

**The (de)personalisation of mediated political communication
in communist and post-communist societies:
The case of Croatia**

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the personalisation of mediated political communication and contributes to the personalisation scholarship by adding to it a non-Western perspective. Specifically, that from the communist and post-communist societies, by using Croatia, the latest member of the European Union, and its communist predecessor Yugoslavia, as a case study. The thesis starts from the premise that the political communication is more personalized, i.e. focused on individual political actors and their personae, in communist and post-communist societies, than in Western ones with which personalisation scholarship dominantly deals with. It is also hypothesized that it may have graver consequences than in the West. For example, it may weaken political institutions, sustain authoritarianism, lead to manipulation and deceit of public etc. Accordingly, main research question asked in this thesis is: What are the similarities and differences in the ways in which the personalisation of mediated political communication develops over time in a communist non-democratic system, a post-communist new democracy, and an established Western democracy? The question is answered through a longitudinal content analysis of Yugoslav/Croatian daily newspapers and fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis. The empirical analyses revealed that the personalized political communication indeed develops in a different way, and is connected to different conditions, in the transitional society, than is the case in established Western democracies. The most important finding of this study is that the mediated political communication was, unlike in Western democracies, de-personalized over time. The theoretical discussion of the possible causes and effects of personalisation in communist and post-communist societies contributes to the development of personalisation theory, and the empirical study provides original evidence of how and why mediated political communication was personalized in non-Western contexts. Furthermore, two new theories are formed that may help explain the personalisation trends in transitional societies. These are *continuation* theory and *democratization* theory.

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1. Introduction

Communist leader Josip Broz Tito, who ruled Yugoslavia for 35 years following the Second World War, died more than three decades ago. Many things have changed since his death. His Yugoslavia dissolved during the 1990s, successor countries went through the process of democratic transition, some of them even joined the European Union; their media systems were deregulated and commercialized, civil society took roots, and a plethora of political leaders commanded the territories of the former Yugoslavia. Nonetheless, one thing does not seem to have changed – the media interest in the personality of the communist leader. The fact that Tito was, and still is, a topic attractive to the media was exemplified by the media's reaction to the death of his widow Jovanka Broz on 20th October 2013. All major media outlets in Croatia, the country that only several months before became the 28th member state of the European Union, reported news of her death. The death of a woman whose husband was political leader of this country 33 years ago was not regular news; it was the main news in all mainstream media. Her pictures dominated all internet news portals: there were detailed reports of how and where she died, and even more detailed articles reminiscing about her marriage to the political leader. The stories of her falling in love with him, her jealousy, his mistresses, their final years together, the effects that their marriage had on the political developments in the country, were once again being brought to public view. Given the attention that Tito's wife's death has attracted, and the consequent reporting of their private lives, it seems that not only his political persona is what (still) interests the media, but rather the private one as well.

One of the questions that this raises is, if his wife's death was such huge news in the 2010s, how prominent was Tito in media reporting, and political communication in general, during his time in power? Were the media and other political communication actors as centred on him as they appear to be nowadays? Or perhaps they were even more so? What was known about his private life and marriage problems while he was in office and his communist party controlled the media? And what consequences, if any, might this focus on the leader and his persona in communism have had for the prominence of leaders in the young post-communist democracy? In other words, the extent to which communist leaders were prominent in the political communication of their countries, the ways in which their

images have been constructed, and how this personalized political communication continued to develop in the transition to post-communism, are questions that no one has answered before.

The lack of scholarly interest in the personalized political communication in authoritarian and transitional societies is surprising, given the negative consequences that this phenomenon might have for democratic and societal processes. They may be even more pronounced than in established Western democracies¹, with which most of personalisation scholarship deals with (for overviews of personalisation theory and research see Maier & Adam, 2010 and Van Aelst et al., 2011). Specifically, the focus on individual political actors at the expense of political collectives and institutions in authoritarian and transitional societies may position political leaders as the greatest authorities in a society and consequently, may void political institutions of significance and legitimacy (Schöpflin, 1993). This development may lead to the rise of the clientelistic society, inhibit the development of strong institutions and party system, and threaten the process of democratic transition. Similarly, mostly negative implications are associated with the focus on political leaders' personae. It is suggested that the emphasis on leaders' lives and qualities can trivialize political communication, lead to the "dumbing down" of politics, distract the public from important political issues and provide voters with irrelevant information based on which they might be inclined to make their electoral decisions (Curran, 2002; Franklin, 2004; Meyer, 2002; Pakulski & Higley, 2008). In authoritarian and transitional societies in which the political elite exerts significant influence over media, these issues are even more important since the politicians are able to control the mediated information about themselves, and hence, project a manufactured image to the public (Apor et al., 2004). In this way the public may be seen as not only distracted from important political issues, but there is also potential for the public to be deceived and manipulated by false information about their leaders.

The main aim of this thesis is to fill this gap in personalisation scholarship by examining the characteristics of personalized political communication in authoritarian systems and to explore how, if at all, this phenomenon changes during the process of democratic transition. Given that the majority of personalisation

¹ The term established Western democracies is used in this thesis for referring to the US and countries of Western Europe. These countries are also referred to as „modern democracies“ (Poguntke & Webb, 2005), „established democracies“ (Swanson & Mancini, 1996), „advanced industrial democracies“ (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000) etc. The term established Western democracies is in this thesis chosen because it most narrowly captures specifically the US and Western Europe, since by using other terms such as modern or advanced industrial democracies countries such as Japan or South Korea would be included, and these are not prominent in personalisation research.

literature focuses on this phenomenon in established Western democracies, the analysis of how personalized political communication develops in authoritarian and transitional systems, for what reasons and with what effects, will enrich personalisation scholarship and broaden the context in which it can be studied beyond the Western world. I believe that it is important to add to the personalisation theory this perspective from authoritarian and transitional societies since political communication may be even more personalized, and with graver consequences, than in established Western democracies. Whether or not political communication was actually personalized to the extent suggested by theories is unknown since there is hardly any empirical evidence to back up the claims made in literature concerned with communist and post-communist regimes. A rare piece of empirical evidence comes from Hermans and Vergeer's (2012) study of candidates' communication strategies in 2009 European parliament elections. They found that politicians from post-communist countries pursued the most personalized communication, manifested in the extent to which they revealed information about their work in politics, family life and private preferences. Politicians in European Western democracies were found to personalize their communication to a far lesser extent. However, this study represents a rare glimpse at the similarities and differences between the ways in which political communication is personalized in different contexts, rather than a comprehensive and definite proof. Consequently, the main research question to be asked in this thesis is: What are the similarities and differences in the ways in which the personalisation of mediated political communication develops over time in a communist non-democratic system, a post-communist new democracy, and an established Western democracy? The main hypothesis is that mediated political communication is *more personalized* in a communist system than in any other, and that this high degree of personalized political communication has continued into the post-communist era. This would indicate that the personalisation of mediated political communication in these systems developed in a different way and for different reasons than in established Western democracies, and that personalisation scholarship is limited and needs to be expanded with theories that can help explain how and why personalisation trends develop in these non-Western contexts. The answer to the main research question and the discussions that will be presented in this thesis might be of interest not only to scholars specializing in personalisation, but also to those interested in political communication and mediatization of politics in general. In addition, given that the thesis explores personalisation from the perspective of communist and post-

communist societies, it may also be of interest to scholars of communist and transitional studies.

Before explaining in greater detail the reasoning behind putting the focus of this study on communist and post-communist societies, and due to multiple understandings of political communication as a field, and personalisation of political communication in particular, certain definitions and concepts need to be made clear.

1.1. Definitions

This thesis follows the definition of the field of political communication advanced by McNair (2011: 4) which states that political communication incorporates:

“ 1 All forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of specific objectives.

2 Communication addressed to these actors by non-politicians such as voters and newspaper columnists.

3 Communication about these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussion of politics.”

In short, McNair's definition is based on the premise that political communication is communication about political actors and politics between three actors (political actors, media, and the audiences/voters). It follows from this that political communication can be manifested in political actors' behaviour, media reporting, and voters' behaviour, and consequently it can be seen as a field in which political science, media studies and political psychology come together. Similarly, Maier and Adam (2010), who in my view offer one of the most comprehensive overviews of personalisation theory and research, see personalisation as manifested in three areas: political actors' campaign strategies, media reporting and voting behaviour. It should be noted that in the context of personalisation theory and research, political actors are usually defined in a narrow way, i.e. as politicians and political parties, although, as McNair (2011) emphasizes, public organizations, pressure groups, terrorist organizations, even media themselves, can also sometimes be seen as political actors. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that existing research on personalisation in political actors' behaviour is mostly centred on election campaigns (see Hermans & Vergeer, 2012; Maier & Adam, 2010; Poguntke & Webb, 2005; Scammell & Langer, 2006), in this thesis a broader view of political actors' behaviour is taken in order to capture not only campaign communication strategies, but also routine, everyday political actors' behaviour. Consequently,

personalisation of political communication is in this thesis defined as a phenomenon manifested in the focus that is put on politicians as individuals, and their personae, by political communication actors.

This thesis focuses on the personalisation of *mediated* political communication, which will be examined through the analysis of personalisation in media reporting and mediated leaders' communication. Although the analysis of personalisation in mediated leaders' communication, i.e. political leaders' statements as reported in the media, will not fully disclose the extent to which, and ways in which political actors (strategically) personalize their communication; it will point to the perception that they might create in the mediated public discourse. The analysis of personalisation in mediated political communication will also not be able to provide answers to questions about the audiences/voters reception of mediated messages about political leaders and their parties, nor the influence that personalization of mediated political communication might have on voters' choices. However, this is not to say that revealing the extent to which, and ways in which, the media and political actors emphasize individual political actors and create their images in mediated public discourse is a subject not worth studying. In the first place, although the effects that the mediated information has on its audiences are far from conclusive (Street, 2011), it is widely acknowledged that the public receives the majority of political information through the use of mass media (Meyer, 2002; Schramm & Roberts, 1971; Swanson & Mancini, 1996). This is not only true for the established Western democracies; early research on primary sources of information in European communist countries confirmed this fact as well (Welsh, 1980). Hence, although this study can not reveal what the communist and post-communist audiences do with the mediated information, it can enhance our understanding of the extent and content of mediated information about political leaders. In the second place, the extent to which, and ways in which, political communication actors emphasize individuals and their personae might influence the communication practices of other political communication actors. In other words, it is suggested that the personalized media reporting might lead to the increase in the personalisation in politicians' communication, and vice versa. Therefore, this study will shed light on how, if at all, media and political actors interact and react to each others communication practices. This thesis will deal with the question of whether political actors are those that dictate the trends in mediated political communication and the media adapts to them; whether the media is the actor that has the potential to change the ways in which politicians communicate politics; or is the relationship between the two actors more complicated and less straightforward?

1.2. The conceptual model

If there are as many definitions of personalisation as there are scholars studying it, there is almost as equal number of different ways in which personalisation is conceptualized. However, in recent years there is a growing consensus that the personalisation phenomenon can be seen as having at least two main dimensions. The concept of personalisation that is used in this thesis draws on the conceptualizations offered by Maier and Adam (2010) and Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2011). However, the concept is slightly modified to allow for a more detailed examination of references to politicians' personae, and in that way, a better understanding of elements on which politicians' public images are based.

The personalisation of political communication is conceptualized as having two main dimensions: a person- and a persona-centred dimension. *Person-centred political communication* refers to the focus that is put on individual political actors as opposed to that put on collective political actors, such as parties or governments. *Persona-centred political communication* manifests in the emphasis that is put on the persona of an individual political actor, or specifically, on a politician's political and private life and qualities. In this project "persona" is primarily understood as a person's perceived personality, a politician's image as it is presented in the public sphere. Hence, in order for the reference to a leader to also be a reference to his/her persona, some part of a leader's personality, life or qualities, must be mentioned. In other words, only those references to a leader which mention him/her in relation to something he/she does or fails to do, thinks, says, how he/she is, which skills he/she has, are considered to be references to a leader's persona. This dimension can be further broken down into two sub-dimensions, namely political and private persona-centred political communication. The *political persona-centred political communication* is manifested in the emphasis on a politician's political life and qualities. That is to say, those actions, traits and skills that are mostly related to his/her political role. On the other hand, the *private persona-centred political communication* is manifested in the focus on a politician's private life and qualities, specifically those actions, traits and skills which are related to roles usually associated to ones' private sphere, e.g. husband/wife, father/mother, daughter/son, friend, lover, sports enthusiast, member of a religious group etc.

Although persona-centred political communication defined in this way is a very broad dimension, I argue that there is value in this kind of conceptualization. Firstly, by only looking at the prominence of either a politician's life (e.g. Stanyer, 2013) or qualities (Reinemann & Wilke, 2007; Sigelman & Bullock, 1991; Wilke &

Reinemann, 2001), it is possible to get only a partial understanding of how politicians are discussed. Only by examining the prominence of all parts of their personae is it possible to fully understand how their public images have been formed and on what elements they are based. Secondly, by only focusing on the prominence of a politician's *private* life and/or qualities, as was done in several previous studies (e.g. Langer, 2011; Rahat & Sheafer, 2007; Stanyer, 2013), much valuable information is lost, since arguably most of the information that is communicated about them is in the political, rather than the private context. In addition, by not examining the extent to which a politician's political persona is prominent in mediated discourse, it is more difficult to draw conclusions about the significance of the visibility of his/her private persona. Specifically, only by comparing the extent to which a politician's political and private personae are visible, and the trends related to them, is it possible to determine the implications of private persona visibility. For example, the mediated visibility of politicians' private personae might have increased over the past few decades, but this information has different implications if the visibility of politicians' political personae has also increased, or indeed if it had decreased. If both political and private personae visibilities have increased, the private persona-centred communication can be seen as a part of a larger trend in the increase in the persona-centred communication, and it could be understood as supplementing rather than replacing the political persona-centred communication. However, if the extent of the political persona-centred communication has decreased over time, the increased visibility of private persona-related information might be seen as a new trend in political communication, and private information as replacing political information in public discourse.

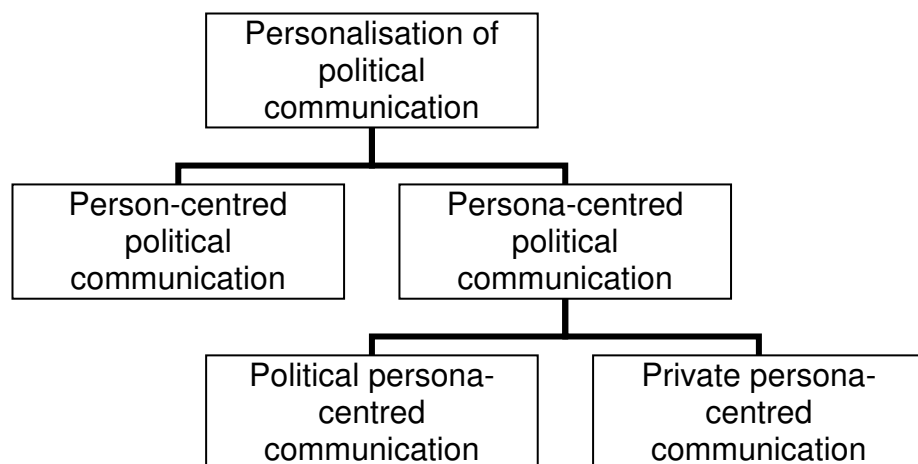


Figure 1.1. Dimensions of the personalisation of political communication

The further value of this conceptual model lies in the fact that by making the distinction between the person- and persona-centred political communication, it is possible to pinpoint dimension-specific effects, causes and trends of personalisation of political communication. In other words, these dimensions of personalisation can be seen as having different effects (chapter 2); can be caused by different factors (chapters 3, 4 and 7); and have different degrees and experience different trends over time (chapters 5 and 6).

1.3. Theoretical and empirical focus: The (post)communist perspective

This thesis will examine the personalisation phenomenon in the communist and post-communist context, using the newest member of the European Union, young post-communist democracy Croatia, and its predecessor, communist Yugoslavia, as a case study. The motivation for examining the personalisation phenomenon from this perspective comes from the theories advocated by the communist leadership cult literature and that concerned with democratic transitions. Specifically, this literature suggests that in these systems the focus in politics and political communication was always on the leader, and perhaps even on his/her persona (Apor et al., 2004; Apor, 2004; Davies, 2004; Eatwell, 2006; Jović & Lamont, 2010; Kitschelt, 1995; Leese, 2014; Lewis, 2000; Plamper, 2004). Mainstream personalisation scholarship suggests that in the past few decades political communication actors have shifted their focus from communicating issues and collectives, such as parties and governments, to communicating information about individual political actors and their personae, especially their private life and qualities. Given that in communist and post-communist systems the focus was arguably always on the leader, mainstream personalisation scholarship seems to lack the power to explain effects, causes and trends of the personalisation of political communication in a communist and post-communist context. In other words, the existing personalisation scholarship does not account for personalized political communication, its causes, effects and trends over time, in systems in which the focus was arguably on individuals and their personae from the very start, examples of which are communist and post-communist systems.

The scholarship concerned with communist regimes usually describes the ways in which politics was conducted and communicated by the term “leadership cult” or “personality cult”, which can be defined as a “god-like glorification of a modern political leader with mass medial techniques” (Plamper, 2004: 33). All

leaders of European communist countries after the World War II developed personality cults, but to differing degrees (Leese, 2014). The underlying logic behind the leadership cult theory is that the leader was the central actor in political communication, and politics in general, of a communist regime. The centrality of a leader in the new system was considered a necessity since it was the only way of legitimizing the new system given that the party was not yet organized and established (Ake, 1966). In line with what the communist party saw as its main purposes in the society, education and socialization, the leader was also used as a means of simplifying values, beliefs and behaviours for the, in large part, uneducated public. The leader was to set the example of how people should behave, what they should value and what their interests should be. Given that the aim of building a communist leader's personality cult was to "centre loyalties and emotions in the persona of the leader" (Leese, 2014: 342-343), i.e. convince the citizens of his greatness and provide an identifiable role model, the leader's persona as it was projected to the public was to a large extent constructed or manufactured (Apor et al., 2004). In short, according to the leadership cult literature, all political communication actors were focused on the leader and his persona in a communist system.

According to some scholars, post-communist politicians' behaviour was in its early period also leader-centred (Lewis, 2000), representing a continuation from the communist era. Some of the reasons why political actors decided to keep the focus on the individuals at the expense of the collectives may have been the weakness of the newly formed parties, low party identification, uncertainty about voters' needs and interests, institutional designs that granted more power to individuals etc. (Kitschelt, 1995; Lewis, 2000; Tomšič & Prijon, 2010). Furthermore, it is argued that in most post-communist countries the political elite retained control over, at least some, media, and was able to use the media as an unobstructed channel of communication to the voters (Gross, 2004; Splichal, 2001). Hence, it might be expected that if the political elite was pursuing personalized communication, media reporting was personalized as well. However, during the transitional process the media in most Central and East European post-communist countries gained some level of autonomy from political influence (Bajomi-Lázár, 2013; Gross, 2004). Consequently, it can be speculated that with the transitional processes that resulted in the rise of autonomous media, spread of entertainment media, institutional changes aimed to de-centralization of power, development of civil society, and increased significance of international relations, the extent to which political

communication is personalized, and the factors contributing to it, might become more similar to the developments in established Western democracies.

Since the main aim of this project is to closely examine the trends of personalisation of mediated political communication and factors which influence it in a communist and post-communist system, the Republic of Croatia, newest member state of the European Union, represents an interesting testing ground for this kind of exploratory study, given that its political and media system have changed significantly in the past 50 years. This changing environment is suitable for testing the hypotheses of continuation and change in the degrees and drivers of personalisation(s).

The Yugoslavian/Croatian case is also interesting because the Yugoslav leader, Tito, might represent an ideal example of the extreme form of the personalisation of mediated leadership. It is widely held that he alone was the glue that kept the multi-national Yugoslavia together (Kolář, 2014; Pavlowitch, 1992; Velikonja, 2008; Zaninovich, 1983). As Carmichael (2010: 1045) writes: "His personal charm and political intuition helped to inspire a huge personality cult which still survives in pockets across the region." Hence, the strength of his cult is exemplified by fact that even today, more than three decades after his death, "everywhere in the former-Yugoslav republics, Josip Broz Tito seems to continue to embody Yugoslavia that many people remember in a positive light" (Volčič, 2007: 30; see also Velikonja, 2008). Combined with the assumption that communist leaders dominated political communication in their countries (Apor et al., 2004) and that in the case of Tito this was for an unusually long time², research into the personalisation of mediated political communication in Yugoslavia has great potential to reveal the unique features of the ways in which mediated leadership was personalized in a communist era.

Furthermore, unlike other post-communist countries of Central Europe, Croatia, one of the Republics formed after the break-up of Yugoslavia, showed in the early post-communist period a preference for institutional arrangements which increase the focus on individual political actors (Easter, 1997). In addition, the first post-communist period is said to have been marked by the presidency of Franjo Tuđman. Jović and Lamont (2010: 1613) nicely capture Tuđman's domination over Croatia in 1990s by stating that „not only did Franjo Tuđman effectively control all state institutions and organisations, but he intervened in civil society, kept the media under firm control, and even shaped popular culture“. Hence, in the early post-

² Tito was the Yugoslav head executive from 1945 until his death in 1980. The only European communist leader which ruled longer than Tito was Albanian Enver Hoxha.

communist period certain continuities from the communist era can be observed with regard to the centrality of political leaders to political processes and communication.

However, in the second decade following the transition, Croatia introduced institutional arrangements which decreased the degree of personalized power (parliamentary political system and proportional electoral system) (Ilišin, 2001), the indexes of press freedom showed that the country's media moved towards being more autonomous (Freedom House, 2013), and none of the post-2000 leaders were considered to have been "fathers" of the nation, as Tito and Tuđman were (Udovičić, 2011). Hence, I believe these continuities and changes make Croatia a good testing ground for exploring topics pursued in this project.

An obvious limitation of a case study approach is that the findings from this empirical study will not be easily generalizable across communist and post-communist systems. Although Central and Eastern European post-communist countries can be seen as sharing certain characteristics, they have entered the transition from different starting points, developed in distinctive ways, and have evolved different media and political systems. Hence, there seem to be "multiple post-communisms" (Jakubowicz and Sükösd, 2008: 25), and not just one. However, given that this project is primarily an exploratory study that aims to examine in depth the extent to which mediated political communication was personalized in communism, and also how and why the trend developed during the process of democratic transition, a case study approach seems the most appropriate. Although the empirical investigation will not reveal the characteristics of the personalisation phenomenon in all communist and post-communist societies, this study will be the first step in exploring the ways in which the personalisation of political communication developed in these systems. It will enhance our understanding of how and why the phenomenon might develop in a non-Western system, and offer some explanations of why political communication is, or is not, personalized, in different periods of transition.

The theoretical discussion of the possible effects and causes of personalisation of political communication in a Western, communist and post-communist system will address the issue of personalisation in these systems more generally. It will be argued that there are some distinctive effects that different dimensions of personalisation can have in a communist and post-communist context, which are not usually considered in the personalisation literature (chapter 2). And furthermore, that there are some causal conditions that can lead to an increase or decrease in the degree of personalisation in these contexts that were previously not acknowledged by scholars studying personalisation (chapters 3 and

4). Hence, these theoretical discussions will inform the personalisation scholarship more broadly and contribute to better understanding of this phenomenon in communist and post-communist societies in general.

The theoretical chapters (2-4) are centred on potential causes and effects of the personalized political communication in order to demonstrate in greater detail why personalized communication might matter, especially in communist and post-communist societies, and why the examined contexts might be seen as particularly conducive to the development of this phenomenon. Specifically, chapter 2 that focuses on potential effects of personalized political communication is designed to give insight into reasons why personalisation is a phenomenon which is important to study in communist and post-communist societies. It examines theories suggesting that the emphasis on individual political actors and their personae in authoritarian and transitional societies may have graver consequences for democratic and societal processes than is the case in established Western democracies. Furthermore, chapters 3 and 4 focus on elements of communist, post-communist, and Western contexts, which are thought of as making these societies favourable to the development of personalized political communication. In other words, these chapters aim to establish why personalized political communication is considered to have particularly fertile ground in which to develop, by examining politically- and media-related factors that might contribute to its development. The reasons why political communication in communist and post-communist societies is believed to be personalized will be discussed there.

Distinguishing between the cause and effect in media studies is a challenging task, which usually comes down to the “chicken or the egg” problem. On the example of personalized political communication, we can ask whether media’s focus on politicians instead of parties have led to the decline in party identification, or rather have the weakened party loyalties made media put the emphasis on politicians since the parties have lost public trust? Given that there is hardly any research which deals with the causes and effects of personalized political communication, it is still impossible to draw robust conclusions about the contexts in which personalisation develops and the effects it has. And also, it is difficult to establish whether personalisation causes certain changes, or is itself a product of these changes and could be reinforcing them. However, this should not be a reason for neglecting these issues, but rather to deal with them in more depth. That is exactly what the next three chapters of this thesis are designed to do.

2. Debating the debate: What can personalized political communication do?

This chapter aims to provide further arguments for the conceptual framework of personalisation used in this thesis by presenting theories that person- and persona-centred political communication are seen as the main cause, or one of contributors to, different effects and have distinct implications for democratic and societal processes. More specifically, in this chapter I discuss why personalisation of politics matters, and furthermore, how it might matter in different contexts.

Hence, this chapter will inform this thesis in several ways. Firstly, it will provide the reasons why personalisation of political communication is a subject worth studying. Secondly, it will provide additional arguments for the conceptualization of personalized political communication as it is used in this thesis. Thirdly, it will show that the effects of personalisation of political communication are not only dimension-specific, but also context-specific, and that caution is needed when making generalizations about the personalisation effects across different systems. In other words, although the implications of the personalisation of political communication tend to centre on the effects that this phenomenon might have on democratic processes in established Western democracies, I argue that personalisation of political communication can have different, yet important, consequences in communist and post-communist societies.

Although the list of possible effects is a long one, many of them are speculative, given that there is very little evidence that personalisation of political communication actually leads to any of them. In addition, it is often unclear whether personalisation is considered to be the main cause of a certain development, or it is just contributing to it. Also, sometimes personalisation's effects can be seen as indirect, in cases when personalisation is seen as causally connected with a process that can have a specific effect. Furthermore, as mentioned in the Introduction, there is a "cause and effect" problem evident with almost all theories looking into how and why personalisation developed and what kind of influences it has on processes that are connected to it. In spite of these limitations, I believe it is important to discuss possible effects since they point to the significance of examining the personalisation phenomenon and contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which trends in political communication are seen to be connected to democratic and societal processes.

This chapter has two parts, each concerned with different dimension of personalisation of political communication. In addition, each of these parts looks at the effects of a specific dimension in three different contexts, Western, post-communist and communist one. I argue that it is important to distinguish between the personalisation effects in different contexts since this leads to a better understanding of how and why certain processes and developments occur in diverse environments. If context-specific effects are not taken into account, the role that personalisation of political communication plays in causing or contributing to a process might be exaggerated, diminished or misunderstood.

2.1. Person-centred political communication

As was outlined in the Introduction, person-centred political communication is a dimension of the personalisation of political communication that is manifested in the focus which political communication actors put on individual political actors instead of collectives, such as parties and governments. Although larger focus on individuals in political communication does not necessarily indicate that individuals have more power than collectives, it points to the fact that the political communication actors perceive them as more important and powerful than collectives. Hence, person-centred political communication is concerned with issues of power. The questions that are usually asked with regard to this dimension are: “Who is perceived as the most powerful and important political actor?” and “How can this perception of power holders influence democratic and societal processes?”. In the first part of the discussion that follows it is argued that the most commonly reproduced argument in a Western context is that the increased focus on individuals weakens the institutions and leads to a crisis of representative democracy. In the following two parts the possible effects of person-centred political communication are discussed in the context of communist and post-communist systems. It is argued that instead of weakening institutions, the person-centred communication might in these contexts lock already weak institutions in a cycle of irrelevance, and consequently inhibit the process of democratic transition.

2.1.1. West: A logical development?

The discussion of the effects of person-centred political communication in Western parliamentary systems mostly focused on the increased emphasis that is put upon Prime Ministers as heads of the executive. One of the most frequently raised issues with regard to the perceived increased power of Prime Ministers in

parliamentary democracies is related to the core principles of this type of political system. Since one of the main aims of a parliamentary system is to prevent the concentration of power in one person, leader-centred governments in parliamentary systems are seen to lead to an unbalanced distribution of power. It is often argued, especially with regard to the United Kingdom, that parliamentary democracies increasingly resemble presidential systems with regard to the power that their head executive exercises (Poguntke & Webb, 2005). Therefore, the person-centred executive is seen as changing the checks and balances of parliamentary systems which are set to disperse the power among political actors. Although these implications are seen as a far greater threat to democratic processes in parliamentary systems, similar developments can also be detected in presidential systems. Here too the chief executive, in this case the president, can informally obtain more decisional power than rival branches of government (for example, the Congress) and in this way challenge the formal institutional arrangements of the system (Langer, 2011; Poguntke & Webb, 2005).

Moreover, person-centred political actors' behaviour is often criticized by the advocates of the party democracy type of representative government. If the parties and the functions they perform in the democracy, such as the aggregation and articulation of public interests, recruiting political elite, and competing for public office, are seen as central for representative democracy, then a person- rather than party-centred system seems as a threat. The general idea is that the increased importance of individuals weakens the role of parties and consequently leads to the crisis of representative government.

In the first place, leaders are increasingly put in the centre of electoral campaigns and seen as the party's main electoral asset. A leader who gets to a position of power in this way can be inclined to claim a popular rather than party mandate and govern past his/her party (Poguntke & Webb, 2005). In addition, autonomous leaders might surround themselves with appointed advisors and consultants, rather than elected representatives, who may have a great influence on decision-making. In this way it can happen that the country is led by people who have no legitimacy, which results in the loss of democratic accountability and policies lacking legitimacy (Helms, 2008; Langer, 2011).

Secondly, some leaders today try to make direct, personal bonds with voters which mean that the parties might lose their connection to the electorate. As will be argued in greater depth in the next chapter, parties have lost a considerable number of their supporters and now find it more difficult to relate to voters due to the changes in society, media and politics (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000). Given that the

leaders are today trying harder than ever to form bonds with voters, if successful they can be less responsive to the party because they do not feel that they owe their public office to it. This further weakens the party.

And thirdly, given that leaders are in this new environment considered crucial for electoral success, parties are usually not willing to challenge the personalizing practices of their leaders (Helms, 2008). This reinforces the leader's autonomy and silences the possible opposition within the party (Langer, 2011).

However, the parties are not the only ones which can be weakened by the person-centred political actors' behaviour. According to some scholars, leaders can be weakened by this phenomenon too. If they claim a popular mandate and govern past their parties, they are assuming most of the democratic accountability and responsibility for the outcomes of their decisions. This can easily backfire on them as they can be blamed for failed policies or bad judgments as individuals. In addition, the reliance on popular rather than party support is a double-edged sword. As Poguntke and Webb (2005: 22) picturesquely put it: "As long as they can ride the tiger of an increasingly fickle public opinion, they can "go it alone"; once public support starts to dwindle, however, they are left with few allies." Furthermore, Helms (2008: 54) argues that personalized decision-making on the part of a leader may "provoke serious opposition and dissent" among members of the executive and parliament who are left out of the decision-making process what can ultimately lead to "legislative gridlock and government instability". Finally, person-centred government can also prove to be less effective than a collegial one. Given that the conventions of leadership have been "stretched out of recognition", in the sense that the leader is the central figure of political and electoral processes, and media coverage of politics as well, the quality of a leader's performance in all these areas can be expected to fall (Foley, 2008: 54). There is only as much as one person can do at a time.

There is, however, a more positive view of the person-centred political actors' behaviour, although not as prominent as the negative one outlined above, based mostly on the works of Bernard Manin. Manin (1997) argues that the increased importance of individuals in the political processes does not represent a crisis of representative government, but rather only a crisis of a certain type of representative government – party democracy. He also points to the fact that the focus on the individual is not peculiar to democratic processes, given that a person-centred system preceded the party democracy³. He makes a convincing case for the

³ Manin (1997: 202) calls this type of representative government „parliamentarism“ and describes it as a system in which „the successful candidates were individuals who inspired the trust of their

prominence of individuals in the modern context, arguing argues that it is more logical today to put the individual at the focus of political processes, given that the modern environment is increasingly complex and the problems that leaders face are more and more unpredictable. In this context, it does not make sense for leaders to promote detailed programs which will soon be outdated. Consequently, leaders need to be assigned more discretionary power in order to be able to react to the changing and unpredictable environment (Manin, 1997; van Zoonen et al., 2011), while policy and issue-based politics at whose heart was party democracy do not seem to be the best type of system for this kind of context. Bjerling (2012: 223) goes a step further and advocates this new system in a straightforward way by saying that “a party-centred model for the steering of society should gradually be replaced by an individual-oriented model for the handling of the unforeseen”.

In addition, the enhanced importance of individual political actors in a context in which citizens are increasingly distrustful of political parties seems quite logical. Given that political parties have lost the trust of their electorate and have problems connecting with the voters, it seems logical that they adapted by putting the focus on individuals. Individual political actors may be better able to bond with voters, revive their interest in politics, and mobilize them to participate in political processes (Mazzoleni, 2000). If they are able to do so, person-centred political actors' behaviour can perhaps be seen as increasing the quality of democracy, rather than lowering it.

The effects of person-centred *media reporting* are also mainly interpreted in a negative light. It is suggested that politicians have felt compelled to pursue a more person-centred communication mainly because the media have put them under the spotlight. For reasons that will be detailed in the next two chapters, the media is considered to increasingly report politics with the focus on individuals at the expense of collectives (parties, governments) and issues. Some authors argue that politicians have had to adapt their practices because of the perceived power of the media (Jamieson, 1988; Meyer, 2002). Therefore, person-centred media reporting can change the ways in which politics is conducted and communicated by shifting the focus from parties to individual political actors. Individuals are perceived as being more powerful, but also as more responsible. Finally, probably the most troubling effect of person-centred media reporting is the framing of politics as a struggle of power-seeking individuals. For the advocates of party democracy, this is a negative effect since it undermines the principles of this system. By media focusing on

constituents as a result of their network of local connections, their social prominence, or by the deference they provoked”.

individual actors instead of parties and issues, parties are denied power and significance, which removes them from the centre of political processes.

However, as Bjerling (2012: 222) points out, there seem to be “good grounds to suggest that the news media ought to be more concerned with individual political actors” because they have become more important in political systems. As was discussed before, in a complex environment characterized with uncertainty, individuals (leaders) are increasingly important because they need to be able to effectively react to unpredictable situations (Manin, 1997). Hence, it seems logical that in this context media too focuses on individual actors given their importance in political processes. This is an argument that extends to the area of voters’ behaviour.

In the early days of *voters’ behaviour* research, voters who were making their decisions based on their evaluations of individual candidates instead of, for example, party promoted issues, were considered irrational. Illustratively, Sears (1969: 366) wrote that this kind of voting behaviour is an “immature way of dealing with political stimuli”. Therefore, political psychologists who were dealing with voters’ behaviour tended to look at person-centred voting as an irrational way of participating in political processes. However, there is a different school of rational theory scholars who claim that voters are actually behaving rationally when they focus on individuals because they use individual political actors as a shortcut in reaching their electoral decisions (Page, 1978; Popkin, 1991). In other words, given the demands of the modern lifestyle, the complexity of political matters, and the proliferation of political actors competing for power, for these scholars it seems only rational for voters to reduce their costs of reaching an electoral decision (time, information gathering etc.) by focusing on individuals who are more easily evaluated than their often abstract and complex policies. Since people feel skilled in judging other people, an activity they do often in their everyday life, focusing on individual political actors in voting process seems as a least complicated strategy of reaching a decision (Garzia, 2011; Pakulski & Higley, 2008). In addition, given the challenges of modern environments, it might seem reasonable that the voters are deciding which individual is better able to act in uncertain contexts rather than which party’s policies should be implemented (Popkin, 1991). By this view, it should also be logical that media reporting is more person-centred, because the leaders are the most important actors in the political system and the voters seem to need information about them in order to reach an informed electoral decision (Bjerling, 2012).

2.1.2. Post-communism: Individuals versus institutions

The discussion of the implications of person-centred political communication in a Western context has showed that the main issues of concern are unbalanced distribution of power, weakening of political parties, and irrationality of voters' choices. The challenging of institutional checks and balances is a serious concern of person-centred political communication in post-communist systems too. However, the main effects are in this context seem to relate to the development of democratic institutions and the institutionalisation of party system.

Alongside the problematic informal increase in the power of Prime Ministers in governments, which was discussed in the Western context, post-communist societies face another problem which can cause an unbalanced distribution of power. Specifically, most post-communist countries are characterized by "dual leadership", meaning that their political systems have both the positions of a Prime Minister and a President (Baylis, 1996). However, their powers vary according to the political system that was introduced. In post-communist parliamentary systems Presidents usually have little formal power, but nonetheless their informal power and prestige is often great (Baylis, 2007). They are more popular than Prime Ministers, citizens trust them more than any other political institution (Mishler & Rose, 1997), and in most cases they derive their legitimacy from direct elections (Baylis, 2007). The discrepancy between a President's weak formal powers and the strong support among citizens can easily lead to tensions and conflicts with other branches of government. Many post-communist Presidents have tried to exercise more power than they were constitutionally given and even change the institutional arrangements to formally gain more power (Baylis, 1996). Their interventions in areas of prime ministerial authority have often led to conflicts with Prime Ministers and weakened their roles in political processes. In other words, Presidents who try to exercise more power than they are given usually go hand in hand with weak Prime Ministers, what leads to an unbalanced distribution of power, ineffective government and reduces the legitimacy of the governments' policies (Baylis, 1996, 2007).

Although this represents a serious obstacle to democratic consolidation, even greater threats to the quality of democracy are under-developed political institutions which may be locked in the cycle of irrelevance by person-centred political communication, although the effect is indirect at best. In the first place, because of the experiences of a former regime, citizens tend to trust more in individual political actors than in institutions. Schöpflin (1993: 268) captures it nicely by saying: "Almost hypnotically, people turned to personalities, virtually without regard to their political

programmes, as a repository for society's hopes and desires in particular, because persons were felt to be more reliable, more authentic and thus more likely to embody what the individual wanted." Research into the levels of trust that citizens in post-communist societies have in different political actors and institutions confirms this thesis. Mishler and Rose (1997) looked at the levels of trust in political institutions in nine post-communist countries at the beginning of the transitional period and found that the institution of a President, the only one that is personalized (as opposed to parties, governments and parliaments), was the one that citizens trusted most. Therefore, citizens tended to invest individual political actors with authority and power, not institutions. Furthermore, it seems that the political processes were also revolving around individuals given that party leaders are said to have dominated over their parties in the early transition period (King, 2002; Lewis, 2000). And consequently, it might be expected that the media too framed the political processes as a personal struggle for power what could have made citizens perceive political institutions as nothing more than "facades hiding different personal interests" (Schöpflin, 1993: 276). It is suggested that all these developments might have contributed to the under-development of political institutions and hindered their ability to acquire legitimacy and inspire trust. Hence, the focus that post-communist political actors have arguably put on individuals, instead of collectives and institutions, might have inhibited the institutionalization processes, and indirectly contributed to the effects that the under-developed political institutions had for the consolidation of democracy.

For example, this direct influence of weak and under-developed institutions, and the possibly indirect influence of person-centred political communication, might be manifested in the increased reliance on informal practices of governing (e.g. clientelistic networks, patronage politics, corruption), and unsanctioned abuse of power. Some authors go as far as to argue that the main democratic deficit in post-communist societies comes from the behaviour of the irresponsible political elite which abuses institutions and power (Fish, 2001; Gallina, 2010; Ledeneva, 2006). Weak institutions are not able to provide distance between the individual and power and ensure that the individuals do not abuse power, so its exercise becomes arbitrary (Schöpflin, 1993). In addition, institutions serve as a base for constructing identities. If they are not able to perform that function, then the society is structured through other elements, such as ethnicity or religion, what can easily be manipulated and can provoke conflicts between opposing groups (ibid.).

Another implication of person-centred political communication in post-communist societies might be the under-institutionalisation of party systems. Mainwaring (1999)

describes weakly institutionalized party systems as those in which politics is dominated by individuals, not parties; levels of party identification are low; voters' volatility is high and person-centred voting is more common than the one based on parties and issues. All these features are usually ascribed to post-communist party systems (Colton, 2002; Kitschelt, 1995; Lewis, 2000; O'Dwyer & Kovalčik, 2005) and they can be directly or indirectly related to person-centred political communication. As was mentioned above, parties are often dominated by their leaders. The person-centred parties are less likely to support the development of programmatic party competition which is favored by the advocates of party democracies. Rather, these parties are often charismatic or clientelistic and favour patronage-oriented politics (Kitschelt, 1995), often putting leaders at the centre of their activities and communication efforts.

By contributing to the rise of patronage-oriented politics, the person-centred post-communist political communication might be seen as indirectly related to the negative effects that this kind of politics usually produces. For example, patronage-oriented politics have often led to the rise of massive state bureaucracies in post-communist periods. Clientelistic and charismatic parties, once in power, have tended to return the favour to their supporters by employing them in state institutions and in this way strengthening their clientelistic networks. This leads to ineffective governance and state bureaucracy since most of the employed are not qualified for the positions they get (O'Dwyer, 2004). Another problem with these practices is that they result in the weakening of mechanisms of democratic accountability. Given that the parties and their leaders are able to win elections and exercise power by relying on informal practices, such as corruption and clientelism, their accountability to voters is weakened (Ledeneva, 2006; Mainwaring, 1999). Also, strong party leaders tend to rule their parties in an authoritarian style, silencing opposition voices and centralizing the decision-making processes (Kasapović, 2001b; Lewis, 2000). Furthermore, low levels of party identification and high volatility often result in changes of the ruling party. The changes in policies that may follow from this dynamic threaten the continuity of reforms and realization of long-term policy goals (Mainwaring, 1999).

On the other hand, some authors suggest that under-institutionalized party systems can have positive effects on post-communist democracies. The domination of party leaders on the political scene is seen as logical, given that the parties were in the beginning of post-communist period lacking clear programmes and policy initiatives (Kitschelt, 1995). Therefore, since it was not possible to instantly form a strong party without roots in the society and faithful supporters, it seems logical that

individuals assumed a central place in politics (King, 2002). In addition, given the voters' distrust of institutions, especially parties, and the confidence they have put in persons (Mishler & Rose, 1997; Schöpflin, 1993), the prominence of individual political actors seems unsurprising. If the politicians have used the trust of citizens to connect with them, promote political participation and democratic values, the person-centred political actors' behaviour might have increased the quality of post-communist democracy. Finally, O'Dwyer and Kovalčik (2005) suggest that there is another advantage of an under-institutionalized party system. They argue that it is easier in weakly institutionalized party systems for governments to undertake radical reforms because of the unorganized and fragmented opposition. In other words, without coherent opposition it is easier to implement reforms and policies, which increases the political stability of the government and the efficiency of its policies.

Equally, there are perhaps good grounds to declare *person-centred voting* of post-communist voters rational, rather than irrational. Given the context – leader-dominated parties without clear policy stands and weak political institutions – it appears more rational to base electoral decision on the evaluation of a party leader than the party or issues it represents, if any. Although, this environment can also promote populism among political actors who want to appear in line with citizens' anti-party sentiments and help them disguise a bid for personal power (Mainwaring, 1999; Schöpflin, 1993).

According to the same logic pursued above, *person-centred media reporting* can also be considered as having a positive impact on the quality of democracy. If the individuals dominate the political scene and the voters invest them, rather than institutions, with authority, it makes sense that the media are too pursuing this dynamic. The media in this context actually needs to focus on individuals to show who is responsible for political decisions, who has the power and who the voters should hold accountable. In person-centred political systems, those are the individual political actors, and arguably they need to be in the focus of media reporting.

However, the media that at the same time reveals the hidden dynamics of the political world, such as the informal practices of corruption, clientelism and patronage, can have a sobering effect on citizens. By showing citizens that the institutions are nothing more than structures used by individual actors for their own personal agenda, citizens might perceive politics as nothing more than a struggle for personal gain. This triggers cynicism and further distrust, makes citizens think nothing can be done to strengthen institutions and stop the power-seeking

individuals. Consequently this development can lead to lower electoral turnouts, and this in turn decreases the legitimacy of elected representatives.

To summarize, while the main criticism of a person-centred political communication in the West is that it can contribute to a crisis of a party democracy, in post-communist systems the main fear is that it might hinder the development of a (party) democracy in the first place. Although there might be good arguments for the dominance of individuals in political communication in the early transition period, it is possible that in the long run this practice can pose a serious threat to democratic consolidation.

2.1.3. Communism: Individuals above institutions

The final part that deals with the potential effects of person-centred political communication will examine the possible influences of this dimension of personalisation in a communist context. It should be noted that when examining the implications of person-centred political communication in communist systems it is not only important to focus on the immediate effects on these societies, but also on more long-term effects which might have had the potential to influence democratic processes in young post-communist democracies.

In the first place it is important to note that although the Communist party was among the most important institutions in communist societies, it is argued that the politics was nevertheless person-centred. The party was powerful and dominated political and social life, but the authority of its leader and members was not derived primarily from the institution they represented, but rather from them as individuals. This was possible because the communist elite created weak institutions and showed little or no desire to strengthen their legitimacy and power (Plamper, 2004). For example, communist countries had parliaments, but they rarely convened; they had elections, but there was rarely a possibility to choose among candidates; there was a constitution, but the systems of separation of power were not institutionalized and there were usually no formalized systems of succession.

The *person-centred political actors' behaviour* can therefore be seen as directly causing or contributing to the under-development of institutions, and indirectly contributing to the negative effects that under-developed institutions had for the functioning of communist systems, but also for post-communist politics. Institutions locked in the cycle of weakness allow political elite to practice politics in an informal way, by using clientelism, patronage and corruption, without fear of sanctions. They can also routinize the legitimization through a person rather than an institution, and create the perception among the public that institutions are not powerful, but rather it

is the people that control them (Schöpflin, 1993). In this situation, the public might be inclined to put personal loyalties above those to institutions, which can result in low respect for rules that are set by institutions (e.g. legal, administrative, political etc). For example, if citizens are aware that the police commissioner can exercise his power in an arbitrary and unsanctioned ways, then they will know that they can end up in prison even if they have not broken any formal law. The respect for laws is therefore weak or nonexistent.

The effects of under-developed institutions in communism can also be traced to post-communist systems. As was argued in the former section, citizens transferred their distrust towards institutions from communist to post-communist systems, while the political elite in many post-communist countries did little or nothing to strengthen them. Therefore, while it should be expected that institutions in democratic societies provide a buffer between the individual and power, serve as a base for constructing identities, derive legitimacy from their ability to sanction those who do not follow rules etc., post-communist institutions were in the first transitional period rarely seen as serving these functions. This might have enabled the political elite to continue with its informal practices. Also, it might not have motivated citizens to start trusting institutions, but rather to continue relying on personal loyalties.

Another implication of person-centred political actors' behaviour in communist systems is the conservation of authoritarianism in the society. As I will argue in the next chapter, communist regimes had put the focus on the leader mainly to legitimate the system and socialize its citizens (Ake, 1966; Butler, 2000; Eatwell, 2006). The political elite tried to motivate its citizens to understand politics through the person of a leader who was to embody society's values and interests (Apor et al., 2004). Given the low levels of education in communist countries, this technique was used in order to simplify complex political and social matters for uneducated citizens, mostly peasants (S. Davies, 2004). A consequence of this strategy of the communist political elite was that the people were socialized to understand politics in a personalized way, which might have made it harder in post-communist period for political institutions to gain legitimacy and citizens' trust. People were also expected to follow a leader's cues uncritically which could have sustained high levels of authoritarianism throughout communist period and prevented the development of critical thought and rational discussion about issues of public interest. In addition, the authoritarianism presents a serious threat to the democratic consolidation in post-communist countries given that people socialized in communism might tend to favour strong leaders over democratic institutions (Rose & Mishler, 1996).

Another possible implication of communist person-centred political actors' behaviour is related to succession. Given that a communist system was deriving its legitimacy from a leader and tying society's values and beliefs to him, there was a state of political and social crisis after his death or removal from office⁴. The death of a leader who was presented as a father of the nation, the only person who can rule the country, the individual in which all hopes and trust have been put, leads to a crisis in the society (McCauley & Carter, 1986). On the one hand, the legitimacy of the country is brought into question. On the other hand, people who are socialized to consider the leader their role-model and to rely heavily on him for political guidance are left in a state of uncertainty and confusion.

Person-centred media reporting might also be seen as legitimizing and reinforcing personalized politics and authoritarianism. On the one hand, if politics were personalized as suggested and the real power lay with the individuals, not institutions (Apor et al., 2004; Furtak, 1986; Luthans et al., 1998; McCauley & Carter, 1986; Schöpflin, 1993), then it might be logical that the media too focused on individuals at the expense of institutions in order to present to the public who has the power and should be accountable for political decisions. Furthermore, given that in elections voters were electing, or better still confirming, individual political actors and not parties (Birch, 2005; Furtak, 1986), it might make sense for the media to pursue a person-centred approach in reporting politics in order to provide the public with information about the candidate(s). Finally, by concentrating on individuals, media were able to simplify complex political issues and to offer information in a form that an uninformed public can more easily grasp (S. Davies, 2004). On the other hand, by assigning all the power and responsibility to individuals, political institutions were left with little or no significance and consequently, had problems gaining legitimacy and public trust. In addition, simplifying political issues by reporting them through a person might have inhibited the development of sophisticated, rational thought in society. In other words, citizens' inability to understand political matters might have been reinforced by person-centred simplified reporting. A more contextualized, information-rich, balanced reporting might have helped to educate citizens to understand complex issues, instead of locking them in the cycle of political illiteracy.

Finally, given that voters were rarely given the option of choosing among candidates, but rather confirming the one candidate (Birch, 2005; Furtak, 1986), the

⁴ The strongest communist leaders were in general leaders for life. Once elected, there was usually no formal mechanism for their removal from office, although exceptions did exist (McCauley & Carter, 1986).

discussion about the rationality of voters' decisions seems inappropriate. Rather, an implication of communist *person-centred voting* might be the socialization of communist citizens to understand politics in a personalized way. In combination with other factors (e.g. person-centred political actors' behaviour, person-centred media reporting) citizens might have been inclined to ascribe individuals with power and accountability, and not institutions, and to transfer those beliefs from communist to post-communist system. With the internalized notion of personalized power, citizens might have been inclined to seek and accept authority from individual political actors, rather than the institutions they represent, even in a democratic system, and consequently this might have contributed to hindering of the development of strong political institutions which would have increased the quality of democracy in post-communist systems and eased their transition.

In short, person-centred political communication in communist systems seems to have been a reasonable choice of political elite given that their aim was to legitimate the system and socialize the public. However, by a constant focus on individuals the public might not have been motivated to try to understand complex political issues in any way other than taking simplified political cues from its leader and the media. This could have inhibited political debate based on arguments and sustained authoritarianism in the society. But, it should be kept in mind that this line of thought, which is dominant in the literature on communist societies, may assume a too simplistic view of communist public. In other words, it is difficult to determine whether communist people accepted the guidance of their leader because of their political ignorance and authoritarian values, or they behaved as they did for instrumental reasons, to ensure survival and the benefits of the system in which they lived.

The first part of this chapter focused on the assumptions about the direct and indirect consequences of person-centred political communication. The second part of the chapter will examine the implications of the second dimension of personalized political communication, persona-centred political communication.

2.2. Persona-centred political communication

The persona-centred political communication is defined as the emphasis that political communication actors put on politicians' personae, i.e. his/her political and private lives and qualities. Unlike the first dimension, the persona-centred dimension of personalisation is less concerned with power and institutions, and more with the communication aspect of politics. Therefore, the main implications of this dimension

are related to the quality of political information and public discourse, as well as the rationality of voters' decisions. More specifically, the normative basis for the evaluation of the effects of a persona-centred political communication is usually rational choice theory. Although this theory is mostly used to evaluate the rationality of voters' behaviour, here it is also applied to assess the rationality of the behaviour of other political communication actors, i.e. media and political actors.

2.2.1. West: Image over substance?

In the context of Western established democracies, most, but not all, of the assumed implications of persona-centred political communication are related to the rationality of voters' behaviour, and can be seen as coming out of a rational choice theory. However, I argue that there are three different schools of thought within the rational choice theory according to which the effects of persona-centred political communication can be evaluated.

The advocates of the first school of thought can be seen as claiming that the emphasis on politicians' personae in general has negative effects on democratic processes. In the first place, persona-centred voting, i.e. voting in which the electoral decision has been made primarily on an evaluation of a leader's persona, is considered inferior to other modes of voting. The early analyses of voters' behaviour tended to imply that voting based on a candidate's persona is based on "trivial and politically irrelevant matters" (Shabad and Andersen, 1979: 29), that it is inappropriate and superficial (Funk, 1996) and that issue-based voting is superior and more sophisticated way of reaching an electoral decision (Carmines and Stimson, 1980)⁵.

The same line of thought can be detected in some discussions about the possible impact of *politicians' persona-centred communication* and *media reporting* on the quality of political information and public discourse. In essence, the idea is that the "image has supplanted substance" which has led to the trivialization of public discourse and decreasing quality of public debate (Franklin, 2004: 11). In other words, focus on politicians' personae has replaced rational debate in politics (ibid.). Both media and political actors are to blame. Firstly, they are seen as putting more focus on image, than on issues and policies. It is argued that they turned the elections into beauty contents (Curtice & Holmberg, 2005; Pakulski & Higley, 2008),

⁵ One of the reasons why persona-centred voting might have been considered so irrational can be found in the perception of leaders at the time. According to Pakulski and Higley (2008), in the mid 20th century voting based on issues and parties was considered more important because leaders were seen merely as implementators of party promoted policies, and not autonomous, powerful, political actors.

that presentation and style have become more important than substantive issues (Franklin, 2004), that politicians' advisors "script strategies for transferring desired qualities into the media image of the candidate" (Meyer, 2002: 68), which results in "aestheticization" of politics and motivates voters to focus on "stylishness, image [and] presentation" (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999: 210) at the expense of issues and policies. Secondly, there is a fear that politician's image is manufactured, fake, not grounded in his/her real persona. Although Gaffney (2001) argues that any mediated persona that is presented to the voters is "virtual" because it is the result of the negotiations between what politicians want to project and media want to report, maybe a more troubling aspect of the image projection is that it can provide voters with completely misleading and deceitful information that they might use as a base for making voting decisions. As Meyer (2002: 69) warns, a politician's "qualities can be expanded or reconstructed, emphasized or downplayed, exaggerated or minimized", so given the opportunities for manipulation and deceit, voters are considered better off focusing on issues of substance, and not on a politician's persona. The persona-centred media reporting in this view is providing voters with trivial and politically irrelevant information, and by giving importance to a politician's persona, motivating voters to consider it relevant and change their evaluative criteria (Garzia, 2011).

The second school of thought within rational choice theory tends to make its evaluations of persona-centred political communication based on the distinction between politically relevant and irrelevant parts of a persona. Miller and Levitin (1976: 45) were among the first ones to call for a differentiation between two sides of a persona. They wrote:

When attributes of social status such as religion or income, past achievements such as military record or government experience, personal styles such as wit and "folksiness", and "deeper" motives such as the need for power are indiscriminately termed "personal attributes", chaos results on the theoretical or conceptual level. ... These problems will doubtless continue until the personal attributes of candidates are no longer lumped into a residual or catchall category containing whatever seems unrelated to issues or to party.

Shabad and Andersen (1979: 26) followed this cue and suggested a differentiation between candidate's attributes with "explicit political content", and

those “with little or no explicit political content”. They argue that it is not “unreasonable to evaluate presidential contenders on the basis of their perceived honesty, competence, experience, or leadership abilities” (ibid., 26), in other words, their political persona. However, if voters’ judgments are made on the base of a candidate’s attractiveness, family background, age or religious affiliation, this can be seen as superficial and irrational. Comparison of several voter studies that relied on such or similarly defined dichotomies shows that voters’ inclination to judge politicians’ persona based on personality traits such as competence, integrity and reliability is usually seen as rational and in line with civic norms, while judgments based on charisma, warmth or other, simply named, personal attributes, are proclaimed irrational (Funk, 1996; Miller et al., 1986; Ohr & Oscarsson, 2003; Shabad & Andersen, 1979).

Similar trends can be observed in the evaluations of *persona-centred media reporting*. Researchers who looked into how politicians’ personae were presented in the media tend to differentiate between two dimensions of a persona. Although they usually label these dimensions in distinct ways⁶, there is a tendency to consider attributes related to a politician’s political sphere as forming part of one dimension of a persona, and those related to a politician’s private sphere as the other dimension of a persona. The reporting of a politician’s private persona is what seems to be alarming critics the most. They argue that media is trivializing public discourse by reporting politicians’ private matters, which is distracting the public from relevant political issues. In some countries, such as the UK and the US, media often reveal scandalous private information about politicians (Stanyer, 2013; Thompson, 2000), which can be seen as a violation of their right to privacy and lead to the shrinking of what is considered to be one’s private sphere (Langer, 2011). Furthermore, this kind of media reporting can lead to growing public hostility towards the media in cases when the public sympathizes with politicians whose privacy has been violated, or it can lead to an increasing cynicism and distrust on the part of a public which is disenchanted with the behaviour of its representatives. The intrusive and aggressive media focus on politicians’ private matters can also affect the elite recruitment and the quality of representation (Spitzer, 2000). Some capable individuals might not be willing to take up political positions because of the fear that they will have to sacrifice their privacy for it (Helms, 2008; Sabato, 1991). Also, those individuals who perform well in the political sphere, but are not comfortable and skilled in revealing their

⁶ For example, Wilke and Reinemann (2001) differentiate between candidate's attributes with or without an obvious political dimension, Grbeša (2008) writes about political and private profiles, Maier & Adam (2010) use the terms political and non-political traits, Langer (2011) distinguishes between leadership and personal qualities etc.

private one, might not be seen as fit to govern in the private persona-centred media environment (Langer, 2011; van Zoonen & Holtz-Bacha, 2000).

The advocates of the third rational choice theory's school of thought argue that the effects of the persona-centred political communication should be viewed in a more positive light. In other words, media, political actors and voters can all be seen as behaving rationally when focusing on a politician's persona, and in that way actually increase the quality of democracy.

In the first place, authors such as Page (1978), Popkin (1991), Pakulski and Higley (2008) and Garzia (2011) suggest that voting on the basis of any dimension of a candidate's persona can be seen as rational. The argument here is that since the voters are better skilled in judging candidate's persona than his/her policies, and given the complexity and uncertainty of the modern environment, it is quite rational that voters evaluate a candidate's persona using it as a shortcut to estimating candidate's policy preferences and abilities. Popkin (1991: 65) sums it by saying that voters "estimate public morality and character from private morality and character, assuming in the absence of better information that candidates treat their constituents like they treat their own spouses and children".

Following this logic, it may also be possible to look at *persona-centred media reporting* as a positive thing. By providing citizens with information about a candidate's both political and private persona they enable voters to gather information which they consider relevant and helpful in the evaluation of a candidate and making of electoral decisions. Also, by revealing their hypocrisy (e.g. inconsistencies between political stands and private behaviour) they are helping voters to "unpack" politicians' images and reduce the possibility of manipulation and deceit. In that way, persona-centred media reporting can be seen as performing their role as watchdogs in a democracy. In general, the more important politicians' personae are for democratic processes and voters behaviour, the more sense it might make that media focus on their personae too.

There is also a growing number of scholars in political communication who argue that *politicians' persona-centred communication*, especially the focus on private persona, has serious potential to bring citizens back to the political arena by increasing their political participation and making them feel better represented. In the first place, citizens in Western democracies are seen as wanting their representatives not only to be extraordinary, but also ordinary, similar to them (Coleman, 2006; Finlayson, 2002; Langer, 2011; Scammell & Langer, 2006). Humanizing their image by presenting their private personae is seen as one of the most functional techniques of achieving this (Grbeša, 2008; Holtz-Bacha, 2004;

Langer, 2011). Therefore, politicians' private persona-centred communication can be interpreted as a fulfilment of their voters' desires and perhaps lead to voters feeling better represented. Furthermore, by communicating their private information politicians can reach different target audiences and present themselves even to those less or not interested in politics (Kuhn, 2004). Given that such communication usually takes place in a more entertainment rather than politics-based media formats, politicians can by participating in, for example, talk shows, and by revealing some of their private sphere, transmit their message to those politically uninterested and perhaps motivate them to politically participate. At the heart of those who see these behaviours as rational is the notion that emotions and rationality are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary. For example, Marcus (2002: 7) argues that "emotions enable rationality" because emotions motivate citizens to gather information, analyze it, to participate in political processes etc. (see also Marcus et al., 2000). From that point of view, politicians are able to form emotional bonds with voters by communicating their private persona which creates a feeling of intimacy between them (Keeter, 1987; Meyrowitz, 1985). Consequently, these emotional bonds can make citizens feel better represented and motivated to participate in politics, what is seen as a development which increases the quality of democracy (Mazzoleni, 2000). Similarly, Corner and Pels (2003) suggest that there is more to politics than rationality, and argue that the value of aesthetics and political style in political representation should not be overlooked. They claim that the politics was re-styled in the past few decades, since both the media and political actors started focusing more on politicians' style, appearance, language, qualities etc. Moreover, they suggest that this should not be looked at as a negative development since "aesthetic stylisation is inherent and inevitable feature of mass politics" and these aesthetic politics "may generate democratic effects, by expanding the platforms for engagement and citizenship, and by offering forms of popular appeal and emotional identification" (ibid., 9-10).

In summary, although the fears of the critics that the focus on politicians' personae might trivialize public discourse, lower the quality of political information, affect the recruitment of political elite and distract voters from "real" political issues, seem reasonable, the possible advantages of persona-centred communication can not be disregarded. This kind of information has the potential to make politics more accessible for citizens and bring them back to political arena. Therefore, instead of looking at this phenomenon as "dumbing down" of politics, it can be understood as democratizing politics by making it more understandable and attractive to wider public (Curran, 2002).

2.2.2. Post-communism: Kompromat wars

While the biggest fear of critics of persona-centred political communication in the West is that it trivializes political discourse and leads to irrational voter behaviour, in the context of post-communist countries the question is not so much whether revealing persona-related information trivializes communication, but rather whether the information related to a politician's persona is manufactured or not. Also, whether it is used solely as a weapon in a political struggle, or also aimed at informing the public of their representatives' actions, values, qualities etc. In spite of this difference in emphasis, the possible effects that persona-centred communication might have on the rationality of political communication actors in a post-communist context is again the primary concern of its critics. This is, however, not to say that the post-communist persona-centred communication can not be seen as a rational choice of the political communication actors that practice it.

The *politicians' persona-centred communication* can be seen as rational for several reasons. Firstly, in the early post-communist period newly created parties were weak, lacking clear issue stands and therefore hard to differentiate based on the policies they propose, issues they promote or interests they represent (Bielasiak, 2002; Lewis, 2000; Tomšič & Prijon, 2010). Therefore, it seems rational that in this situation parties relied on their leaders' personae as an element that differentiates them from other parties (King, 2002). Secondly, it was difficult for most people living in post-communist countries to quickly grasp all the complexities of the processes that were happening around them, such as the development of democracy and democratic institutions, free market, civil society etc. Putting the focus on leaders' personae instead of the complex, and to a part of the public, incomprehensible issues, seems a rational way of making politics more accessible to citizens. Thirdly, communicating politics through the persona of the leader "resonated with cultural predispositions" of post-communist people who were socialized in a system which put significant emphasis on the persona of its leader (Colton, 2002: 187). In this way too, it can be argued that politics was presented to the people in a way they were accustomed to understanding it, and hence, better enabled them to grasp the developments in the new political environment. Fourthly, in a time when post-communist countries were being formed, the world was already characterized by high levels of complexity and uncertainty, so it seems reasonable that more focus was put on the leader and his/her persona due to the importance of leaders in national and international politics. Finally, politicians' persona-centred communication in post-communist societies is seen as a technique for creating party

identification (Colton, 2002; Grbeša, 2008; King, 2002). In other words, instead of leaders' evaluations being influenced by party identification, it is argued that evaluations of a leader's persona "help give rise to party identifications: stable, enduring attachments to particular political parties" (King, 2002: 39). Given that higher levels of party identification are usually associated with stable, institutionalized party systems (Mainwaring, 1999), this development can be seen as having potential to increase the quality of democracy in new democracies.

However rational and whatever potentially positive effects politicians' persona-centred communication might represent, the negative effects should not be overlooked. Focus on leaders' personae might have been beneficial in the early post-communist period, but it might have also inhibited the development of a programmatic party system in which parties compete on their programs and policy initiatives (Kitschelt, 1995). This can be seen as hurtful for democratic consolidation given that programmatic parties are usually considered more in line with democratic values than those revolving around leaders (Kitschelt, 1995; Kreuzer & Pettai, 2004). In addition, the danger posed by "packaged" politics (Franklin, 2004) and the manufactured personae of a leader (Gaffney, 2001; Kuhn, 2004; Langer, 2011) is perhaps even more pronounced in post-communist than Western democracies. Voters untrained in judging policies and evaluating issues might rely more on leaders' personae in making political judgments, so the quality of information about leaders' personae seems of great importance. And the quality of this information is often questionable. On the one hand, it is suggested that post-communist political elite still exercises considerable influence on the media (Gross, 2003; Mihelj et al., 2009; O'Neil, 1997; Örnebring, 2012), so it should be easier than in Western democracies for them to manipulate the information and present via media a manufactured personae. On the other hand, to the extent that post-communist politics revolves around politicians' personae, political struggle is conducted around the persona. In other words, instead of fighting each others policies and ideas, politicians often engage in personal fights and attack each others persona (Gross, 2003; Ledeneva, 2006), while political issues stand neglected. Often revelations of compromising material (kompromat) about politicians can increase the distrust of citizens in politicians and political institutions and lead to a cynical view of politics. Given the already low levels of party identification, electoral turnout and distrust in political institutions, "kompromat wars" in which political struggles are led by revealing compromising information about political opponents (Ledeneva, 2006) can further alienate people from politics and negatively affect the democratic consolidation.

With regard to the *persona-centred media reporting and voters' behaviour*, it might also be seen as rational that media and voters focus on politicians' personae if the politics is centred on them. If politicians' personae are seen as the most important electoral assets, and in the absence of policy and issue discussions, it seems reasonable that the media provides voters with information based on which they might be able to make electoral decisions. However, the quality of this information is questionable. In the first place, the information about politicians' personae can be largely seen as false or exaggerated in post-communist media. On the one side, those that are able to influence media can use it to promote their manufactured images. On the other side, compromising material that is published is mostly considered manufactured too. The truthfulness of the information is rarely of relevance in publishing kompromat, so media can not be seen, as in the West, as revealing a politician's true face when publishing negative information (Örnebring, 2012). Furthermore, simply because politicians are not discussing important political issues does not mean that media shouldn't either. Constant simplification of political issues by their presentation through the persona of a politician does not help the development of political debates in post-communist societies. In other words, although at a first glance it might seem reasonable that political communication revolves around politicians' personae, in the long run this kind of focus might be detrimental to democratic consolidation because voters are not being given the option to discuss political issues. They are presented with false information about politicians' personae and not being given enough information about political issues, so their electoral decisions can be seen as being uninformed. In this way voters are locked in a cycle of political ignorance, and the media are not educating them as to how to understand and evaluate political information. They can also be seen as excluded from political processes, because if the majority of political information they receive are related to politicians' personae, that means that real politics is happening behind closed doors and that voters have little or no say in it.

There is also space to consider the effects of a persona-centred political communication through the middle school of rational choice theory, i.e. by making the distinction between private and political persona. However, the implications are very much the same as in the Western context, so repeating them here seems redundant.

In summary, although persona-centred political communication might seem as a rational choice in the early post-communist period, it does not necessarily mean it is a positive development. The persona-centred communication was (and perhaps is) in some post-communist societies used as a tool to simplify political

issues, attack and discredit political opponents, and distract the public from political, economic and societal problems. Where it is used to engage citizens with politics and help them understand complex issues, it can be seen as having positive effects. Unfortunately, most of the evidence suggests that public discourse is dominated by manufactured information that aims to “trick” the voters and secure political self-preservation.

2.2.3. Communism: Manufactured extraordinariness

The origins of the practice of communicating manufactured persona information can partly be traced back to the communist era. However, I argue that this continuous presentation of the leaders’ manufactured personae to the public had limited potential to make voters’ choices in communism irrational.

Given that all elections in European communist countries were majoritarian, and that all candidates were representing the same party, it might be logical to assume that communist voters were casting their ballots based on their evaluations of candidates’ personae as it was one of the rare elements of differentiation. In a given situation, it might be the only rational thing to do. However, I argue that the possible effects of this persona-centred voting can be considered insignificant because voters actually rarely practiced this kind of voting. In the first place, voters rarely had the opportunity to choose between multiple candidates, since only in Hungary and Poland was it mandatory to have multiple candidates competing for the same post in elections (Furtak, 1986). Hence, there was usually no need to evaluate anything in order to reach an electoral decision since there was only one candidate running whom voters needed to confirm, rather than elect. In addition, in some countries voters didn’t even elect directly their representatives in parliaments, but rather they elected delegates who then appointed representatives (*ibid.*). In other words, voters were not evaluating candidates’ personae. Finally, leaders, be that the party’s general secretary or the formal head of state, were in general appointed by some political body, and not elected by voters (*ibid.*). So, again, voters were not evaluating leaders personae. However, this is not to say that they had no opportunities to learn about and evaluate politicians’ personae. The literature related to communist leader’s cults suggests quite the opposite.

It is argued that communist leaders were presented to their people as an embodiment of society’s values, beliefs, history (Apor et al., 2004). This has several possible implications for the quality of information in public discourse and the socialization patterns of communist, and also post-communist, political communication actors. In the first place, the leader’s persona, as it was presented to

the public, was to a large extent manufactured. Leader's qualities were created so they would be in line with society's values and beliefs, and personal stories were invented to present a leader's biography as a mirror image of a country's history (Apor, 2004; S. Davies, 2004; Sretenovic & Puto, 2004; von Klimo, 2004). Beside the fact that the public may have been deceived by the false image of its leader, there are other implications for the exaggeration of a leader's persona. In the first place, leader was presented as a unique person with extraordinary qualities. This might have created very high expectations of leadership which were hard to achieve in a post-communist context where the leader could not use the media as in communism to uncritically promote a desired image. Post-communist citizens that were socialized with the notion of extraordinary leaders might have easily been disappointed with the not so extraordinary attributes of post-communist leaders. This might have lessened their support for the development of democracy and increased their backing of individuals whose leadership was more similar to those of communist leaders (Luthans et al., 1998).

Secondly, since the main aim of mediating a leader's persona seemed to be the simplification of issues for an uneducated public and providing them with a role-model (S. Davies, 2004), continuous focus on a persona can be interpreted as making politics more accessible for citizens, but also as a way of preventing citizens from developing a deeper understanding of political issues. With continuous simplifications in this manner people might not have been motivated to understand complex issues in a more sophisticated way, arguably because they were more easily controlled and manipulated if politically ignorant.

Thirdly, unlike in Western democracies where leaders' attempts to humanize their image by communicating private information might be seen as reactions to their citizens desire for more "ordinariness" in their leaders, in communist countries there seems to have been a more "top-down" approach to creating culturally valued qualities. It is suggested that the political elite decided what qualities and behaviours should be valued and presented them via their leader as a role model, while the public was expected to imitate them (Apor et al., 2004; Butler, 2000; Cavalli, 1998). This is yet another example of how communist societies were managed by an elite, and the public was provided with little opportunity to influence societal and political processes.

Finally, some authors, such as Apor (2004) and Davies (2004), argue that the leader's private persona was almost completely politicized in media reporting. In other words, there was information about a communist leader's private life and qualities in public discourse, but it was usually presented in a political context. This

might have created the perception that everything about the leader was political, his family relations, holidays, life-style, upbringing etc. It could also have led to a routinisation of politicization of private persona, and motivated journalists that even in post-communist era present politicians' private personae in a political context. The consequence of this might be the already discussed shrinking of one's private sphere and frequent violations of the right to privacy in post-communism.

In addition, the leader's "real" private persona was usually kept hidden, even in situations when leader's private matters made him incapable of governing. For example, some of the Soviet Union leaders' physical and mental incapacities were not made public (McCauley & Carter, 1986), as well as the Yugoslav leader Tito's serious health problems. In other words, while the public was fed with information about a leader's fictive attributes, a leader's "real" persona was hidden from the eyes of the public even when it was crucial that the public knows about it.

All these effects should be ascribed not only to politicians' persona-centred communications, but also to media reporting, since it is argued that these two political communication actors in communist countries communicated basically the same messages (O'Neil, 1997). Media was seen as an extended arm of the political elite and not able to function autonomously, and hence, it could be speculated that it was not able to create independent effects.

In summary, it is argued that a communist leader's persona, as it was communicated to the public, was to a large extent manufactured and politicized. This means that there were constant attempts to manipulate and deceive the communist public, although it is difficult to estimate to what extent the public actually believed the information provided by media and political actors. For example, Coban (2013: vii) argues that people living in European communist countries were "able to identify and avoid the propaganda oriented message of media output" and hence, that the "negotiated and oppositional decoding was used very widely". Although this assumption is intriguing and perhaps is a more convincing illustration of communist audiences to advocates of active audiences, there is limited evidence that would support this claim. On the other hand, the evidence from communist era is usually considered unreliable because it is believed that research participants were not comfortable with expressing opinions that were not in line with party policies (Welsh, 1980). Hence, the impact of persona-centred communication in communist countries remains inconclusive and based on speculation. However, among the most likely effects of a persona-centred political communication in communist societies were manipulations of public, simplification of political issues, suppression of political

debate, creating unrealistic expectations of leadership and imposition of cultural values.

2.3. Conclusion

This chapter has had several aims. Firstly, it aimed to demonstrate that personalisation of political communication may have serious consequences for democratic and societal processes and that it is, therefore, a subject worth studying. It has been shown that the implications of personalized political communication include a wide range of both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, personalized political communication might make governance more effective and stable, individuals more accountable to their voters, politics more accessible to wider public, provide strong leadership in turbulent transition times, help legitimate political systems etc. On the negative side, personalisation of political communication can have consequences such as the unbalanced distribution of power, under-development of political institutions and party systems, trivialization of public discourse, manipulation of public, and weakening of political parties.

Secondly, this chapter aimed to provide additional evidence in favour of the differentiation between dimensions of personalisation of political communication. By separating the assumed consequences of person-centred and persona-centred political communication it was suggested that different dimensions of personalized political communication might have quite different effects. For example, person-centred political communication might contribute to the under-development of strong institutions, but also help the development of democracy by providing voters with clear choices in weak party systems. The persona-centred political communication might be used as a tool to deceive and manipulate the public, or it can help simplify complex political matters for wider public and in that way make politics more accessible. Therefore, instead of condemning personalisation of political communication in general for all the negative effects it can produce, a more nuanced approach such as this one can help pinpoint specific developments that directly or indirectly contributed to certain effects and in that way enhance our understanding of both the cause and the effect.

The third aim of this chapter was to demonstrate that all effects of personalized political communication are not applicable to every context, but rather that most of the implications are context-specific. In the case of Western, communist and post-communist countries, I argued that different dimensions of personalisation of political communication can have quite different effects. For example, person-

centred political communication in Western democracies can weaken political parties; in post-communist countries it can inhibit the development of an institutionalized party system, while in communist system it can lead to the rise of importance of informal practices such as corruption and patronage over formal ones. The consequence of a persona-centred political communication in Western context can be the revelation of a politician's hypocrisy, while in post-communist context it is more likely that it will inhibit the development of a programmatic party system, and in communist system that it will be used to deceit and manipulate the public. This is just to name but a few examples.

Finally, this chapter has shown that personalisation of political communication should not be seen, per se, as either a positive or negative phenomenon. To borrow from the sociological vocabulary, the effects of personalisation of political communication can perhaps best be seen as dependent on the ways in which the agents use the structures within which they operate. It may be argued that because of the strong institutions and checks and balances in established Western democracies, their agents have fewer opportunities, and perhaps less desire, to abuse the structures and consequently contribute to negative effects. In communist systems, structures are created by the agents so they can maximally use them to their own advantage. Therefore, structures are not so much limiting arbitrary behaviour as enabling it in communist contexts. Consequently, this can perhaps be looked at as a more fertile environment for personalisation producing or contributing to more negative effects. The case of post-communist countries is probably most complex. Although the structures, which are often modeled upon Western counterparts, provide certain limitations for actors' behaviour, they are not as strong as in the West in restricting actors' arbitrary behaviour. Weak institutions, under-institutionalized party systems, and unclear distribution of power better enable those individuals that are keen to exploit personalisation of political communication in a negative way, to do so. However, post-communist countries in theory have the instruments to empower the structures and limit the actions of its agents, so negative consequences that personalisation of political communication might contribute to in these societies can perhaps be reversed.

After examining the possible effects of personalisation of political communication in different contexts in this chapter, the next two chapters will focus on factors which have the potential to cause or contribute to the personalisation of political communication. More specifically, the next chapter will discuss politically-related factors that may increase personalisation of political communication, while

the fourth chapter will examine the media-related factors that might do the same. Starting from the premise that Western, communist and post-communist contexts are suitable for the development of personalized political communication, the aim of the next two chapters is to establish which elements of these systems make them favourable for the development of this phenomenon. The examination of these elements/factors will shed light on why these three contexts might be seen as conducive for experiencing personalized political communication, and reveal what is known and unknown about how and why this phenomenon might have developed. Consequently, these discussions will help in the formation of research questions and hypotheses that will be tested in this thesis.

3. Politics always come first: Politically-driven approaches to personalisation

There are two main theories that might explain how and why the personalisation of mediated political communication develops. One of them suggests that modern trends in political communication, one of which is personalisation, developed in the United States, and from there they have been disseminated around the world. This theory is called “Americanization”, and it postulates that the US is the origin of modern trends in political communication, while other countries in which the political communication is also personalized, have imported this trend from the US (Swanson & Mancini, 1996). In relation to personalized political communication, it is argued that American style of campaigning, in which the political actors put themselves and their personae at the forefront of election campaigns, have been imitated around the world (Baines et al., 2001; de la Torre & Conaghan, 2009; Mergel, 2009; Nord, 2006; Porto & Hallin, 2009). In addition, it is suggested that the American media initiated the trend of personalisation in media reporting, and this reporting style was later transferred to other countries which adopted it (Schulz & Zeh, 2005; Swanson & Mancini, 1996; Uğur, 2012).

“Americanization” theory has been heavily criticized, primarily because the structural changes which are thought as influencing the development of modern trends in political communication, such as the changes in society, party systems and media systems, have not been observed only in the US, but around the world (Nord, 2006). Hence, the other main theory which aims to explain how and why modern trends in political communication develop is “modernization” theory which suggests that the similar changes in countries around the world result in the resemblance of their political communication practices, personalisation being one of them (Asp & Esaiasson, 1996; Swanson & Mancini, 1996). Plasser (2002: 17) sums the modernization process nicely by saying that “structural changes on the macro-level (media, technologies, social structures) lead to an adaptive behaviour on the micro-level (parties, candidates and journalists), resulting in gradual modifications of traditional styles and strategies of political communication”. Hence, according to this theory, political and media actors did not start putting the focus on politicians and their personae by imitating the practices from the US, but rather because they reacted to changes occurring in their environment.

There are also more nuanced approaches that take into account both the modernization and Americanization theory, such as the “hybridization” of political communication, or “shopping model” (ibid.). They suggest that the media and political actors combine country-specific communication practices with those that they consider efficient from other contexts, not necessarily the US. Hence, these approaches would consider both internal and external conditions relevant for the development of personalisation of mediated political communication.

American, or foreign influences in general, do not seem likely to have been able to contribute to personalisation in European communist countries given that these societies usually tried to prevent the penetration of Western influences which they considered to be destructive (Coban, 2013). On the other hand, Western influence, especially from the US, is said to play a pivotal role in the development of political communication practices in European post-communist democracies (Doolan, 2008; Slavko Splichal, 2001; Voltmer & Schmitt-Beck, 2002). However, there is little empirical evidence to back up these claims. Hence, before jumping to conclusions about the relevance or irrelevance of the “Americanization” theory in communist and post-communist context, the context-specific factors that can be identified as contributing to personalisation in these societies need to be examined and compared to those in established Western democracies. Only in this way will it be possible to determine the similarities and differences in the potential ways in which personalisation developed in these three contexts, and based on this, speculate about the most appropriate theories to explain this development.

Based on the context-specific factors that are speculated to be able to influence personalisation, two main approaches to the development of personalisation can be identified in the existing scholarship: media- and politically-driven approach to personalisation. As Ryfe (2001) observed, political communication scholars most frequently explain changes in the field by reference to developments related to media. They start from the idea of a “usable past”, the notion that politics and public discourse worsened in the past few decades due to the changes in media. However, there is an emerging current which refutes the idea of media as the main cause of personalisation. These scholars argue that it was the change in politically-related factors that led to the rise of the personalisation of political communication. As Wolfsfeld (2004: 31) argues, based on his observation of the interplay between the media and political actors, “it is not a chicken and an egg problem, politics almost always comes first”. He asserts that “the influence of the news media is best seen in terms of a cycle in which changes in the political environment lead to changes in media performance that often lead to further

changes in the political environment” (ibid., 31). In short, advocates of the politics-focused theories claim that politically-related factors are those that have the largest potential to cause or contribute to an increase in the personalisation of political communication.

The aim of this chapter is to unpack the politically-driven approach, and explore alternative theories to the mainstream ones by taking into account the specific political, cultural, social and historical circumstances of communist and post-communist societies. This theoretical exploration of existing scholarship will inform this thesis on several levels. Firstly, on a theoretical level, this chapter will offer additional theories of, and explanations for, the personalisation phenomenon. Specifically, this chapter will focus on the politically-related elements of communist and post-communist contexts with an aim to establish which, if any, political factors made these contexts conducive to the development of personalized political communication. Secondly, the identification of possible politically-driven causes of personalisation in both democracies and (post) communist societies will inform the empirical research on this topic. One of the aims of this thesis is to try to explain personalisation, or in other words, to identify the sets of factors which contribute to it. This chapter will identify possible political factors that will be tested in the empirical analysis in chapter 7. And finally, information presented in this chapter, as well as the one related to the media-driven approach that will be discussed in the next chapter, will be crucial for the interpretation of cross-temporal, as well as cross-national, empirical analysis. The aim of these analyses is to examine the similarities and differences between the ways in which personalized political communication developed in established Western democracies, communist and post-communist societies, and this chapter will provide information which will enable the researcher to understand and contextualize the findings.

Given that this thesis looks at personalized political communication as a multi-faceted phenomenon, the additional value of this discussion is in making distinctions between the political influences on different dimensions of personalized political communication. Since personalisation has only in the past decade been seen as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, most of its causes and effects have been ascribed to personalisation in general. One of the aims of this chapter is to connect specific, politically-related factors with person- and/or persona-centred political communication in order to gain a better and more detailed understanding of how these different dimensions of this phenomenon might have developed both in established Western democracies and in communist and post-communist contexts.

Specific emphasis is put on factors such as the characteristics of voters and voters' behaviour, institutional settings, legal frameworks, characteristics of political actors and political actors' behaviour. These are the most frequently mentioned politically-related factors in existing scholarship.

3.1. Political characteristics of voters and voters' behaviour

The first group of politically-related factors that will be discussed in this chapter are the political characteristics of voters. In established Western democracies, societies have undergone a process of modernization in the second half of the 20th century, and this process is said to have changed some characteristics of voters and consequently their behaviour. The most important attribute of modernization in this sense is the fragmentation of identities and life spaces which resulted in the weakening of social and political cleavages, and consequently the ties between citizens and the groups with which they identified. Fragmentation of identities meant that individuals were no longer strongly identified with traditional social systems, such as the Church or class, but rather they developed multiple identities. This eventually led to a weakening of ties with their communities and decline in general of group-based politics (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000; Dalton, 2002; Swanson & Mancini, 1996).

The second distinguishing feature of modernization at the micro-level is the individualization of society based on increased levels of education, greater geographical and social mobility, and enhanced access to information which stems from the rise of commercial and non-partisan media (Thomassen, 2005). Dalton (2002: 201) argues that the increased availability of political information and education "led to a process of cognitive mobilization, whereby citizens feel better able to make the decisions affecting their lives without habitual reliance on external cues". Dalton and Wattenberg (2000: 11) further advance this hypothesis by claiming that the rise of these new, autonomous and independent individuals changed the role of citizenry in Western democracies making them "self-sufficient in politics" which means they are less likely to "defer to party elites or to support a party simply out of habit". On the contrary, these politically "self-sufficient" citizens, not bound by social and political cleavages and without strong connections with groups, such as parties, religion or class communities, are more likely to question the actions of political elites and make their electoral decisions based on some short term factors, one of which might be the evaluation of candidates running for office. Voting based on the preference for a candidate or even his/her persona would lead

to an increase in the person and perhaps persona-centred voting behaviour. This phenomenon is called the “personal vote” (Cain et al., 1984; Carey & Shugart, 1995), “candidate-centred politics” (Wattenberg, 1991), “leadership effect” (Bean & Mughan, 1989) etc.

Post-materialism is another feature of the process of modernization manifested in the transformation of citizens’ values and interests. Thomassen (2005) writes that materialist values, such as security and economic wellbeing were characteristic of generations socialized during the great economic depression of the 1930s and Second World War. Later generations, who were raised in a time of economic development and the welfare state, constructed their values around post-materialist issues, such as environment protection, life-style choices, consumer rights, self-expression, and quality of life. Politicization of these post-materialist values and interests broadened the boundaries of politics (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000) which opened the space for other actors to enter the political scene, namely specialized interest groups. As Swanson and Mancini (1996: 8) frame it, social complexity was increased by the creation of new structures, “specialized to satisfy increasing demands of particular sectors of society and groups of citizens”. In other words, there is a growing number of interest groups and citizens’ movements and organizations, that gather individuals with common values and interests, which weakened the role of political parties in the articulation of citizens’ interests. Specialized groups did not lose their influence even when mass political parties transformed into “catch-all” parties with an aim to represent diverse interests and attract voters with different values and identities. Citizens can advance their various interests by participating in a wide range of interest groups and benefit from all of them through their specialized knowledge and expertise. Some of these groups even have strong connections with the governing bodies and are, therefore, able to advance their agenda in the policy-making process. In addition, given that some party systems have not yet internalized many post-materialist values, specialized interest groups sometimes represent the only institution citizens can turn to in this matter. Because post-materialist values and the issues associated with them to some party systems “seem antithetical to the disciplined partisan politics that once were common in many Western democracies” (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000: 11), citizens turn to specialized groups which can advance these values and interests.

The rise of politically self-sufficient voters who decreasingly find parties representing their interests and values can be seen as having two major influences on the personalisation of political communication. Firstly, the changes are seen to contribute to the rise of personalisation in voters’ behaviour. And secondly, these

changes indirectly, and the personalized voters' behaviour directly, are seen as having the potential to contribute to the increase in the personalisation in political actors' communication.

In the first place, a direct impact of this change in voters' characteristics might be expected in the area of voters' behaviour. This new electorate might be more inclined to vote based on its evaluation of the candidate and his/her persona, and less based on its social background or party identification. Several studies have found this to be happening in some established Western democracies (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000; Ohr & Oscarsson, 2003; Wattenberg, 1991). For example, Wattenberg (1991) argues in favor of the growing importance of candidates' images on the vote. He found that the presidential elections in the US are less and less decided by voters' identification with the presidential candidate's party, while the significance of the presidential candidate's image becomes more central in making an electoral choice. Bean and Mughan (1989) showed that candidates are increasingly important, not only in presidential systems where voters cast their vote directly for a candidate, but also in parliamentary systems where voters officially choose between parties. Their analysis of British and Australian general elections of the 1980s showed that the effect of party leaders on the vote was around 5%. In spite of the fact that most studies of electoral behaviour in Western democracies indicate that the importance of long term factors (i.e. party identification, class, age etc.) on the electoral choices is decreasing, the results are not so straightforward in regard to the increasing relevance of short term factors, candidate-based or personalized voting being part of it. Based on the comparative study of voting behaviour in West European democracies, Thomassen (2005: 263) concludes that no evidence is found "in support of the hypothesis that the effects of these [short-term] factors on party choice would increase over time".

In the second place, changes in society and voters' characteristics, as well as the personalisation in voters' behaviour, might have contributed to the personalisation in political actors' communication. In societies which are not divided across traditional cleavages, in which there is a "fair amount of agreement in regard to fundamental values and directions of future development" (Šiber, 2007: 65; see also Kuhn, 2004), party leaders might rise as "brand differentiators" or in other words parties "unique selling points" (Langer, 2011: 47). Since parties can not mobilize voters by their unique policies alone, they are arguably turning to their leaders to act as the differentiators in the party system and form bonds with voters. Leaders are most commonly differentiated by their performance in party and/or political office, their personalities, personal qualities and skills, but sometimes even

based on the choices they make in their private sphere. Similarly, the increase in personalized voting might also contribute to the personalisation in political actors' communication. Given the decrease in the party identification, political parties need new ways of connecting with voters, and it is suggested that many political parties find it easiest to try to re-connect with voters through their leaders who are expected to form emotional connections with the electorate (Garzia, 2011; Mazzoleni, 2000). Therefore, in Western democracies characterized by these developments political actors' communication may be person and persona-centred.

3.1.1. (Post)Communism: Authoritarianism and external guidance

Changes in society and voters' characteristics connected with the Western democracies, such as the weakening of cleavages, the rise of politically self-sufficient citizen or the increased importance of post-materialist values, were not observed in the communist and post-communist societies. However, this is not to say that the characteristics of these societies and its voters' did not have the potential to contribute to the increase in personalized political communication. On the contrary, there are certain long-lasting characteristics of the society and voters' in these countries which have been transferred from communist to post-communist societies (Evans, 2006; Kreuzer & Pettai, 2004; Šiber, 2007) and might be discussed in the context of increasing personalisation of political communication, or at least some of its dimensions. These characteristics were considered to be a precondition for the acceptance of the centrality of the leader in communism, two of them being most frequently emphasized in the literature. The first one is the prominence of authoritarian personalities, and the second is related to citizens' political dependence upon external cues due to the lack of the necessary education.

Authoritarianism is usually considered to be characterized by a preference for strong leaders and uncritical submission to a superior, but at the same time exercise of power over one's subordinate (Šiber, 2007). It is suggested that it had a fertile ground for developing in the European communist societies since they were mostly formed in the traditional, rural areas where there was no or little tradition of civil society. Šiber (2007: 148) argues, drawing on the findings from a comparative study of personal attitudes in the communist and Western societies, that people who were living in communist societies expressed higher levels of authoritarianism in their uncritical acceptance of authority. This authority was most commonly expected to come in the form of a strong leader, since authoritarianism was manifested in the "deep-rooted longing for a strong leader" (Eatwell, 2006: 149, see also Plamper, 2004) and in some cases, a long authoritarian tradition which generated habits of

worshipping the leader (S. Davies, 2004). In addition, strong patriarchal elements, visible in the high respect given to elders, further contributed to the easier acceptance of leaders whose images were often built on the premise that they are the “fathers of the nations” (Rees, 2004). These elements of the pre-communist societies were further reinforced in the communist regime with the practices which positioned the leader as the highest authority.

Although many scholars of leaders’ cults emphasize the charismatic authority on which some cults were based and the true devotion that people had for these authorities (e.g. Ake, 1966; Cavalli, 1998; Eatwell, 2006; Gentile, 1998), Plamper (2004) argues that there is an alternative explanation for the acceptance of the leader’s cult and participation in its creating. He argues that “the makers and recipients” of the cults were sometimes “not guided by sincere feelings, but by utilitarian considerations” (ibid., 41). They can therefore be considered to be rational actors who adapted their behaviour, possibly only in public, in order to gain material and/or social benefits from participation in the building of the cult. For example, Plamper writes that “writers, artists and composers produced their sycophantic eulogies of Stalin not out of sincere belief, but because they were afraid of the consequences of not doing so, because they wanted to gain an advantage, however small, in everyday life, or simply because everyone around them was doing so” (ibid., 41). This practice shows that some parts of communist societies were not blindly respectful of authority and the “great leader”. However, in a sense of socialization patterns, it points to the fact that people may have been socialized to make use of clientelistic networks and charismatic leadership. They might also have learned practices which they were able to use in the post-communist systems as well.

In short, high degrees of authoritarianism in communist societies might have influenced the public to put the focus on the leader instead of on the political collective. In addition, this preference for strong leaders might have also contributed to the increase in the person-centred political actors’ behaviour because the political actors arguably wanted to communicate information in line with cultural values of their people.

Another characteristic of society and voters which was transferred from the pre-communist system to the communist one, where it was reinforced and subsequently might have influenced voters’ behaviour in the post-communist systems, was the heavy reliance on the political authority in making political decisions. People who lived in areas where communism was established after the Second World War were mostly peasants with little or no formal education, unable to

comprehend complex political matters and, therefore, used to accepting guidance about political matters from sources they considered reliable and legitimate (Eatwell, 2006; Plamper, 2004; Šiber, 2007). The communist leaders were apparently aware of these “limitations” of the part of the society and an important reason for making the leader’s cults was to simplify political ideas in order for the uneducated masses to understand them. For example, Davies (2004: 37) writes that Stalin maintained that his leader cult is “necessary for mobilizing a poorly educated population” and tolerated it “for the sake of the masses who were accustomed to worshipping the tsar”.

The making of the leader cult went beyond positioning the leader as the highest political authority in society. Eatwell (2006: 151) argues that “people have a need to understand complex events, and often find it easiest to come to terms with complexity through the image of a single person who is held to be special, but in some way accountable”. The leader cult was therefore created on the basis that the leader is an “embodiment” of the ideas and values that were considered necessary by the communist regime in order to reduce the complexity of issues and present ideas (Plamper, 2004). This “embodiment” principle on which leader cults were most frequently based is most visible in the leaders’ official biographies in which leaders’ lives and personalities and parties’ histories were so heavily interconnected that they often looked like “personalized representations of nation’s history” (Apor, 2004: 65). Although the communist regime eventually increased the level of education in society, people may have still depended upon the leader’s cues to act politically since they were socialized to do so.

In short, authoritarianism and the need for external control were two major political characteristics of communist, and in some cases post-communist, societies that might have contributed to the rise of personalized political communication. On the one hand, the preference for strong leaders can be seen as contributing to the public’s focus on individual political actors and also to the communist political elite’s decision to focus on the leader instead of a collective in its communication. The need for external guidance might have alongside the increase in the person-centred politicians’ communication and voters’ behaviour, also influenced the person-centred communication. If the public was used to understanding politics through the persona of the leader, the political elite might have been inclined to communicate political information in this way to resonate with people’s preferences.

3.1.2. Post-communism: Similarities based on differences

Alongside these unique characteristics of (post)communist societies and voters that might have contributed to the increase in personalized political communication, there are also new developments in post-communist societies, and consequently voters' behaviour, that might have increased the degree of personalized political communication. Evidence from East and Central European countries suggests that the voters' behaviour of post-communist countries has some resemblance to trends observed in established Western democracies. However, it should be taken into account that the origins of these political communication trends are different in the two systems. Some of the characteristics that post-communist and Western democracies' seem to share in relation to voters' behaviour are electoral volatility, low party identification and weak impact of cleavages on the vote.

For instance, electoral volatility in the post-communist societies is among the highest in the world. Volatility indices are not only higher than those of Western democracies, but also of those countries of the third wave of democratization which have moved earlier than communist ones from authoritarian to democratic regimes (e.g. Latin American countries, Spain, Portugal). Although the differences in volatility between post-communist and Western societies are considerable, the systems share the trend in electoral behaviour characterized by shifting voters' allegiances between elections (Bielasiak, 2002; Lewis, 2000; Rose, 1995).

Moreover, this electoral volatility can partly be explained by the low party identification and general distrust of political parties which is a characteristic of all post-communist societies. Political parties are often the least trusted of all the institutions in the society (Poguntke & Scarrow, 1996; Rose, 1995; Tomšič & Prijon, 2010), just as is the case in West European countries (Grbeša, 2008), but the levels of party identification are usually even lower than in Western democracies (Lewis, 2000).

Finally, the pattern of social cleavages and their impact on electoral choices are remarkably similar in Western and post-communist societies. Although the overall impact of social cleavages on the vote is in general not very great, both groups of societies are politically divided along the lines of religion and class. The only significant difference is in the impact of age on the political preferences of the electorate. As compared to trends in Western democracies, in post-communist societies the older generations socialized in the former regime position themselves on the "left" side of the political spectrum and have nostalgic memories of communist times, while younger generations belong to the political right, often having nationalist tendencies and little or no support for the old regime (Evans, 2006; McAllister & White, 2007).

Although this data indicates that the “patterns of party representation” in post-communist societies are quite similar to those observed in the West, “the trajectory of party development is nevertheless different and, while parties may share characteristics and seem to occupy similar positions within a political system, this may be for very different reasons” (Lewis, 2000: 160). In line with this, quite strong antiparty, reflected in the low levels of trust in the parties, is considered to be a legacy of “prolonged one-party rule” which has “fostered an underlying distrust of all party-like structures” (Poguntke & Scarrow, 1996: 257). In addition, citizens who were made by the former regime to express their party identification and participate in party activities, often just for securing material and social benefit and not because of any strong ties with the party, decided to practice their new right to be politically independent of any party affiliation (Rose, 1995; Šiber, 2007). Bielasiak (2002: 207) similarly writes that the difficulty of forming strong party identification in the new regime is a consequence of “severed party-constituency linkages” which make it harder for parties of the new regimes to “reconstruct the ties that bind citizens to specific political organizations”.

These trends that characterize voters’ behaviour of post-communist societies, namely high electoral volatility, low party identification, distrust of political parties and weak influence of cleavages on the vote, could be seen as setting the ground for personalized voting. Indeed, in a climate of general distrust of parties, low party identification, and especially in the early democratic period, uncertainty as to what each party represents and whether it can deliver the promises it makes, it could be speculated that voters were more inclined to make electoral decisions based on their evaluations of leaders and perhaps even their personas. Voters socialized in communism might have been accustomed to candidate-centred voting given that all the candidates running for public office were from the same party, and they presumably used the familiar technique of reaching a voting decision in the new system as well, at least until the rules of the new game in town, democracy and multi-party system, became more transparent and known.

One of the reasons why political actors might have pursued a persona-centred communication strategy might be, as in Western democracies, the state of social and ideological cleavages in the society, but in post-communist societies these feature in a different way. The inability of parties to differentiate according to social cleavages was not due to a lessening of cleavages, but rather because of the uncertainty about them in the early democratic period. Political actors were not aware of the needs and interests of their citizens, partly because they had little or no connection with their potential voters, and partly because voters themselves were

just trying to define their interests (Lewis, 2000). In this situation, it seems logical to try to use the leaders as “brand differentiators” (Kuhn, 2004; Langer, 2011) and mobilize the voters around a leader, and not issues.

In summary, there seem to be some context-specific characteristics of communist and early post-communist societies that have the potential to increase the personalisation in voters’ behaviour and leaders’ communication. Although high degree of authoritarianism and low educational levels are considered to continue into the post-communist era, if eventually these societies became less authoritarian and the levels of education grew, it might be speculated that the personalisation in leaders’ communication and voters’ behaviour decreased. With regard to the possible influences of the personalisation in voting behaviour on other actors, it is also possible only to speculate since there is no empirical evidence on the topic. It might be expected that the personalized voting would increase both political actors and media’s focus on politicians and their personae, since both of these political communication actors might be inclined to provide the voters with the type of information that they consider relevant when reaching electoral decisions.

3.2. Institutional characteristics

Alongside the changes in the political characteristics of voters and voters’ behaviour, other politically-related factors that may be able to cause or contribute to the increase in the personalisation of political communication are a country’s institutional settings. As Karvonen (2010: 23) nicely sums it up: „A certain set of institutional constraints may enhance collective actions, whereas another institutional set-up may encourage individual actors to go it alone.” Among the most frequently mentioned institutional characteristics in this regard are the type of a political and electoral system, as well as candidate and leader selection methods.

According to existing research, the type of a political system can be seen as connected to increased person-centred political communication. Dalton and Wattenberg (2000) investigated whether there is an increased focus on leaders versus parties in the US, France, the UK, Austria and Canada in media reporting. They analyzed the newspaper campaign coverage from the 1950s to 1990s, comparing the ratio of candidate and party mentions cross-temporally and cross-nationally. This analysis revealed that over time the number of candidates mentions outnumbered those of their parties in all countries, but with significant differences between presidential and parliamentary systems. Specifically, in presidential

systems, such as in the US and France, the ratio of candidate to party mentions was four times higher than in parliamentary systems (the UK, Austria and Canada)⁷.

The same conclusion about the contribution of political system to the degree of person-centred political communication can be drawn based on research on voting behaviour. The Dalton and Wattenberg study also researched the voting behaviour patterns of the two major party voters in presidential and parliamentary democracies. They wanted to examine whether voters have a candidate and/or a party preference and how these preferences influenced their voting decisions. The study showed that in the 1990s two-thirds of voters in the US and France cast their vote on the basis of their candidate preference in a situation of inconsistent candidate and party preference, while only one third did so in the parliamentary democracies (Canada, Germany, Australia). This indicates that voters are more inclined to cast their ballot based on their evaluation of the candidates in systems where an individual is vested with most power. In addition, it can be observed, based on the longitudinal data for Germany and Canada, that voters in parliamentary democracies are over time more inclined to focus on candidates than parties. However, even these increased degrees of person-centred voting in parliamentary democracies “fail to display anything close to the degree of dominance of candidates over parties that clearly exists in presidential systems” (ibid., 54).

With regard to person-centred political actors' behaviour, there is hardly any comparative and/or longitudinal studies that even tackled the question of the extent to which their communication is focused on individuals (Maier & Adam, 2010), let alone what role the type of political system plays in the process. However, as with the other two political communication actors, it might be speculated that in presidential systems the political actors are more inclined to put the focus on themselves, since they are the ones who are vested with power, make decisions and are responsible for them.

Since person-centred political communication research has only recently begun, national studies are rare, with hardly any cross-national (Maier & Adam, 2010). One of these rare studies is Stanyer's analysis of the extent to which politicians' private lives are media visible in seven European democracies and the reasons why there are variations in their mediated visibility (2013). He tested the influence of the type of political system as a causal condition in the fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis, and found that the presidential political system can

⁷ In the mid-1990s the ratio for the US and France was 5,6 while for the UK and Austria was 1,3 and for Canada 1,6. (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000: 52)

be seen as contributing, among other factors, to an increase in the degree to which leaders' private lives are mediated, but not in all cases. Similarly, this study found that the parliamentary political system is connected with lower degrees of this phenomenon, but also not in all cases. Hence, the type of political system can be seen as having the potential to contribute to the persona-centred media reporting, and it might be speculated on other political communication actors as well. It can perhaps be expected that in systems centred on individuals all political communication actors will tend to put more focus not only on candidates but also on their personas, personal qualities and life. However, this development should be more likely if there is a fair amount of agreement in the society about the course of its development and its main issues (Kuhn, 2004; Langer, 2011; Šiber, 2007), and not dependent solely on the type of political system.

Another important institutional characteristic that may have an influence on the personalisation of political communication is the type of the electoral system, especially its main design – majoritarian, proportional, or mixed. In general, the introduction of proportional electoral systems in which voters are casting ballots for parties, not individuals, is seen as having the potential to decrease the focus on individual political actors. Mixed and especially majoritarian systems are considered to potentially contribute to higher emphasis on individuals because voters choose among candidates, not parties (Mergel, 2009; Swanson & Mancini, 1996). Given that in the majoritarian elections the emphasis is on the individual political actors, it might be speculated that all political communication actors are more focused on the candidates than on political collectives which would result in higher degrees of person-centred political communication.

Finally, it is speculated that the candidate and leader selection methods might contribute to the personalisation of political communication. For example, primary elections represent a candidate selection method in which candidates who will run for office are not chosen by the party leadership but rather by smaller or larger number of party members. It is argued that the introduction of primaries can lead to higher degree of person-centred politicians' behaviour since the candidates campaign for themselves within the same party and therefore put individuals at the focus of both campaign strategies and electors' attention, and possibly even the media's (Swanson & Mancini, 1996). Rahat and Sheafer (2007) showed with the example of Israel that the introduction of primaries triggered other dimensions of personalisation. More specifically, the growth of the electorate that participates in the candidates' selections was the first impetus which led to increased person-centred political communication in the media and in politicians' communication. If

there is a fair amount of consensus among the candidates about the party's policies and course of development, there is a good chance that primaries could lead also to the increase in persona-centred political communication since the differentiation between the candidates would be based on their personal qualities and life.

To summarize, it is suggested that a country's institutional settings which grant more power to an individual at the expense of the collective can contribute to an increase in the personalisation of political communication. Specifically, presidential political systems, majoritarian electoral systems and primaries are seen as those elements that have the potential to make political actors', media and voters, focus more on individual political actors than on collectives, i.e. contribute to the person-centred political communication, and in some cases even to the persona-centred political communication.

3.2.1. Communism: Concentrated power

If institutional characteristics really can contribute to the increase in the personalisation of political communication, then the institutional settings of communist systems might represent an ideal context for this development. Specifically, early European communist systems' constitutions concentrated political power in the hands of an individual. In the first years following the Second World War when most of Central and Eastern European communist systems were created, these countries were without exception ruled by strong leaders who held almost all political power (Furtak, 1986). In the later communist period, starting from late 1950s, there was a shift from vesting one individual with this amount of power to a dual leadership. The political power was in these later stages of communist systems divided between the party leader, usually called the general secretary and the formal head executive, who most frequently held the position of a Prime Minister or a President (Blondel, 1992). Since it is argued that all important decisions were made in the party, and that the role of state institutions was primarily to "put the party's decisions into effect" (Furtak, 1986: 10), it would be logical to assume that the general secretary of the communist party had more power than the other leader, the formal head of state (McCauley & Carter, 1986). However, this move towards dual leadership can be indicative of communist's desire to distribute the power rather than concentrate it, only in countries where the two positions were not allowed to be held by the same person. In the cases of Yugoslavia, Albania and Romania, the head of state was at the same time the party leader so the power was still very concentrated and the political system relied on an individual (Blondel, 1992). Consequently it does not come as a surprise that the leaders of mentioned

countries, Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito, Albania's Enver Hoxha and Romania's Nicolae Ceaușescu, had the strongest and most enduring leadership cults (Leese, 2014).

In addition, one of the reasons why the political leader was so central to the system, although communist systems officially had all three branches of government (executive, legislative and judicial), was that there was no system of check and balances in these countries (Butler, 2000). Furtak (1986: 13) analyzed political systems of communist countries and concluded that "the constitutions do not regulate the relationship between single branches of government" and that "the executive and judicial branches of government are not part of an institutionalised system of separation of powers". What this meant is that the person or body that was in power was not restrained by other political institutions, such as parliaments or judicial bodies in democracies. Furthermore, Luthans et al. (1998: 193) write that the "absence of an established legislative, judicial and regulatory infrastructure, which is not as common in Western societies, made the personal power of leaders in the communist system a substitute for the institutional infrastructure and ideological vacuum".

Hence, if a presidential political system in established Western democracies has the potential to make political communication actors focus on the individual who is vested with the most power, at the expense of political collectives, the ways in which communist political systems were set might contribute even more strongly to person-centred political communication.

Furthermore, given that all communist countries had majoritarian electoral systems (Birch, 2005), it could be expected that the electoral system might also contribute to an increase in the personalisation of political communication. However, as was already mentioned in the previous chapter, voters rarely had the opportunity to choose among candidates in communist elections, and political leaders were mostly appointed, not elected, so the extent to which the type of electoral system can influence personalisation, especially person-centred political communication, remains ambiguous. It might be speculated that these majoritarian elections have socialized the public to understand politics in a personalized way. If their only contact with the political world was voting for an individual at the elections, they might have seen politics as a world of powerful individuals and not collective actions and decisions.

While the type of political and electoral system in communist countries seem to have been favorable to the increase in the personalisation of political communication, the candidate and leader selection methods do not. These

processes were in communist countries centralized and exclusive. The party leader was either elected by a party congress, or appointed by the party elite (Furtak, 1986). The formal head of state, if different from the party leader, was in general appointed by the legislative body or some party organ (ibid.). In some countries the right to nominate candidates for elections had local party organizations and social organizations, but the decision of who will ultimately be a candidate was again left to a centralized and exclusive party organ (Furtak, 1986). Hence, the primary elections do not seem to have been an important institutional factor that might have increased the personalisation of political communication in European communist countries.

3.2.2. Post-communism: Personal competition over team spirit

In the first post-communist period there were continuities from the communist era. The choice of institutional design in the post-communist system largely depended upon the model of transition, which in turn depended upon the legacies of the former system (type of regime, level of industrialization, former experiences with democratic regimes etc.). In the end the choice of institutional design was decided on the basis of the power relationship between the communist elite and their opposition⁸. In the countries where the communist elite retained control over the power resources in the transition period, it was able to determine the institutional design of the new system without negotiations with the opposition forces. The communist elite which was consolidated in this way and which thought that it would “have the most to gain by limiting the access of others to state’s power resources” opted for the presidential political systems which represented the continuation of the focus on individual political actors from the former regime (Easter, 1997: 211). Since presidential systems promoted “a concentration of power on charismatic individuals” and dominance of “personal competition” over “team spirit” (Kitschelt, 1995: 452), they were the first choice of communist elites that were leading the transition because they expected to benefit from the “name recognition of local and national leaders and clientelist networks” (ibid., 453). The presidential political systems were the most common institutional choice of post-communist countries, primarily because of the large number of post-Soviet republics which opted for it (Easter, 1997).

⁸ This explanation of the reasons why certain institutional designs were adopted is similar to what Frye (1997) calls „electoral bargaining approach“. Although Frye considers this approach as one of the most important ones, he emphasized that there are alternative approaches that might explain how post-communist countries chose their insitutional designs, namely cultural, economic, political and societal approaches.

Meanwhile, the prevailing political system choice of post-communist countries of Central Europe was either the parliamentary system or the mixed, semi-presidential one. The parliamentary system was the most common outcome of the transitions in which the opposition forces gained considerable power while the communist elites lost much of their power following internal fragmentation (Eatwell, 2006). Since neither of the elites was confident in securing enough public support for autonomous rule, they opted for a system in which neither option would be able to control all power resources if it were to be elected. A parliamentary system was also a way of preventing the rise of a new strong leader, a technique often used in establishing new Western democracies after the Second World War (Cavalli, 1998). Finally, a rather rare choice was the introduction of the semi-presidential system. Kitschelt (1995) argues it was the choice of the struggle of communist elite which lost certain amount of power, but was still able to negotiate with opposition forces. By introducing a semi-presidential system, the communist elite was able to partly secure the continuation of person-centred politics, but since it was forced to negotiate with the opposition, it had to comply with some of the opposition's demands, which were usually connected with the introduction of the elements which decrease the focus on individual political actors and enhance the power of collectives.

With regard to the choices of electoral system in post-communist countries, Renwick's analysis of electoral systems in ten post-communist systems showed that "all but one of the post-communist countries in the sample chose systems allowing voters at least some opportunity to vote for individual candidates" (2011: 474-475). Therefore, even if the country opted for a parliamentary system, and possibly a proportional electoral system, there were other ways to make political communication actors focus on individuals instead on collectives. Most prominent among these techniques is the direct elections for a President who has no or little executive power (the so called "figus" presidents) and the direct elections of mayors. Even if the executive power was given to the Prime Minister and his/her cabinet, post-communist countries kept the institution of the President whose role is most frequently only ceremonial but he/she is nevertheless in general chosen by the direct vote⁹. Additionally, the direct elections of mayors at the local level are the most common technique for electing local governments in post-communist

⁹ Presidents in parliamentary post-communist democracies can be appointed, like in Germany or Hungary, or popularly elected, like in Slovakia, Croatia, Poland, Slovenia etc. (Baylis, 2007)

countries¹⁰. These techniques might contribute to the increased person-centred political communication since they “periodically serve to place parties in the background and leaders at the centre of media attention” (Van Biezen & Hopkin, 2005: 282), and it might be supposed voters’ behaviour and leaders’ communication. Hence, this development might be seen as undermining the role of the parties and making it more acceptable and perhaps desirable for the electorate, media and political actors to focus on individuals instead on the collectives.

In summary, since in most of the cases there was a tendency among post-communist countries to adopt institutional designs which put the focus on individual political actors instead of collectives, it can be concluded that, in general, communist system showed some continuity with the new system when it comes to institutional characteristics. These elements of post-communist institutional designs might have kept voters focused on individuals rather than parties, and could have also made political actors focus their communication strategies on party leaders.

3.3. Legal framework

Another politically-related factor that needs to be taken into account when examining the variables that have the potential to contribute to the personalisation of political communication is a country's legal framework. The most commonly discussed legal provision in this regard is the way in which one's right to privacy is legally protected (Stanyer & Wring, 2004; Stanyer, 2013). This factor is mostly tied to the rise in the private persona-centred media reporting.

Stanyer (2012) argues that there are two main types of country with regard to the ways in which politicians’ privacy is protected legally – the ones practicing common law and the civil law countries. In the common law countries, such as the US, the UK or Australia, there are no statutory privacy laws that would protect politicians’ privacy from media intrusion. Furthermore, the politician is the one who has to prove that the media outlet that published information about his/her private life had known that the mediated information is untrue. This makes it easier for the media to intrude into a politician's privacy and report about his/her private life, given that it is highly unlikely that there will be any legal consequences of this action. In some cases politicians' use libel law to act legally against media outlets, but this has been shown to attract more publicity so they rarely do it. On the other hand, in civil

¹⁰ Mayors are directly elected in Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia nad Hercegovina, Serbia, Russia, Poland Romania, Slovakia etc., while for example Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus are among the exceptions.

law countries, such as Germany, France, Italy and Spain, a politician's privacy is regularly protected by statute which makes media intrusion into politician's private life the subject of legal penalty. Partly as a consequence of this, these countries' media outlets rarely publish scandalous information about their politicians' private matters. Stanyer (ibid.) has shown, based on his analysis of mediated politicians' infidelity across seven Western democracies, that there is a clear divide between the amount of this kind of coverage in the US and the UK on the one side, and Germany, Italy, France and Spain on the other side. For the period 2000-2009 the biggest difference in this regard was between the US and France. While the media in the US revealed around 30 cases of politicians' infidelity, the French media revealed none.

In summary, countries differ according to the ways in which political actors' privacy is legally protected, and a country's legal framework might contribute to lower or higher degrees of politicians' private personae visibility in the media.

3.3.1. Communism: Protection of privacy without a right to privacy

The right to privacy as it is understood in the established Western democracies, i.e. the right for one's personal and family life to be legally protected from intrusion, did not exist in the majority of constitutions of the European communist countries (R. Errera, 1996). Most of these countries did not have anything similar to a privacy right in their early post-1945 constitutions, but in the later period, especially since 1960s, there was a shift towards including more citizens' rights into the main legal framework (Simons, 1980). However, the right to privacy that was proclaimed in these later communist constitutions did not usually protect the privacy of one's personal and family life, but rather communist rights to privacy more commonly proclaimed the protection against searches of the home and the privacy of personal communication (ibid.). However, it was clear from these constitutions that the authorities had the right to violate one's privacy if they thought there was a need to (R. Errera, 1996; Simons, 1980). In spite of the relative lack of the legal framework that would protect media intrusion into leaders' privacy, it does not seem that in communist countries this legal provision had significant impact on the degree to which the media reported leaders' private personae. Given the high level of political control over the media (Jakubowicz & Sükösd, 2008; Lauk, 2008; Novak, 2005), it seems rather unlikely that the communist media would intrude into their leader's privacy just so they would have a juicy story to report. According to the censorship systems that were implemented in most communist countries, journalists

would either not dare even pursue that kind of story, or the story would be allowed to be reported only if it would be approved by the political elite (Apor et al., 2004).

Hence, the degree to which one's privacy is legally protected in communism does not seem to have the same potential to contribute to the degree of the private persona-centred media reporting as in the established Western democracies.

3.3.2. (Post)Communism: Powerless privacy and powerful libel laws

With the introduction of democracy, most of Central and Eastern European post-communist countries introduced to their constitutions the right to privacy based on the legal protection of one's personal and family life (Errera, 1996; Privacy International, 2012). In addition, the majority of these countries eventually signed the European convention on human rights whose Article 8 proclaims a right to privacy ("European Convention on Human Rights - Impact in 47 countries," n.d.). Hence, it seems that one's right to privacy is quite strongly protected in European post-communist countries. If the laws are properly implemented it might be expected that the private persona-centred media reporting is affected by the legal protection of privacy in a similar way as in the West. However, post-communist countries are (in)famous for their problems with implementing laws (Galligan & Kurkchian, 2003). If there are problems with law implementation, the situation is less clear and the outcome might depend on the power holders in the specific country. In other words, if the media believe they can get away with publishing private information about politicians, they might pursue this kind of reporting. However, if the members of the political elite have some other legal means they can use for retribution, that might inhibit media's willingness to infringe their privacy.

One of those legal means that might prevent the media from reporting politicians' private information are libel laws and laws protecting the publication of unflattering information, i.e. insult laws. They are not usually discussed in the context of possible influences on personalisation in media reporting, but I argue that they can be seen as potential inhibitors of private persona-centred reporting in these contexts. Specifically, it is known that there were legal provisions in communist countries that prevented the media from criticizing political leaders and publishing information that might hurt their reputation (Coban, 2013; Jergović, 2003; V. K. Rao, 2007). In the communist era, that legal provision was another factor that might have inhibited reporting of not only embarrassing private information about leaders, but negative information in general. A similar legal framework continued in some post-communist countries even after the introduction of a democratic system (Jergović, 2003; Splichal, 2001). Libel is still in some post-communist countries a criminal

offense, sometimes punishable by imprisonment (Article 19, n.d.). However, there is a general trend towards the decriminalization of libel (ibid.). In those countries and periods of transition in which the publication of unflattering information and/or defamation was criminalized, the media might have been less inclined to report embarrassing private information about political leaders, especially if there were no sources they could use to back up their stories.

Hence, libel and insult laws can be seen as context-specific legal provisions that may need to be taken into account when examining the factors that might influence private persona-centred media reporting in communist and post-communist systems.

3.4. Political actors and their communication strategies

Up until now I have discussed how different politically-related factors can contribute to the increase in the personalisation of political communication, specifically personalisation in voters' behaviour, media reporting and political actors' communication. I also considered how the personalisation in voters' behaviour might influence the personalisation in other political communication actors, i.e. media and political actors. This final part of the chapter looks into how characteristics of political actors might impact the personalisation of political communication and also, how personalisation in political actors' communication might contribute to the increase in the personalisation related to the other two political communication actors, i.e. media and voters' behaviour. As was already mentioned, public organizations, pressure and interest groups, terrorist organizations, even media, might be seen as political actors (McNair, 2011), but when we discuss the characteristics and communication strategies of political actors it is primarily meant those of political parties and individual politicians.

Firstly, there are several characteristics of political parties and party systems that might contribute to the personalisation of political communication. As was indicated in the first part of this chapter, in established Western democracies, characterized by decline in party identification and weakening of ideological cleavages, parties might be inclined to put the focus on the leader and his/her persona in order to differentiate themselves in the political market and re-connect with voters. However, even in societies that are not characterized by these developments there are parties that have lower and higher degrees of support (measured by, for example, party identification levels or party membership), and those that are closer and more distant from the ideological centre. Hence, the extent

to which a party in any society may strategically decide to emphasize its leader and his/her persona in its communication might partly depend not on the system-related variables, but rather those specific to a party. If a party has significant public support and/or promotes extreme ideological positions, it may not be inclined to pursue person- and persona-centred communication, even if it operates in a system usually characterized by the decline in party identification and weakening of cleavages.

In addition, Swanson and Mancini (1996) hypothesize that some characteristics of a party system may also contribute to the personalisation of political communication. Specifically, they suggest that personalisation in political actors' communication might be more prominent in two-party systems usually dominated by catch-all parties who find it easier to differentiate based on their leaders than ideologies and policies. On the other hand, in multiparty systems parties can differentiate based on their ideologies and policies, what might hinder their intention to put the focus on the leader and his/her persona since they have alternative basis for differentiation in political market.

In the second place, some of the characteristics of individual political actors, such as politicians' personality, age, political experience, and gender, may contribute to the increase in the personalisation of political communication. For example, the extent of a leader's prominence in a party's communication strategies is seen as strongly dependent upon the personality of the leader (Holtz-Bacha, 2004; Langer, 2011). There are those who wish to have more power than they are institutionally ascribed in both their parties and public office, which can be seen as a desire for increased personal power (Poguntke & Webb, 2005). On the other hand, there are those who are most comfortable with collective power and responsibility and do not wish to put themselves above the collective. Additionally, not all leaders are willing to disclose their private sphere in public communication. Some of them are quite comfortable and skilful in presenting private information so it looks natural and boosts their political image (e.g. Tony Blair, Barack Obama), while others wish to preserve their privacy and/or are not able to communicate private information effectively (e.g. Gordon Brown). In a society in which some level of politicians' private disclosure is seen as necessary, the latter approach might be a serious political disadvantage. Van Zoonen and Holtz-Bacha (2000: 55) stress that "politicians need to be able to operate smoothly in personal discourse in order to construct themselves as likeable individuals which is a necessary part of the political persona".

Two other personal characteristics of politicians may be able to influence the rise in the private persona-centred political communication. Stanyer (2013) argues

that the politicians' age might influence the degree to which the media is interested in their private life. However, the basis of this argument is that politicians born after 1945, members of the so called "baby boom" generation, might feel more comfortable in communicating private information since they were raised during a period in which "many Western democracies witnessed an informalizing process in which much conduct that had been forbidden was permitted, and ways of behaving in public changed fundamentally" (ibid., 63). Hence, I agree that the politicians' age might be important for the rise of private persona-centred communication, but not so much in media reporting, as in politicians' communication. In addition, the time that a politician has spent in politics before running for high office might also be able to contribute to the persona-centred, and especially private persona-centred politicians' communication, and also media reporting. Politicians who do not have significant political experience, especially those who recently entered politics from another profession, might be more inclined to communicate information about their personae, and especially emphasize information from their private sphere, in order to attract media attention and explain to voters who they are (Langer, 2011; Stanyer, 2013). Given that they usually don't have much politically-related information to provide, they might be more inclined to focus on their personae. Similarly, the media might report more private information about them, since there is little to be said about their political personae.

The politicians' gender is also seen as playing a role to the extent to which political communication is personalized. Specifically, it is suggested that the prominence of female politicians in political processes might increase the personalisation in media reporting, but at the same time decrease it in political actors' communication. To clarify, the research on media representation of women in politics has revealed similar findings across Western democracies, and they all show that the coverage of female politicians in the media is usually centred on their private persona, especially their appearance, lifestyle, fashion sense, family life, maternal and marital status etc. (Everitt, 2003; Mavin et al., 2010; Wasburn & Wasburn, 2011; Van Zoonen, 2006). This would suggest that the presence of women in politics, especially those running for high office, might increase personalisation in the media, particularly the visibility of political actors' private sphere. On the other hand, as Muir (2005: 58) observes, women in politics "have always struggled to be judged on their performance, their achievements and their substance rather than their appearance". The reason for this might be that their private persona is often presented in a political context. In other words, information from their private sphere is politicized, and their appearance and marital status are

often connected with their competence to perform public duties, mostly in a negative way (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009; Mavin et al., 2010; Muir, 2005; Wasburn & Wasburn, 2011). Given that the media is more likely to report women's private sphere, and that this information tends to harm their political image, women are considered to be less willing to use their private sphere in political communication. For example, Van Zoonen (2006: 295) argues, based on her analysis of European female leaders Angela Merkel and Tarja Halonen's communication strategies, that "they both present a thoroughly political and professional persona to the public and rigidly conceal their private lives". These communication strategies of female politicians would lead to a decrease in the visibility of a politician's private persona in public discourse, or at least in political actors' communication strategies. The conclusion that Van Zoonen (ibid., 299) draws from this development is that "women – willingly or not – may end as the last keepers of traditional modernist ideas of politics as a separate sphere in which rational actors and representatives publicly deliberate and decide on the course of society".

Alongside the fact that some characteristics of political actors can lead to higher or lower degrees of personalisation of political communication, it is also argued that the increase in the personalisation in political actors' communication can contribute to increased emphasis on individual political actors and their personae in another area – media reporting. More specifically, it is argued that once political actors decide to personalize their communication, this then leads to an increase in the personalisation in media reporting. In other words, political actors firstly personalize their communication, and then media react to this by increasing the focus on the politicians and their personae.

In Germany for example, research has found that there was a rise in the person-centred media reporting from 1990 to 2002, and the researchers argue that the initiative did not come from the media but rather that the media reacted to the parties' person-centred campaigns and consequently put more focus on party leaders in reporting (Schulz and Zeh, 2005). France is an example of a country in which the emphasis on a politician's private sphere in public discourse is believed to have been triggered by the actions of politicians. The French media was not comfortable in revealing information about a politician's private life in the past. It is argued this was due to strong privacy laws and the lack of a tabloid media culture (Kuhn, 2004). However, neither privacy laws nor the lack of strong tabloid sector prevented the rise of private sphere prominence in public discourse after French president Nicolas Sarkozy, who came to power in 2007, put significant emphasis on private information in political communication. Due to these new "fair game" areas,

the French media quickly became accustomed to reporting his love life, hobbies, vacations, family, insecurities etc. (Campus, 2010). A similar development might be observed in the United Kingdom. Although the United Kingdom is (in)famous for its strong tabloid sector and has no right to privacy in common law (Deacon, 2004) which would prevent media from invading a politician's private sphere, media became more concerned with the private qualities and lives of its leaders only in the past two decades (Langer, 2011). Langer has traced the origins of this change to the leaders' political strategies and concluded that it was them that triggered the trend, while the media's role was mostly reactive. In addition, the findings from an analysis of the 1992 General Election campaign coverage also illustrate the reactive nature of British media in the pre-Blair era, but this time related to the person-centred political communication. Semetko et al. (1994) found that party leaders were the most prominent political actors in both press and television election coverage, largely due to the parties' leader-oriented campaign communication strategies.

To summarize, the characteristics of political actors seem to be mostly tied to the increase in the personalisation in politicians' communication, although some variables, such as the leader's previous time spent in politics, might also contribute to the increase in the private persona-centred media reporting. In addition, there seems to be evidence suggesting that the personalisation in leaders' communication, especially leaders' willingness to disclose private information, may contribute to the rise in the personalisation in media reporting.

3.4.1. Communism: Irrelevance of personal characteristics?

Several points need to be emphasized with regard to the possible influences that characteristics of political actors might have had for the personalisation of political communication in communism. Given that in these countries the ruling party was promoting extreme ideological views, and that it had strong support among the public, or at least there was a perception of this support, it could be expected that the political actors did not pursue personalized political communication. At least not for these reasons. The fact that the communist party was the only political force in the country might have made politicians competing for the same political office to communicate more persona-related information. They were arguably promoting the same, party-approved, policies and therefore needed another base to differentiate themselves.

In addition to this, leadership cult literature suggests that the political actors intentionally put the focus on the political leader, and his persona, due to the weakness of the party in the early periods, and to accomplish the two main party's

role, as they saw it: education and socialization of citizens. The focus on the political leader was at the beginning of communist period considered necessary since it was the only way of legitimizing the new system given that the party was not yet organized and established (Ake, 1966). The purpose of the strong leader was to unite different groups in the society by reshaping rituals and myths in order to create common goals for society as a whole to pursue (Cavalli, 1998; Šiber, 2007). The focus on the individual instead of the collective was therefore a political decision adopted for two main reasons: to legitimize the new system and to simplify the education and socialization of the people. Legitimization was based on the premise of the leader's greatness and extraordinariness: the message that was communicated to the public was that there was no other person who might run the country except for the leader. In line with what the communist party saw as one of its main purposes in the society, education and socialization, the leader was used also as a means of simplifying values, beliefs and behaviours for the, in large part uneducated, public. The leader was to set the example of how people should behave, what they should value and what their interests should be.

If the communist political actors really intentionally and strategically put the focus on the leader in their communication, and consequently in media reporting that they had control over, the characteristics of the leader might not have played an important role in the increase in the personalisation of political communication. In other words, the characteristics of the leader discussed in the context of established Western democracies, such as their personality, age, or previous political experience, might not have been as important as in the West when it comes to contributing to the persona- and private persona-centred leaders' communication and media reporting.

In regard to the influence of female politicians on personalisation of political communication, there is hardly any evidence of how women politicians were represented in communist media, but some literature suggests that the presentational style was similar to that in Western media systems with regard to the media visibility of private persona and its politicization, but with an important difference in the evaluative tendency (Havelková, 1999; Ibroscheva, 2008). Apparently, the politicization of female politicians' private personae was usually done in a positive context. For example, Ibroscheva (2008) writes that the Bulgarian press was full of "articles about young women, embarking on political careers at the local and regional governmental level, while at the same time, attending their family and social responsibilities". It seems as though the representation of female politicians in the media was quite didactic and its purpose was to propagate the

ideal communist woman, the one that supports the goals of the Party, is active in the community, contributes to the economy, but at the same time does not neglect her private sphere. However, the only part of a woman politician's private sphere that was media visible was her role as a mother, because women were, unlike in the West, "devoid of any playfulness and coquetry", "dressed in conservative clothes, lacking any fashion sense and appearing utterly asexual" (ibid.). Given that it might be the case that communist journalists shared their Western colleagues' tendency to report women politicians with an emphasis on their private sphere, it can be expected that this led to an increase in persona-centred media reporting. However, this presentation of female politicians in communist media should be regarded as a reproduction of an ideological construct designed by the political elite, rather than a preferred reporting style.

3.4.2. Post-communism: Charismatic parties and influential political actors

With the introduction of democracy, multi-party systems were formed in European post-communist countries, so it could have been expected that the characteristics of political actors might have started to contribute to the personalisation of political communication as in established Western democracies. However, this does not seem to have been the case, at least in the early post-communist periods. It is argued that the post-communist political actors decided to keep the focus on the individuals at the expense of the collectives (e.g. parties) partly due to the nature of the newly formed party systems. Scholars mostly agree that the new parties that emerged after the introduction of multi-party systems were, at least in the beginning, poorly organized, without roots in the society which would help them make ties with the citizens, lacking clearly defined identities since there was a high level of uncertainty about the needs and interests of the electorate, and also, except for the reformed communist parties, the new parties had little or no experience in either political or democratic environments (Kitschelt, 1995; Lewis, 2000; Tomšič & Prijon, 2010). Since these weak parties were not able to attract and mobilize voters, party systems were often characterized by "the dominance of individuals and political leaders over party structures" (Lewis, 2000: 154).

In addition, the type of political party seems to be particularly important for the personalisation of political communication in post-communist countries. Kitschelt (1995) argues that, in some cases, transitional circumstances¹¹ were not favourable

¹¹ Type of former communist regime (patrimonial, bureaucratic-authoritarian, national), mode of transition to democratic governance (implosion of the old elites, inter-elite negotiations, preventive reform by elite), institutional arrangements introduced with democracy etc. (Kitschelt, 1995)

to the development of programmatic parties (i.e. those that are organized around political and social cleavages and citizens' interests and values), but rather that parties were organized around charismatic leaders. Transition led by the reformed communist elite, or where it was negotiated between communists and opposition, often produced charismatic and/or clientelistic parties in the new system, demonstrating a perception of continuation of the person-centred politics from the communist system. Kitschelt (ibid., 449) defines charismatic parties as "not much more than an unstructured mass of people rallying around a leader", but because of this, a party's destiny is closely connected with the popularity of the party leader and eventually with the benefits it can provide to its followers. In short, it seems that, even when multi-party parliamentary systems were introduced, parties were weak and unorganized and therefore dependent upon their leaders and clientelistic networks. This presumably made political actors focus on leaders in their communication.

The characteristics of politicians, such as personality, former political experience and age might in post-communist societies be speculated to contribute to the personalisation of political communication as in the established democracies.

With regard to the influence of female politicians on personalisation of political communication, there is not significantly more empirical evidence on how the media report women in politics or about female politicians' communication strategies in post-communist countries than in communist ones. However, there is some indication that post-communist media might portray female politicians in the same manner as their Western counterparts. In one of the rare studies that examines the media representation of female politicians in the media, Danova (2006: 130) concluded, based on a content analysis of the Bulgarian press, that the media favors female politicians' "private images over their images as public figures". Furthermore, again on the case of Bulgaria, Ibroscheva (2008) claims that female politicians reinforced this trend, rather than condemned it. According to her observations, women in politics often try to use media interest in their private lives to their advantage so they actively promote their private sphere in order to gain publicity. However, Ibroscheva does not provide any empirical evidence to support this claim. By contrast, there are female politicians in post-communist countries who, like their colleagues in the West, condemn the media for focusing on their private personas rather than on their political achievements. For example, former Croatian Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor often complained that the media were more interested in her fashion style than her policies. In short, more research is needed to

reveal what kind of information female politicians communicate and how the media portrays them in post-communist countries.

It is also possible only to speculate how the personalisation in politicians' communication might have, if at all, impacted personalisation in voters' behaviour and media reporting in post-communist countries, since there is no empirical evidence on this topic. Given that it is usually suggested that the political elite remained in control of media, at least in the first post-communist period, it could be expected that if the political elite decided to focus on individuals in their communication, and perhaps their personae, it had the power to make media report in a similar way as well. However, the extent to which the political elite was able to control the media varied among post-communist countries, and across different periods of transition. Hence, it can be expected that even if the political actors were able to make media personalize their reporting in some post-communist countries and periods, their influence might have decreased with the rise in the autonomy of media, institutionalization of party system, rise of civil society etc.

While the fact that politicians pursued personalized communication strategies in the early post-communist period is yet to be empirically established, there is evidence to suggest that post-communist politicians in the late consolidation period are quite willing to communicate information about themselves. Hermans and Vergeer (2012) analyzed the type of information that the candidates for 2009 European parliament elections shared on their personal websites in 17 EU countries, six of which were post-communist countries. They found that politicians from post-communist countries share the most personal information about themselves. Specifically, they revealed most information related to their work in politics, but also family life and private preferences, compared to politicians from other EU countries. As one of possible explanations of this finding, authors emphasized that "the former communist, authoritarian countries have a history of glorifying political leaders. Maybe practices of presenting professional feats are still engrained in post-communist cultures." (ibid., 12). Although in the late consolidation period political actors in most post-communist countries had limited ability to influence media reporting, their personalized communication still might have contributed to the personalisation in media reporting. As was discussed in the case of Western democracies, once the politicians start revealing information about themselves, sometimes the media follows and media reporting also becomes more personalized. In addition, if most of the political information that the voters were receiving was related to individual politicians, they might also have been motivated to make their electoral decisions based on evaluations of individual political actors.

In summary, the characteristics of communist political actors and the possible influence of their personalizing practices on other political communication actors seem quite different than in established Western democracies. Although there is little known about the post-communist political actors, their communication strategies, and influence on other actors, they seem at times more similar to that of communist political actors, than Western ones. However, as the country moves away from its communist past, it can be speculated that they and their possible influences started to increasingly resemble their Western counterparts.

3.5. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to examine the politically-related factors that may contribute to the personalisation of political communication, or at least some of its dimensions, and to offer alternative theories of how and why personalisation might have developed in a communist and post-communist context by taking into account the political, cultural, social and historical circumstances of these societies. Specific emphasis was put on the factors related to political characteristics of voters and their behaviour, institutional designs, legal frameworks, and the characteristics of political actors and their communication strategies.

The discussion showed that there are some similarities between established Western democracies and communist and post-communist countries with regard to possible political influences on the personalisation of political communication. However, the origins of these seemingly similar factors are quite different. For example, one of the reasons why Western political parties might have decided to focus their communication on leaders is the weakening of societal cleavages which led to the weakening of parties. Similarly, one of the possible reasons why communist and post-communist political actors decided to pursue person-centred communication might also have been the weakness of their parties. However, post-communist parties were arguably weak and unorganized, lacking enough knowledge of their voters' needs and interests, from the beginning, i.e. the introduction of the multi-party systems. Hence, although political actors in all three systems might have decided to pursue person-centred communication due to the weakness of parties, there are different origins of this (parties') weakness.

Alongside the similarities, there are also important differences in the ways in which some politically-related factors might have influenced personalisation of political communication in an established Western democracy and communist and post-communist societies. For example, some characteristics of voters, such as the

rise of politically self-sufficient voters or those relying on post-modernist values, legal provisions, such as the protection of privacy, or characteristics of political actors, such as politicians' age, political experience or personality, do not seem to have the same explanatory power when their potential contribution is examined in the context of communist societies. Given the limited extent to which factors identified in existing literature can help explain the development of this phenomenon in a communist and post-communist context, the examination of literature concerned with communist leadership cults and systems, and transitional studies, showed that there are some context-specific factors that need to be taken into account when analyzing the political factors that have the potential to cause or contribute to the personalisation of political communication in these contexts. Specifically, the degree of authoritarianism in the society, educational levels of public, and legal proscriptions against libel, are some of the factors speculated to have an influence on the personalisation of political communication in these systems, but have not previously been discussed in the personalisation literature.

Finally, the discussion presented in this chapter has showed that although the politically-related factors are usually seen as having the potential to influence the personalisation of political communication in general, some of them can be seen as contributing solely or mostly to a specific dimension of personalisation. For example, the type of political and electoral system, and the degree of autohoritarianism in the society, seem to have the most potential to contribute to the person-centred political communication, while only limited influence on persona-centred communication. Similarly, politician's age, political experience, and ideological position, seem mostly connected to the persona-centred communication, and privacy laws to the private persona-centred communication.

By examining the potential politically-related factors in this nuanced way, i.e. by examining the politically-related variables in a context-specific and dimensions-specific way, it will be possible to contextualize the findings from the empirical analysis of mediated political communication (chapters 5 and 6), and also analyze the contribution of these factors with relation to different dimensions and areas of personalisation (chapter 7). Specifically, the discussion presented in this chapter will inform the empirical analyses in this thesis, especially those that aim to answer the questions of why and how personalisation of mediated political communication developed in a communist and post-communist system, and what are the similarities and differences in the factors that contribute to the personalisation in these two systems and established Western democracies? The next chapter, which will put the

focus on the media-driven approaches to personalisation, will also contribute to answering these questions.

4. “It’s the media, stupid”’: Media-driven approaches to personalisation

The previous chapter examined politically-related factors that have the potential to increase the personalisation of political communication, or at least some of its dimensions, based mostly on the „modernization“ approach to the development of personalisation. The aim of this chapter is to explore the second perspective on how and why the personalisation of political communication developed, in both Western and (post)communist societies. This second group of theories can be seen as a “media-driven approach” to personalisation, given that the emphasis is on the role that the mass media had in the development of personalisation. Scholars who study personalisation tend to rely upon what Ryfe (2001) calls the “usable past” to assign value to their research. The main premise of this “usable past” is that “in the twentieth century, politics and public life progressively worsened, and the mass media have been a primary culprit” (ibid., 211). And indeed, the main hypothesis of many scholars in this field is to see the development of the personalisation of political communication in the Western societies as part of the “narrative of decline” in which the past broadly represents strong party systems in which parties defended the interests of their voters, informed voters made rational decisions based on their evaluations of parties and issues, and media discussed political issues and policies in order to inform citizens and enhance the quality of public debate. The present is, on the other hand, characterized by the decline of parties, a dealigned electorate which is cynical and does not trust political institutions, and media reports which are more focused on politicians’ private lives than on “real” politics. The personalisation of political communication is in this narrative usually regarded as one of the “bad” outcomes of the rise of mass media.

The exploration of media-related factors that might have the potential to influence the degree to which political communication is personalized will inform this thesis in several ways. Firstly, by examining the media-related elements of the Western, communist and post-communist societies it will be possible to establish why, if at all, these contexts are well suited for the development of personalized political communication. In addition, given that the media factors will be examined in a Western context, but also in a communist and post-communist one, this chapter will present alternative theories of what might have caused or contributed to personalisation to those usually reproduced with regard to media influence on personalisation. In order to explore the ways in which media might have influenced

personalisation in (post)communist systems, this chapter will draw on literature related to the leadership cult and transition studies. By borrowing from these areas, this chapter will aim to reconstruct the ways in which and reasons why the personalisation might have developed in these systems. This will enrich the existing personalisation scholarship which has not yet dealt with this issue. Secondly, the identification of media-related factors, together with the politically-related factors that were identified in the previous chapter, will help contextualize findings from empirical analyses of mediated political communication in chapters 5 and 6, and inform the empirical analysis that will aim to explain how and why the personalisation of political communication developed in different contexts. Specifically, the ability of the media-related factors identified in this chapter to contribute to the development of personalized political communication will be tested in Chapter 7.

The media-related factors whose influence is examined in this chapter are news values, the changes in media technology, especially the rise of television; media commercialization; the nature of journalistic culture; and the personalisation in media reporting. Similarly, as in the previous chapter, their influence is examined with relation to specific dimensions of the personalisation of political communication and the specific context. In other words, I examine which media-related factor is considered to be connected with the person-, and which to persona-centred political communication, and which media factors seem most important in Western, communist and post-communist systems.

4.1. News values and presentational styles

The first media-related factor that is seen to influence the personalisation of political communication are news values. Richardson (2005) describes news values as “the crystallized reflection of, or ‘ground rules’ for deciding, what an identified audience is interested in reading or watching”. In other words, news values are considered as criteria according to which an event becomes news. Galtung and Ruge (1965) published one of the first studies of news values, and they claimed that the media’s focus on individuals, as opposed to structures and processes, is one of the main criteria that journalists in Western countries employ when deciding which event will get into the media. Although there were many other lists of news values produced after this seminal study, the focus that the media puts on individual political actors, and sometimes even their personae, at the expense of collectives and structures, is often considered one of the news values (Campus, 2010; Kriesi, 2011; Mazzoleni, 1987; Stromback, 2008; Takens et al., 2013).

Putting the focus on individuals seems logical from a media perspective since it fits with the preferences of the audience. People not only prefer to read about other individuals instead of abstract issues and institutions (Mazzoleni, 2000), but they also more easily understand narratives which are centred on persons (Brants & Neijens, 1998). This is especially the case with political issues which are often complicated, and which typical news consumers cannot understand if they are articulated in an abstract and overly formal way (Campbell et al., 1960; Graber, 1988; Jantol, 2004). In addition to this need to be informed about complex political issues in a simplified and reader-friendly manner, people are also “more willing to associate political power and authority with a readily identifiable political personality than with abstract institution or political ideal” (McAllister, 1996: 287). With regard to these audience needs and preferences, the media’s focus on individuals can be seen as an adaptation to the needs of their consumers. Hence, favouring individuals over collectives and issues can be seen as both a news value and a presentational style. It is argued that media give more attention to events which feature prominent individuals because it considers them newsworthy and it also tends to present information through the experiences of individuals to make a story more interesting and engaging. In regard to political information, politicians are often presented as a personification of their party’s program, values, and issue stands, as a strategy for clarifying and simplifying political information (Brants & Neijens, 1998; Karvonen, 2010; Mazzoleni, 2000; Meyer, 2002).

4.1.1. Communism: Structural or personalized reporting style?

Galtung and Ruge (1965) contrasted personalized news reporting found in Western countries with a “structural” style of presenting news which is characterized, they argue, by the emphasis on social forces while “the names of the actors” simply disappear (ibid., 68). They suggest that this news value might be more common in communist countries, such as the Soviet Union, than in Western media systems. And indeed, there are some studies that indicate that communist media reporting was, unlike in the West, more strongly based on structural rather than person-centred style. For example, Gerbner analyzed the coverage of the 1960 General Assembly meeting in the *New York Times* and Hungarian newspapers. His study showed that the *New York Times* named individuals in around every line and a half, while Hungarian newspapers did so in every eight line. This suggests that the *Times* was using a more person-centred presentational style, while the communist Hungarian paper presented the meeting in a more structural way (cited in Robinson, 1977: 167-168). Two studies comparing Yugoslav and American news coverage,

done by Robinson (1977) at the beginning of 1960s, further reinforced this hypothesis. One study showed that the Associated Press put the emphasis on individuals in 30% of its news items, while the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug did so in 23%. The difference is not great but it does point to a more structural presentational style practiced by the communist news agency. The other study examined the same two agencies' coverage of the Vietnam war. Here, the Associated Press put the focus on individuals in 70% of its news items, while only 25% of Tanjug's reports were person-centred. Robinson (*ibid.*, 170) concludes that the Yugoslav reader acquires "a more structural explication of the issues involved". On the other hand, Martensson's study of three major Soviet newspapers in 1964 found that Soviet newspapers pursued quite person-centred, rather than structural reporting style (cited in Galtung & Ruge, 1965: 87).

This finding from the Soviet Union is more in line with the hypotheses set by the second camp of scholarship that speaks of the news values and reporting style in communist systems. According to the leadership cult literature, communist systems are considered to have been centred on leaders, whose cults were built by the extensive use of mass media (Eatwell, 2006; Janjetović, 2009; Plamper, 2004; Rees, 2004). As Lauk (2008: 199) writes: "the primary task of news presentation in former communist bloc journalism was not to chronicle daily events, but to glorify the Communist Party and its leaders". Given that the politics and political actors' communication strategies were arguably centred on a leader, whose cult was communicated mainly through the mass media, it could be expected that the individuals, not structures, were considered news values and hence, that the media practiced more person-centred than structural way of reporting. And furthermore, since the leader was set to impersonate society's history and values, it might also be expected, as some literature already suggests (Apor, 2004; Eatwell, 2006; Janjetović, 2009; Sretenovic & Puto, 2004), that this reporting was also person-centred, i.e. focused on leaders life and qualities.

These two competing theories – one arguing that communist media practiced a structural, and the other suggesting it was a person-centred news presentation style – make it difficult to reach any sound conclusions about the style of reporting in communist societies. In addition, more and more authors emphasize the differences, rather than similarities across European communist media systems, pointing to the fact that it is problematic to generalize in this context (Coban, 2013; James Curran & Park, 2000; Lauk, 2008; Oates, 2012; Tworzecki, 2012). Therefore, the real extent to which the mediated political communication was centred on individuals, especially on political leaders, in communist systems, remains ambiguous.

However, what both of these theories indicate is that the news values and presentation style in communist countries was to a large degree dependent upon the needs and instructions of the political elite. The structural presentation style can be seen to accord with the communist ideological thesis that the society and its structures are more important than individuals (Coban, 2013), while the person-centred style may be the result of the political elite's decision to build leaders' cults (Apor et al., 2004). Although the level of control that the political elite exercised over media content varied from one communist system to the other, scholars mostly agree that the political elite strongly controlled the mediation of political content (Coban, 2013; Robinson, 1977). In other words, even if journalists were free to report as they wish about some topics (culture, sports etc.), political topics were as a rule covered in a party-desired way. Hence, it might be speculated that whichever news presentational style communist media followed, it was the product of news values which were imposed by the political elite.

4.1.2. Post-communism: Shift or continuation?

How, if at all, the news values and presentation style changed during the democratic transition from a communist to a post-communist system, is unclear. The literature concerned with media developments in European post-communist countries is mostly concerned with media's freedom and independence, deregulation of media markets, and the nature of interactions between political elite and journalists. Little is known about the news values and presentation style, although it is frequently suggested that the post-communist media have after the introduction of democracy started publishing sensationalist, trivialized and personalized news (Gulyas, 1998; Lauk, 2008; Slavko Splichal, 2001; Voltmer & Schmitt-Beck, 2002). There is, however, little empirical evidence that would support these claims. In spite of this, the focus on individuals, and perhaps even their personae, can be examined through the theories of continuation, modernization and Americanization.

In the first place, the focus on individuals as a news value in the post-communist media might be seen as a continuation of personalized reporting from the communist era. That is, if the reporting was personalized in communism. Journalists educated and socialized in the communist system did not start working in the new system as a *tabula rasa* but rather they transferred their news values and reporting styles from the former system. Most frequently mentioned in this context are tendencies toward propagandistic writing, commentary instead of facts, and advocacy as opposed to objective journalism (Coman, 2000; Lauk, 2008). What is,

however, more important is the possible continuity in the focus on the leader as an individual and his/her persona, if the communist media were pursuing this personalized rather than structural news values and presentational style. If the journalists were, as some literature indicates, emphasizing the leader and his persona, then it might be expected that they transferred this presentational style to post-communist period, at least in its early days.

In the second place, if the communist media considered structures and processes as news values, and they changed towards seeing persons as more newsworthy in the post-communist period, this development might be seen as a result of changes in the country's media and political system. If the changes in the news values and presentational style were caused by conditions such as the introduction of the free market, media deregulation, rise of commercial media etc., which arguably made media focus on individuals to be more competitive, then the consequent increase in personalisation in media reporting can be seen as an outcome of modernization processes. In other words, the increased media focus on individual political actors and their personae can be seen as an outcome of the changes which the societies have gone through. Hence, it might be argued that once post-communist societies experienced changes in their media and political systems, the political communication actors started pursuing the same communication practices as their Western counterparts. That is, they started considering individuals to be important and newsworthy actors, and consequently they started personalizing their communication.

Finally, as was outlined at the beginning of previous chapter, some scholars suggest that the personalized reporting style did not develop in post-communist countries as a result of modernization processes, but rather that these countries "adopted 'Americanized' style of reporting (Votmer & Schmitt-Beck, 2002: 21). In this way the rise of importance of individuals as a news value is seen as a trend imported from Western countries, among which the United States is most frequently mentioned as a centre from which modern trends in political communication are disseminated (Swanson & Mancini, 1996). Therefore, the "Americanization" hypothesis in this context would suggest that the news values and trends in media reporting of post-communist countries have been imported from the US, i.e. that the post-communist media started pursuing personalized reporting by imitating news values and practices from the US.

A more nuanced approach to this export-import model is that which considers national political communication trends to be a combination of trends imported from other countries, not necessarily the US, and traditional

communication practices. Examples of these models are “hybrid” and “shopping” models (Plasser, 2000, 2002). Hence, according to these theories, the rise in importance of persons as a news value in post-communist countries would be seen as the full or adapted imitation of news values and practices from other, mostly Western, countries. However, which news values post-communist media followed, how they affected their reporting styles, and which theory is best suited to explain the development of news values in this context, remains unclear.

4.2. The role of television

Although news values seem as an important factor that might contribute to the increase in the personalisation of political communication, a more frequently mentioned causal condition are the technological developments related to media. Specifically, in the political communication, and especially personalisation literature, the increase in the personalisation of political communication is most frequently connected to the rise of electronic media, primarily television (e.g. Jamieson, 1988; McAllister, 2007; Meyrowitz, 1985; Poguntke & Webb, 2005; Ryfe, 2001). Since it may be argued that Western media were even before the television era focused on individuals due to its media logic, the role of television can perhaps be better seen as enhancing an already present trend. A common hypothesis is that the technology of television has a great impact on the focus on individuals, and especially their personae (Karvonen, 2010; Keeter, 1987; Meyrowitz, 1985).

In the first place, television is a visual medium, hence it mostly communicates information through visuals, videos and pictures. Information about complex and abstract issues and institutions is difficult to present with visuals, so it is more convenient to communicate such information through a person (McAllister, 1996, 2007). For example, if the story is about the reconstruction of a government, the television news will probably cover it with recordings of the Prime Minister, old and new cabinet members, and sound-bites of important political actors, than by a recording of the government headquarters and documents detailing the process of reconstruction. In this way the abstract and complex issue of government reconstruction is explained through the main actors in the process.

Another reason why individuals came to be the leading actors in television news lies also in the fact that viewers tend to forget most of the information from the television news, but not that related to persons. For example, Gunter's (1987) research showed that television is not an efficient medium for increasing viewers' knowledge of issues since an average television viewer remembers only two or

three of 15 television news items. However, television viewers more easily remember people they see on the news and information about their personas (Graber, 1988). Hence, telling a story through a person in television news might increase the extent to which viewers remember the news.

Finally, due to the dimensions of the television screen and the quality of the image, television uses close-ups which give a “more detailed look at our leaders than we have of most of our friends” (Jamieson, 1988: 62; see also Meyrowitz, 1985). This intimate look at leaders that television allows creates an intimacy between the viewer and the leader. It makes viewers believe that they saw the leader as a real person since they have the impression they received the image of the leader without journalistic interpretation; they saw it for themselves how he/she really was (Jamieson, 1988; Keeter, 1987).

This feeling of intimacy is furthermore emphasized by the fact that visuals of leaders often reveal information which was in the pre-television era considered private, and was mostly hidden from the public. Meyrowitz (1985: 271) writes that “the television camera invades politicians’ personal spheres like a spy (...) It watches them sweat, sees them grimace at their own ill-phrased remarks”. This dimension of television, communicating information about a leader’s persona through visuals, is the one which might be seen as enhancing persona-centred media reporting the most. Meyrowitz argues that even if the journalist and/or the politician speaks about impersonal matters, such as collective bodies, policies and issues, television will still communicate personal information, such as a politician’s tone, attitude, grimace etc. For these reasons, media research which looks only at how leaders are portrayed in the spoken parts of television coverage might be misleading. For example, Semetko et al. (1994) analyzed the television coverage of party leaders in the 1992 UK General Elections. They found that references to leaders’ traits in the spoken parts of the coverage were extremely rare, based on which it can be argued that mediated political communication was not persona-centred. However, they also found that leaders were the most visible political actors in the news, appearing in every fifth BBC news item on elections and in every fourth on ITV. If we depart from the premise that “image bites” increase persona-centred media reporting because they transmit personal cues (Meyrowitz, 1985) and give voters “firsthand knowledge about political actors” (Bucy & Grabe, 2007: 669), then it appears as though the television coverage of 1992 UK General Elections was actually quite focused on party leaders’ personae.

In addition, it is suggested that the personalized style of reporting on television can lead to an increase in the personalisation in other media outlets,

mainly newspapers. Meyrowitz (1985: 178) claims that „one indication of the dominance of television in our society is the fact that print media now often emulate the type and form of information that television provides“. Hence, it is argued that since television put the focus on politicians' personae in its reporting, this has led to a spillover effect into print media. In other words, the increase in persona, and especially private-persona centred television reporting might also contribute to print media pursuing this type of reporting by putting more focus on politicians' political and private personae.

In sum, the rise of television is considered to be able to increase the personalisation in media reporting, especially by enhancing the focus on politicians' personae, and their private personae in particular.

Furthermore, the extent to which television communicates information about a leader's persona might contribute to the personalisation in voters' behaviour for two reasons. Firstly, viewers tend to focus more on the visual than on the audio and remember the visual better, faster and longer (Gunter, 1987). And secondly, the kind of information about a leader's persona which is communicated by visuals is the type of information viewers are accustomed to evaluate since they are evaluating people based on their personas in everyday life (Meyrowitz, 1985). Hence, television is considered to encourage voters to cast their votes based on their evaluation of leader's persona, which would lead to an increase in the persona-centred voters' behaviour. Research in the US showed that the importance of leaders' qualities in structuring voters' choices has grown for television viewers since 1964 (Keeter, 1987), which seems to support this thesis.

Due to the alleged influence television has on the formation of voters' choices, the importance of it as a source of information, and its ability to reach a wide and diverse audience, it has also become strategically important for political actors. On the one hand, political actors can reach politically less interested audience and transmit their message via television. On the other hand, since the number of floating voters who decide based on information gathered from the campaign has been on the rise for the past few decades in Western democracies, and that television is considered the main source of information, political actors try to influence the information communicated by television to their advantage (Keeter, 1987; Meyer, 2002; Schulz & Zeh, 2005). This might result in the increased persona-centred political actors' communication.

Specifically, it is argued that politicians started pursuing more persona-, and especially private persona-centred communication, due to the rise of television. The intimacy between the viewer and the politician which was created by the electronic

media is considered to have altered the extent to which private information is communicated not only through visuals, but also through spoken communication (Meyrowitz, 1985). Hence, in order to be in line with this new communication practice, the politicians needed to start disclosing their private information which created a “new eloquence in an electronic age” (Jamieson, 1988). For example, Jamieson (ibid.) writes that in the pre-television era American presidents did not mention their families, pets or anecdotes from childhood in their presidential speeches. That changed dramatically with the introduction of television. For instance, Richard Nixon famously used his dog Checkers in a political ad, but long before that, while he was still a senator in 1952, he mentioned the dog in a televised speech which was named by the media the “Checkers speech”. This persona-centred political communication which emphasizes elements from a politician’s private sphere is said to have become routine in politicians’ communication because in the television era communication “*without* such intimate revelations (...) seem stuffy and unrealistic” (Meyrowitz, 1985: 179).

In short, the rise of television seems to have the potential to increase the emphasis that all three political communication actors put on leaders’ personae, and especially their private lives and qualities. In other words, it is assumed that the more widespread the television use is in the society, the higher the degrees of persona- and private-persona centred media reporting, politicians’ communication and voters’ behaviour.

4.2.1. Communism: The ambiguous case of television

Television was popular in communist countries as well and it reached significant proportions of the population (Dunnett, 1990; Oates, 2012; Tworzecki, 2012). Research points to the fact that on average between 60 and 70% of people living in communist countries in 1970s had access to television. The penetration rates were lower in less developed countries, such as Bulgaria, and were usually lower in rural areas than in urban ones (Welsh, 1980). However, in most communist countries by 1970s the television was one of the main sources of information and one of the main leisure time activities (ibid.). In comparison, more than 90% of households had a television set in the UK during 1970s, while the average for G7 countries¹² was around 85% (Nationmaster, n.d.). Hence, although television was quite popular in communist countries, it wasn’t as prevalent as in the established Western democracies.

¹² A group of advanced economies, namely the US, Canada, Japan, Germany, Italy, France and United Kingdom.

It might be speculated that even if the reporting style on communist television was structural, the rise of television might have increased the persona-centred media reporting in these systems as well as in Western ones, simply because of the rules of television as a medium, i.e. it tends to communicate information through people, because abstract issues and collectives are difficult to cover with visuals. Hence, even if the narrative in the news report was based on structures, the visuals might have communicated information about politicians' personae, even private personae. However, even if the television increased persona-centred television reporting simply by the ways in which it operates, it is difficult to establish what kind of influence, if any, this had on the ways in which other media reported. If the preferred presentational style was a structural one, it might be expected that personalized television reporting did not have a major influence on the change towards more persona-centred reporting in print. Also, it is unclear how, if at all, the personalized television coverage might have contributed to the personalisation in political actors' communication. Given that politicians were exercising either direct (e.g. media content could not be published unless it was checked by appointed political body) or indirect control (e.g. appointing media personnel, self-censorship) over the media content, they were arguably not inclined to change their communication strategies towards those more television-friendly, i.e. personalized ones, because they did not need to adapt in order to secure favourable coverage. However, this might not have been the case with less-known politicians or those wanting to get public opinion on their side for some issue. If they weren't powerful enough to use the media to their advantage, they might have adopted more personalized communication style in order to secure coverage.

4.2.2. Post-communism: Delayed technological development

In the first post-communist period the political elite tried to remain in control over the media, especially broadcast media. In most European post-communist countries the ruling elite firstly deregulated the print media market, while they stalled with the deregulation of broadcast market and usually remained in control over the state or public service broadcasting (Splichal, 2001). However, by the end of the first decade of post-communism, most Central European countries have deregulated their broadcast markets (Gross & Jakubowicz, 2013) and television reached more than 90% of the population (Nationmaster, n.d.). Hence, although television was introduced decades ago, the television market only became as competitive, diversified and widespread in 1990s European post-communist countries as it was in the 1970s in some established Western democracies. Consequently, it might be

speculated that the rise of television in young post-communist democracies could have influenced the personalisation of political communication in similar ways as it may have impacted political communication actors during its rise in established Western democracies several decades ago. In other words, the rise of television during transitional period might have influenced the personalisation of political communication, most probably the increase in the persona-, and especially private persona-centred, reporting in other media outlets, politicians' communication and voters' behaviour.

In short, the rise of television had the potential to increase persona-, and especially private persona-centred media reporting, in the context of established Western democracies. It is also suggested that it might contribute to increased persona-centred communication of political actors and voters. The same speculations might be said of the impact of television in young post-communist democracies which underwent similar changes with regard to the development of television as established Western ones, but several decades later. However, the potential of television to contribute to above mentioned processes in a European communist society remains ambiguous, mainly because of the political control over the media and not fully developed broadcast market, which might have hindered the potential of television to influence personalisation of political communication.

4.3. Commercialization and tabloidization of media systems

In spite of television's "natural" focus on individuals and their personas, Hallin and Mancini's (2004) analysis of Western media systems showed that personalisation of political communication is common to commercial media in general, and not only television. The rise of commercial media is considered to be particularly able to contribute to the increase of persona-centred political communication, more specifically on the visibility of information from politicians' private spheres (Holtz-Bacha, 2004; Kuhn, 2004; Roncarolo, 2004; Sanders & Canel, 2004). Commercialization, or deregulation of the media market, has led to the multiplication of media outlets which consequently meant that there is more media space to fill with new content. Given that the variety of choices offered to the audience led to its fragmentation, that the media market in some countries became highly competitive, and that the primary goal of these new commercial media was to make money (Curran et al., 2009), media outlets in this new environment needed to attract advertisers, primarily by attracting their target audiences. To attract the audience and consequently the advertisers, media broadened the scope of political

topics it covered and changed the style of reporting politics (Kuhn, 2004; U. Rao, 2008).

With regard to the thematic transformation, coverage of politics was mainly broadened by topics connected to post-materialist interests, such as environmental issues, life-style choices or consumer rights. This seems a logical development given that politics itself in the past decades broadened its scope to include these post-materialist interests which increasingly matter to voters (Verstraeten, 2004). In addition, a topic of political reporting increasingly became the personae of politicians, specifically the information about their private sphere, which is closely related to the second transformation, the change in the style of reporting politics. As Stanyer and Wring (2004) noticed, media adopted a style of reporting politics that increasingly became connected with entertainment. Reporting became sensationalist and dramatized, in order to become more “interesting, engaging and reader friendly” (Rao, 2008: 3).

This new presentational style in reporting politics led to the penetration of political information in entertainment forms (e.g. Barack Obama appearing on the Oprah Show) and to the penetration of entertainment information in traditionally informative forms (e.g. a story about a dog that skis in the news) (Brants, 1998). The connection between entertainment/popular culture and political discourse can be seen as an extension of trends already triggered by the rise of electronic media and politicians’ “new eloquence”. The intimacy which television created between the viewers and the leaders made reporting politicians’ private sphere more acceptable, not only for television, but also for other media. Politicians who acted according to this new communication environment reinforced the logic of using elements from private sphere in public discourse and their private sphere consequently became “fair game” for the media (Esser, 1999; Meyrowitz, 1985; Seaton, 2003). For example, the British Sunday Times in 1992 “argued that the publication of stories about politicians’ private lives was a legitimate matter to bring into the public domain, especially in an age when politicians are eager to promote their ‘happy family’ image to curry favour with voters” (Esser, 1999: 314). However, as Seaton (2003: 181) points out, one of the main reasons why commercial media are interested in reporting politicians’ private spheres lies in the fact that “private misdemeanors make better stories than politics”. In other words, given the intense competition on the market, media outlets need to provide the audience with interesting and attention-grabbing news to attract them and in this sense shocking and sensational news about politicians private lives are better “sellers” than complicated and abstract political news (ibid.).

These kinds of infotainment stories are most common to the tabloid press and commercial television (Stanyer & Wring, 2004). In other words, it is suggested that the private persona-centred reporting has better grounds of developing in a country with a strong tabloid sector. There is some evidence of this. Stanyer (2013) used fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis to investigate whether the strength of a tabloid sector is connected with higher exposure of politicians' private lives in the media. He found that in the US and the UK strong tabloid sectors are connected to the higher degree of mediatization of politicians' private lives, but also that in some countries, such as France, politicians private lives can be quite media visible even without a strong tabloid sector.

The importance of a strong tabloid sector for the private persona-centred media reporting goes beyond the fact that tabloids would be more willing to publish stories about politicians' private personae. As Stanyer (*ibid.*, 66) claims: "the tabloid media normalize the focus on personal lives of those in the public eye, it becomes mainstream, a taken-for-granted part of reporting for the whole system". Hence, a strong tabloid sector may lead to a process of tabloidization of the media system, meaning that even the quality press and public television may start reporting politicians' private issues as a reaction to the changes happening on the media market. Schulz and Zeh (2005) report that German public television followed trends in the programming of commercial television stations whose news were characterized by drama, negativity, sensationalism and personalisation. Given that the audience showed a preference for this kind of news, public television needed to adapt its programming to attract viewers (*ibid.*). Kriesi (2010) writes about a similar development in Swedish newspapers. There was an apparent shift towards more dramatization in the ways in which the leaders are portrayed in the quality press, which can be seen as an adoption of trends characteristic of the tabloid press, in an attempt by the quality press to boost their circulations. Tabloidization of news content was used as a successful method of increasing circulation in the case of British quality papers as well, but it is not a strategy that works in every context. In the German case, research showed that papers which decided to "go tabloid" did not increase their circulation, arguably because of the reading preferences of a German public which values hard news, such as business news and political commentary (Esser, 1999).

Although most Western countries had deregulated their media markets by the end of 20th century, these trends (tabloidization, infotainment, emphasis on politicians' private spheres) are not equally developed in all of them. As Street (2011: 75) noted: "It may be true that the mass media are obsessively interested in

the minutiae of campaign tactics, or in the private lives of political leaders, but this is not some sort of universal media fact. It is the product of a system of news reporting, itself shaped by commercial, political, professional and other factors.“

In short, it is suggested that the media focus more on individual political actors, and their political and private life and qualities, in media systems characterized by a high degree of commercialization. In addition, in these commercialized systems in which tabloid media is strong, the media might be more willing to report politicians' private personae, but it is also common that politicians communicate information about their private personae in order to appear newsworthy and attract media attention. Hence, increase in all dimensions of personalisation in media reporting, and also private-persona centred politicians' communication, is seen as connected with the commercialization of media market. Furthermore, strong tabloid sector may be associated with a private persona-centred media reporting and leaders' communication.

4.3.1. Communism: Politically allowed entertainment

The possible influence of entertainment programming on the personalisation of political communication in communist systems is, similar to that of television, rather ambiguous. Stronger emphasis on politicians' private persona, especially private misdemeanors, was in the context of Western democracies discussed with relation to the rise of the tabloid media and the competitive market. It was argued that, in the media systems characterized by an intense market competition, the media started putting more emphasis on entertainment content and changed the ways of reporting politics in order to attract audiences and advertisers. However, the link between the commercial media operating in an intense market and entertainment-oriented programming can not be easily found in the communist systems. There were no commercial media in communist countries, but rather all the media were state- or publicly-owned (Mihelj, 2011; Oates, 2012; Tworzecki, 2012). It is also frequently claimed that communist media programming was heavily focused on political and educational content, while more entertainment programming was allowed only from the 1980s when most of the communist societies started their liberalization processes (e.g. Coman, 2000; Dunnett, 1990; Gulyas, 1998, 2003). A known exception to this was Yugoslavia whose audience had been receiving a significant amount of entertainment content since the 1950s, when media started being financed through subscriptions and license fees, instead of state subsidies. This caused media to revise their programming in order to attract more audiences (Robinson, 1977). As Mihelj (2011: 518) writes of Yugoslavia, "both leisure and

entertainment were considered legitimate and necessary". There is, however, evidence that entertainment programming was not unusual even in other European communist countries. Oates (2012: 462), for example, maintains that "within the constraints of the Soviet system, entertainment and high professional standards of cinema still could flourish, as Soviet citizens enjoyed classic films, games shows, sports, and professional news productions that were careful to showcase the best aspects of the Soviet system." Similarly, in Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia and East Germany, the audience was not only able to watch programming of Western neighbours, but a significant amount of programming on the domestic communist television was imported Western content, especially in the form of movies (Mihelj, 2011; Tworzecki, 2012).

Nonetheless, it should be kept in mind that the entertainment-based content had its limitations, which might be seen as especially relevant with regard to its possible influence on the increase in personalisation of political communication. Entertainment programming was allowed as long as it was reinforcing the state's ideology and values and not harming the party or the members of the political elite (Mihelj, 2011; Oates, 2012). It is, therefore, difficult to imagine that communist media would pursue scandalous persona-centred reporting, which is sometimes the case with Western entertainment media. However, in countries such as Yugoslavia, and perhaps Poland and Hungary, where there was an audience accustomed to receiving "tabloid-style coverage" of popular culture, characterized by the focus on celebrities' private lives (Mihelj, 2011), both the political elite and the media might have been more inclined to sometimes use this kind of communication to their advantage. On the one hand, communist politicians sometimes engaged with popular culture to "boost their standing abroad and attract popular support at home" (Mihelj, 2011: 326), just as their colleagues in the West. For example, Yugoslav leader Tito's relationships with famous Hollywood stars were frequently reported in the media. It was reported that Hollywood stars expressed "admiration for Tito's personality" when they met him in Los Angeles. Richard Burton's comments about Tito's heroism were mentioned etc. (ibid.). On the other hand, the media was apparently willing to pursue stories about a leader's private life, to the extent approved by the political elite, in order to sell more papers or attract a larger audience (Apor, 2004). Even though these examples show that this kind of persona-centred reporting was not completely absent from some communist systems, it is still unclear as to whether it was a normal feature of communist political communication, or only practiced occasionally and in special circumstances.

In short, it might be supposed that in those communist media systems in which the media at least to an extent relied on advertisers and the audience for its funding, the spread of entertainment-based content might have been connected to the increase in the personalisation in media reporting and leaders' communication, just as in Western countries.

4.3.2. Post-communism: The curious case of tabloids

With the introduction of democracy and the free-market, the state in the post-communist era stopped funding most media, public television being the exception to the rule, and opened the market for private investors. Without state subsidies and with the tidal wave of new media outlets, media from the former system was forced to adapt their content in order to attract audiences, and arguably to start reporting in a more Westernized style, that in which news values are scandal, sensation, entertainment, public figures' private lives etc. (Coman, 2000; Gulyas, 1998, 2003; Lauk, 2008). It is further argued that these trends were reinforced by the entrance of foreign, mostly West European investors into these new markets. Their primary goal was to make a profit so they invested almost exclusively in the tabloid sector which showed the biggest growth. Accordingly, they pursued aggressive commercial policies (Lauk, 2008). These changes were firstly manifested in the print since the state remained in control of public television and usually delayed with deregulation of television market. However, changes in news values and presentation styles on public television eventually followed in order not to lose its audience, especially after the commercial networks entered the market (Gross, 2004; Splichal, 2001).

Hence, it might be expected that the deregulation of the media market that led to the commercialization of the post-communist media system could have contributed to a greater personalisation in media reporting, since the media were arguably, in their desire to attract audiences and make profit, pursuing person- and persona-centred reporting. If media reporting was already personalized in communism, then post-communist personalized reporting can be seen more as a continuation than a change in media reporting, although arguably the reasons why media personalized their reporting in post-communism might have been different. While it is suggested that media reported according to political logic in communism, the person- and persona-centred reporting in post-communism can be seen as a result of the media logic, be that triggered by modernization or "Americanization" processes. From a modernization perspective, the post-communist media personalized their reporting because they recognized that this type of reporting would attract audiences and advertisers in the increasingly competitive market

created by deregulation. Hence, the editors and journalists reacted to the changes in the media system by pursuing personalized reporting that would secure their media's survival. From an "Americanization" perspective, the journalists and editors started imitating the Western style of reporting because it was considered a role model for successful media, or perhaps because foreign media owners transferred the reporting style from that practiced in their Western media outlets.

Given the strong growth of tabloid sectors in post-communist countries, and the dominance of foreign ownership, it might be expected that post-communist politicians' private personae were increasingly being put under the media spotlight, but this did not seem to happen. This was partly due to the reluctance of foreign media owners to interfere with the world of post-communist politics. Tabloid journalism in post-communist countries was seen as a way of participating in the media market without engaging in the possibly dangerous reporting of conflicting political powers (Splichal, 2001). This escape into entertainment in order to avoid confrontation with political powers was common to the media in Latin American military dictatorships as well (Voltmer, 2008). Hence, the growth of the tabloid sector might not be as connected to the rise of the private persona-centred reporting in post-communist countries as it is in established Western ones.

In summary, the commercialization of media markets is said to be connected with the increase in the personalisation in media reporting in established democracies. In addition, in those systems also characterized by a strong tabloid sector it can be expected that both the media and political actors might be more willing to communicate information about politicians' private matters. Commercialization can be seen as having the same effect on personalisation in post-communist systems as well, although it can be speculated that the rise of tabloid sector does not significantly contribute to private persona-centred media reporting and politicians' communication because it is argued that that post-communist tabloids are reluctant to engage with the world of politics. Finally, the potential influence of entertainment-based media in communist systems is rather ambiguous, although it might be speculated that it could have contributed to persona-centred media reporting and politicians' communication if the media relied on advertisers and audience for funding and politicians felt they need to engage in this kind of communication to boost their image.

4.4. Journalistic culture

The final element that will be discussed in the context of the assumed mass media influence on the personalisation of political communication will be the country's journalistic culture. Several authors have emphasized the relevance of the journalistic culture for the personalisation phenomenon in established Western democracies, especially in relation to the media visibility of politician's private persona (Kuhn, 2007; Mavin et al., 2010; Sabato, 1991; Sanders & Canel, 2004; Splichal & Garrison, 2000; Stanyer, 2012; Stanyer & Wring, 2004; Wasburn & Wasburn, 2011; Wojdyski & Riffe, 2011).

Stanyer and Wring (2004) distinguish between "laissez-faire" journalistic cultures and more "conservative" ones. In laissez-faire ones journalists may be seen as pursuing investigative, attack journalism, putting their "watchdog" role ahead of others. One of the main motivations for revealing, especially scandalous, information about politicians' private lives is the exposure of politicians' hypocrisy. The authors note that in these journalistic cultures "politicians' private lives are seen by many journalists as fair game, especially where politicians have used their personal lives for publicity purposes" (ibid., 6). Furthermore, the intrusion into politicians' privacy is often justified by public interest, or in other words, the right of the people to know. It is frequently argued by journalists and their editors that the public has the right to know about what kind of a person a politician is privately because it "allows the public to make judgments about politicians' authenticity, trustworthiness and competence to govern" (ibid., p.6). Other studies have also shown that the US and the UK editors tend to decide on whether to publish a story about a politician's private life based on the perceived link between the private information and a politician's public persona (behaviour, actions, values, policies etc.). For example, one of the findings of the Garrison and Splichal (1994) study of US newspaper editors' attitudes toward publishing information about politicians' private lives was that editors are far more likely to publish a story about an extramarital affair if the politician promotes family values. Around one third of editors were willing to disclose it anyway, but with the hypocrisy element the percentage of editors willing to disclose this information rose to around 85%. Similarly, more than two thirds of editors were likely to report on the abortion of an anti-abortion politician. Almost identical results were found in the follow-up study conducted in 1999 (Splichal & Garrison, 2000).

UK editors share their American colleagues' tendency to base a decision on whether to publish a story on the connection between politician's private and political persona. Stanyer (2012) ascribes the increase in the number of publicized cases of British politicians' infidelity in the 1990s to the journalists' reaction to the John

Major's "back to basics" speech. According to Stanyer, the Prime Minister's emphasis on the family values made British journalists more willing to reveal politicians' sex scandals in order to expose their hypocrisy. However, it was a practice that existed even before the famous 1993 speech. In 1992 *The Sunday Times* argued that politicians' private lives are "fair game" since the politicians themselves use them to gain political points (Esser, 1999).

These examples show that the journalists and editors in this type of journalistic culture are to a lesser extent willing to simply publicize private information. They tend to politicize it, or in other words, connect the politicians' private matters with his/her political role. This may be seen as an argument against the view that the focus on politicians' private persona in the media necessarily leads to the trivialization of public discourse. Given that authenticity is one of the qualities voters value most in politicians (Finlayson, 2002; Kuhn, 2007), it seems relevant, and not trivial, that media provide information that reveals the real person hidden behind the image promoted to voters.

Finally, it should also be noted that not all media outlets operating in the *laissez-faire* journalistic culture are equally willing to pursue a story about a politician's private life. Stanyer (2012: 86) argues that broadcast news and the serious press are less likely to run these kinds of stories if there is no "strong public-interest reason", although this trend seems to be shifting. On the one hand, journalists in serious media apparently want to distance themselves from the tabloid-like sensation pursuing journalists. But on the other hand, given the competition in the media market and the fact that in the UK and the US, the main representatives of the *laissez-faire* journalistic culture, reporting politicians' private personas is normalized, even the serious media outlets nowadays feel the need to cover such stories once they emerge.

On the other side of the continuum from the *laissez-faire* journalistic culture sits a "conservative" one. It is characterized by a deferential media and journalists reticent to report politicians' private matters, "even if they are widely known about amongst the journalistic community" (Stanyer & Wring, 2004). Stanyer (2012: 83) argues that in countries such as Germany, France or Spain it is "ethically inappropriate amongst a large section of media professionals" to report politicians' private matters. He sees this ethical consensus as a distinctive element of this journalistic culture and warns of the consequences of breaching, what was once called in the US a "gentlemen's agreement" (Sabato, 1991). "Journalists who step outside this consensus and violate the codified norms surrounding exposure of

private lives may find themselves isolated within the press corps” (Stanyer, 2012: 84).

State controls and privacy laws offer only partial explanation of why this journalistic culture “appears less comfortable about intruding into politicians’ personal affairs” (Stanyer & Wring, 2004: 6). There is some evidence that, for example, in Germany and France, “attack” journalism was hindered due to close personal relationship between politicians and journalists, and a not very competitive media market. In a situation where the politician is a journalist’s friend and the media are not engaged in a fierce battle for audiences, there is a better chance that a politician’s private matters will remain private (Esser, 1999; Holtz-Bacha, 2004; Kuhn, 2004). However, this implies that a change in these elements might lead to a change in journalistic practices, as was noticed in France with the growth of competitiveness in the media market (Kuhn, 2007), and the weakening of ties in the 2000s between German politicians and journalists (Holtz-Bacha, 2004).

Analysis of Spanish media gives another reason for the low media profile of politicians’ private personas. According to Sanders and Canel (2004), Spanish media, unlike the US and the UK ones, do not consider hypocrisy a justification for revealing private information about politicians. They note that “there is no debate about whether private morality has a bearing on public morality. The question posed about Britain’s disgraced minister, David Mellor – if he lied to his wife, would he lie to the country? – simply does not arise for the Spanish media” (ibid., 207). Stanyer (2012) suggests this is the case in most continental European democracies.

In sum, Western *laissez-faire* journalistic cultures are seen as those contributing to the persona-centred media reporting, with special emphasis on publicizing and politicizing politicians’ private lives. On the other hand, in those journalistic cultures that are more “conservative”, there is evidence that the media pays less attention to politicians’ private personae.

4.4.1. Autonomous v. Deferential media

While it is suggested that in established Western democracies it is the autonomous, non-deferential media that might tend to pursue a persona-centred communication and reveal details from politicians’ private sphere, I would argue that in communist and post-communist systems the deferential media can be seen as an important factor in these developments as well. Specifically, journalists in a deferential journalistic culture in communist and post-communist systems might put the focus on a leader and his/her political and/or private persona, if they are instructed to do so by the political elite that exerts influence over them.

Communist journalistic culture should be seen as highly deferential and dependent upon the instructions and decisions of the political elite, at least as far as reporting politics and political leaders is concerned. As was already stated, communist media systems varied according to the level of freedom they had in reporting news. However, even if the political elite gave the journalists more freedoms in reporting certain type of news, such as culture or sports, it remained in control over the presentation of home and foreign politics, the party and its members, especially the leader. State propaganda bodies usually made clear strategies of how the leader will be presented in the media. For instance, the Hungarian Politburo had clearly stated what articles popularising their leader Rakosi needed to look like. They needed to „include a picture of the leader in question, a short biography and a brief description of his current political activity“ (Apor, 2004: 67). In other words, the descriptions and references to leader's persona were mainly designed by the political elite, while the role of the media was mostly to implement this personalized media reporting and communicate the leader's image as it was constructed by the political elite (Apor, 2004; Rees, 2004).

With the introduction of democracy the political elite did not immediately let hold of the media. One of the common characteristics of the media freedom development at the beginning of the post-communist period were the attempts of the political elite in almost all countries to remain in control of the media, especially broadcast media. Gross (2003: 79) noted that “during the first five years of the post-Communist era, the control and influence exercised by political parties, politicians, political systems, and politics on the news media, particularly television, was greater than on any other institutions”. Although Western, liberal media systems were set as role-models according to which post-communist media systems should be transformed (Gross, 2004; Lauk, 2009), the new more liberal media regulation often had loopholes that the ruling party was able to use to remain in control of the media (Splichal, 2001), and the implementation of new laws and regulations was in general deficient (Bajomi-Lázár, 2013; Lani, 2013).

It is argued that the turbulent 1990s ended on a more positive note. Gross (2003, 2004) claims that by the end of the 1990s media started fighting for more independence and power, and political control over the media eventually weakened. However, some scholars emphasize that those media outlets that became more independent from political influences were mostly privately owned media (Gross, 2004; Lašas, 2013; Wyka, 2006), often also in hands of foreign owners (Slavko Splichal, 2001). Hence, while it might be true that privately owned media has

become less susceptible to political influences, this may not have been the case with the state owned or public service media.

What these developments point to is that the continuing political control over the media made journalists continue with their old practices of deferential attitudes towards the political elite, while investigative and attack journalism was largely absent from post-communist journalistic cultures. This continuous deferential attitude towards the elite meant that the media was unwilling to dig around and expose private information about politicians (Mihelj et al., 2009; Oates, 2012; Pfetsch & Voltmer, 2012; White & Mcallister, 2006), and that the journalists might have been putting the focus on leaders and their personae if that was in line with the desires of the (new) political elite, at least in the early post-communist period. However, with the rise of media's freedom in the later transitional period, post-communist journalistic culture might have become more autonomous and less deferential. It might be suggested that the journalists in this new autonomous journalistic culture were free to report in line with media logic, i.e. put the focus on the individual political actors and their personae. Again, from a modernization perspective, non-deferential media would pursue personalized reporting because it is in line with the needs and preferences of their audience, while "Americanization" approach would suggest that post-communist autonomous media reported in a personalized way because it adopted a reporting style from countries that were its role models – established Western democracies.

In short, in communist and post-communist system both autonomous and deferential journalistic culture can be seen as contributing to the personalisation in media reporting, albeit for different reasons. In addition, political actors that were once able to influence the extent to which and ways in which they were represented in the media, might have needed to adapt their communication practices with the rise of autonomous media. For example, politicians might have become more inclined to put more focus on themselves than their parties in order to be more in line with media logic and in that way be newsworthy and get into the news.

4.4.2. Hypocrisy v. Kompromat

The second important difference between established Western democracies and communist and post-communist journalistic cultures is related to speculations about motivations that the media have for disclosing information about politicians' political, and especially private, personae. It was argued that in Western democracies, such as the UK and the US, the most common argument for disclosing this kind of information is the right of the public to know what kind of

people their leaders are, especially if the mediated information reveals their hypocrisy. In the context of communist media it was suggested that the media served as a tool for the implementation of the leader's image as it was created by the political elite. Hence, in communist systems it can be supposed that the media published information about leader's persona primarily because they were instructed to do so.

The leadership cult literature suggests that there was plenty of mediated information about the leader's life-style, education, social background, upbringing, family and so on, which would in the Western view be information connected with one's private sphere (Langer, 2011; Van Aelst et al., 2011). However, it seems that this information was mainly politicized or presented in a completely political context. Given that communist leaders were meant to impersonate society's values and desirable behaviour, most references to their qualities and lives were connected with communist history and ideology, since the ideal person was expected to be "totally dedicated to the idea of communism" (Apor, 2004: 77). As an illustration, Davies (2004) reports that Stalin was reluctant to allow the publication of articles which were focused on him as an individual or true stories from his private life, such as those about his children or his own childhood. However, he found it acceptable, even desirable, to present his qualities and life stories (real or constructed) as a "personification of the cause" (ibid., 77). Hence, it seems as though it was acceptable to publish information from leader's private sphere, or invent it, as long as the information was presented in a political context and served in a function of legitimizing the order or educating and socializing the public. This practice was especially evident in leaders' biographies. Apor (2004) and Davies (2004) argue that the presentation of leader's life and qualities as personalized narrative of society's history and values led to production of a largely impersonal image of a leader who was stripped of any private features. Hence, non-exposure of the communist leader's private persona should not be seen as a consequence of some kind of "gentleman's agreement" between journalists and politicians such as once existed in some Western countries. Rather, journalists did not have an actual choice of whether to report private information about the leader or not. In other words, it would be very surprising if communist journalists were able to justify the exposure of politicians' private matters with the hypocrisy factor given that the political elite controlled political content in the media and could have easily stopped the mediation of undesirable information.

Although it might be expected that it was the political elite that pushed leader stories into the media, it seems as though journalists themselves were sometimes

competing over who would portray the leader in a more glorious way. Davies (2004: 40) reports how Stalin himself tuned down some of the reports which exaggerated his adulation by, for example, eliminating from the report the sentence “great was the joy of the people who had the happiness of seeing their own Stalin”. Similarly, one of many Rakosi’s biographies, which exaggerated his qualities, stating among other things that he was in his youth “a handsome young Hungarian lad with sleek black hair who made the girls’ hearts beat whenever he danced”, was not allowed to be published (Apor, 2004). On the one hand, these glorifications might have been a reflection of writers’ true admiration for the leader. On the other hand, it can be argued that for some writers building a leader’s cult was more of a career choice than an expression of true devotion. Those who were not participating in the glorification of the leader were in jeopardy of being called enemies of the state, while participation usually ensured authors with public prestige, access to political elites, material benefits etc (Sretenovic & Puto, 2004; von Klimo, 2004). In other words, writing favorably about the leader seemed a very rewarding job. Hence, even if the journalists pursued personalized reporting due to their own interests, they can still be seen as practicing this reporting style because they considered it to be in line with the reporting approved by the communist political elite.

Similarly, it is argued that in post-communist systems the media discloses information about politicians’ personae because they are instructed to do so or paid to do so by members of the political elite. In other words, analyses of the relationships between the journalists and politicians point to the fact that the post-communist “media are complicit in the informal clientelistic exchanges” (Örnebring, 2012: 509).

Specifically, the practice of media publication of “kompromat”, compromising material about a politician, paid and ordered by their political opponents, is one of the most prominent elements of post-communist journalistic culture (Ledeneva, 2006; Oates, 2012; Örnebring, 2012; Pfetsch & Voltmer, 2012). It has a direct influence on the increase in the personalisation of media reporting, given that the compromising material is often related to a politician’s persona, especially his/her private life. Ledeneva (2006) claims that kompromat is often related to a politician’s spending habits, sexual orientation and behaviour, cultural and religious practices, health, age, family life etc. The mediation of negative information about a politician’s persona is sometimes used as a weapon for destroying opponent’s image in elections, but it can also be used in elite-to-elite communication. Örnebring (2012: 509) suggests that kompromat techniques are a constant feature of post-communist political communication since they are regularly used with an aim of “promotion

within the network hierarchy”, for “ensuring the appointment of clientelistic allies to key positions”, and for “ensuring preferential treatment for allied companies”.

This practice of publishing negative information about a politician’s persona differs in several ways from the exposure of scandalous information about a politician in established Western countries. Firstly, in these democracies the revelation of scandalous information is sometimes leaked to journalists, but sometimes it is also the product of investigative journalism. In post-communist countries, especially in the early transitional period, journalists were publishing kompromat after it was leaked to them, or they were paid for publishing it. Investigative journalism was, and in most post-communist countries still is, very fragile. Secondly, Western editors often claim that they publish scandalous information because it is in public interest (Sabato, 1991; Splichal & Garrison, 2000; Stanyer, 2012). Ledeneva (2006) cautions that the publication of kompromat should not be seen as reporting in the public interest given that journalists’ are publishing it to support their patrons or because they get paid for doing so. Thirdly, Western editors tend to emphasize that they run scandalous stories mostly if they can be proven to be true (Stanyer, 2013), while the truth seems completely irrelevant when publicizing kompromat. It is considered that the compromising material mediated in post-communist countries is “sometimes loosely based on fact but often simply fabricated” (Oates, 2012: 466). Finally, while the increase in the amount of mediated scandalous information about politicians’ private persona is in Western democracies partly connected with the rise of autonomous, investigative journalism and tabloid media, in post-communist countries the publication of kompromat is usually seen as a continuation of “practices of informal politics tried and tested by the previous regime” (Ledeneva, 2006: 88). In other words, it is argued that the political elite even in the post-communist period tends to see the media in similar ways to their communist predecessors – as an instrument of control and an attribute of political power (Mihelj et al., 2009; Oates, 2012; Tworzecki, 2012), and that media’s attitudes towards the political elite have not significantly changed from communist days.

In short, journalists’ motivations to report leaders’ personae in communist and post-communist systems seem to differ from those in established Western democracies. Specifically, in communist and post-communist systems the media discloses information about politicians’ personae because they are instructed to do so or paid to do so by members of the political elite. Also, this information is often false or manufactured, and hence, does not aim to informing the public, but rather for discreditation of political opponents.

4.5. Personalisation in media reporting

The final media-related factor has the potential to influence the personalisation of political communication is personalized media reporting. This chapter has until now focused on the media-related factors that are most frequently seen as contributing to personalisation in media reporting, political actors' behaviour and voters' behaviour. However, as was discussed in the previous chapter with relation to the influence of personalized voting and personalized political actors' behaviour, personalized media reporting can also be seen not only as an outcome of various processes, but also as a factor influencing them. This chapter ends with the examination of the ways in which personalized media reporting may contribute to the personalisation in two other political communication actors, i.e. political actors and voters.

As was already briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, the media is considered to have a significant impact on how politicians behave and communicate. Various theories have been designed to account for the changes in political actors' behaviour that are said to have been triggered by the media, such as colonization of politics, media democracy (Meyer, 2002), mediatization of politics (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Stromback, 2008) etc. At the centre of all these theories is the idea that the political actors adapted their behaviour and communication in line with media logic, i.e. its news values and presentation style, in order to more effectively communicate not only with media actors, but also with voters/audiences that became accustomed to receiving information in a media designed way. In other words, it is argued that the politicians adapted to media logic, or even adopted it, i.e. internalized it, in order to get into the news and be able to communicate information to voters in a way they understand best (Stromback, 2008). Given that personalisation, manifested in a focus on individuals and their personae, is considered to be one of the most important elements of media logic (Kriesi, 2011; Mazzoleni, 1987; Stromback, 2008; Takens et al., 2013), politicians may have started pursuing personalized communication partly because the media was reporting in a personalized way. Specifically, it is suggested that politicians started putting the focus on themselves rather than their parties because the media have put them under the spotlight (Stromback, 2008). Similarly, it is argued that that politicians started disclosing more information about their personae, especially private one, because the media imposed this kind of communication and made it part of the regular discourse (Jamieson, 1988; Meyrowitz, 1985). Hence, personalized media reporting is considered to be able to significantly contribute to

the personalisation in political actors' behaviour by changing the ways in which politicians communicate and the type of information they share.

In spite of these strong claims, there is little empirical evidence that the politicians' communication has become more personalized over time, or that personalized media reporting is what caused the change. Maier and Adam (2010) in their state of the field analysis found only a few studies which looked into the changes in the extent to which political actors have put the focus on individuals and their personae in their communication, and established that only rare analyses showed a trend towards a more person-centred politicians' communication in established Western democracies. However, the fact that they were triggered or caused by the personalized media reporting remains a speculation.

With regard to the possible influence of personalized media reporting on personalisation in voters' behaviour, there is again little empirical evidence that the two are causally connected; although it is feared by critics of personalized reporting that they might be, as was already mentioned in Chapter 2. Specifically, it is suggested that the media's focus on individual political actors instead on institutions and issues might motivate voters to understand politics as a struggle of power-seeking individuals, what might make parties and political institutions less powerful and significant in the political processes (Karvonen, 2010). In addition, the person-centred media reporting, especially the focus on politicians' private personae, is by some scholars seen as distracting voters from important political issues and providing them with trivial and politically irrelevant information based on which they might be inclined to reach their electoral decision (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999; Garzia, 2011). Hence, personalized media reporting is considered to be able to motivate voters to understand politics in a personalized way, and perhaps even contribute to them making voting decisions based on the evaluations of politicians' personae. These are again mainly speculations, since there is little empirical evidence that would support any of these claims.

4.5.1. (Post)communism: The dominance of political influences?

While in established Western democracies it is widely held that the media can impose its logic upon political actors, the same can not be claimed for the former European communist countries. In this context it is more frequently argued that it is not political actors that had to adapt to media logic, but rather that media had to adapt to political logic given the control that the political elite exercised over the media (Coban, 2013). Hence, in a communist context it seems much less likely that personalized media reporting has contributed significantly to the personalisation

in political actors' behaviour. On the contrary, as was already mentioned, it is suggested that communist media's reporting style and content were determined by political actors (Apor et al., 2004; Coban, 2013; Lauk, 2008), so even if political actors communicated in a similar way to media, this would not mean that they adapted to media logic.

The same may be true for the early post-communist period in which the political elite tried to remain in control over media (Gross, 2003, 2004; Splichal, 2001). However, with the deregulation of the media system and the rise of media's autonomy, it might be speculated that the more autonomous media started reporting according to its own logic. Once the media reached this, as Stromback (2008) calls it, second phase of mediatization, in which it became mostly free from political influences and started following media, rather than political logic, it could be expected that the political actors started paying more attention to media logic as well. In other words, it can be speculated that the more freedom media gained in the post-communist period, it pursued more personalized reporting which is in line with media logic, and consequently, might have, as in established Western democracies, contributed to the changes in political actors' communication. Kunac and Lalić's (2005) comparison of 1995 and 2003 political campaigns for Croatian Parliament provides some evidence in support of this hypothesis. Authors claim that one of the main differences of campaigns led in the early post-communist period (1995) and the consolidation period (2003) is the fact that the political actors have in the consolidated period started significantly adapting to media logic. Specifically, compared to the 1995 campaign, political parties have designed their campaigns and promotional materials to be more newsworthy and in line with the ways in which audiences became accustomed to receiving information. Apparently, personalizing campaigns by presenting party leaders as personifications of parties and their values was one of these techniques by which political parties adapted to media logic (ibid., p. 111).

In addition, unlike with the case of the personalized media reporting influence on political actors' behaviour, it seems that the personalized media reporting can be speculated to have had similar influence on voters' behaviour in established democracies, communist systems and post-communist ones. In other words, in communist and post-communist systems personalized media reporting can also be seen as potentially contributing to voters' focus on individuals and their personae, although it remains unclear how important was and is this influence.

In short, personalisation of media reporting is in the context of established Western democracies seen as able to contribute to the personalisation in political

actors' and voters' behaviour, although the empirical evidence on the topic is scarce at best. On the other hand, in communism and some periods of post-communism, personalized media reporting might not have been able to influence political actors' behaviour because arguably media were following political logic, and not the other way around. However, with the rise in media's independence from political influences, the post-communist media can be speculated of having similar influences on political actors as is the case in the West.

4.6. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to examine the most frequently discussed media-related factors that are speculated to have the potential to influence personalisation of political communication. As in the previous chapter, alongside those media-related factors that are commonly mentioned in the context of established Western democracies, this chapter also looked at other, not yet acknowledged, communist and post-communist context-specific media-related factors that could have contributed to personalisation of political communication in these systems. By examining media-related elements of these three systems, the intention was to establish why these contexts might be considered as favourable for the development of personalized political communication, and to create hypotheses of how and why this phenomenon may have developed cross-culturally.

In the first place, the discussion showed that there might be significant similarities between the media-related factors that may contribute to personalisation in established Western and consolidated post-communist democracies. Specifically, the trends related to the rise of television, commercialization of media system, or the influence that the personalized media reporting might have on personalisation related to other political communication actors, seem to have the similar potential to contribute to personalisation of political communication in the established and consolidated new democracies. However, these trends developed in post-communist democracies decades after some established Western democracies have experienced them.

Also, there seem to be significant differences between the communist system on the one side and established and consolidated post-communist democracies on the other side. Illustratively, communist reporting is argued to have been led by political logic, while that in established democracies is said to be led by media logic, and perhaps that in new post-communist democracies as well. Similarly, the influence that the personalized media reporting has over the political

actors' behaviour also seems different. It was suggested that personalized media reporting did not have a great potential to influence personalisation in communist politicians' communication since political elite was controlling the media and imposing reporting styles. On the other hand, it is frequently suggested in the context of Western democracies that personalized reporting can contribute to personalisation in politicians' communication, and the same can be seen to be happening in post-communist democracies once the media started gaining independence.

However, it was argued that there are at least two main differences between the media-related influences on the personalisation in Western and (post)communist systems. One is related to the influence of journalistic culture and it was suggested that unlike in Western systems where autonomous, non-deferential media are those that might tend to pursue a person-centred communication and reveal details from politicians' private sphere, in communist and post-communist systems the deferential media can be an important factor in these developments as well. It was suggested that deferential media in communist and post-communist systems might put the focus on a leader and his/her political and/or private persona, if they are instructed to do so by the political elite that exerts influence over them. Hence, in communist and post-communist system both autonomous and deferential journalistic culture can be seen as potentially contributing to the same degree of personalized political communication. The second difference is related to speculations about motivations that the media have for disclosing information about politicians' political, and especially private, personae. In Western democracies, such as the UK and the US, the most common argument for disclosing this kind of information is the right of the public to know what kind of people their leaders are, especially if the mediated information reveals their hypocrisy. On the other hand, it is argued that in communist and post-communist systems the media discloses information about politicians' personae because they are instructed to do so or paid to do so by members of the political elite. Also, this information is often false or manufactured, and hence, does not aim to informing the public, but rather for discreditation of political opponents.

Finally, the discussions presented in this chapter also revealed that certain media-related factors seem better able to influence some, rather than all dimensions of personalisation. While factors such as commercialization of media system, or in the case of (post)communist societies, the nature of journalistic culture (i.e. deferential or autonomous), might be seen as potentially contributing to both person- and persona-centred political communication, other media-related factors seem

particularly connected to specific dimensions. For instance, it was suggested that the rise of television might be particularly connected to the rise of persona-, and especially private persona-centred communication, given the personal nature of information that the television discloses. Also, the rise of the tabloid sector is seen as potentially contributing to the increase in the private persona-centred communication, and not so much to person-centred communication.

Past two chapters have shown that there are plenty of assumptions and speculations about what makes Western, communist and post-communist contexts conducive to personalized political communication. However, there is little, if any, evidence that political communication was or is personalized in these contexts, let alone which factors contributed to it most, in the communist and post-communist societies. It can be hypothesized based on the examined literature that mediated political communication in communism was personalized to a high degree, particularly due to these systems' institutional settings, political elite's aims and practices, high degree of authoritarianism, low educational levels, and deferential journalistic culture. Furthermore, it can also be hypothesized that this personalized mediated political communication continued in the early post-communist system, primarily where the institutional settings were designed to concentrate power, parties were organized around charismatic personalities, television reach grew substantially, media systems were deregulated, and the journalists participated in kompromat battles by publishing compromising personal information about politicians.

Literature review presented in the past two chapters seems to have opened more questions than it answered, and the empirical analyses in the next four chapters will aim to give answers to these open questions about how and why personalisation of mediated political communication developed in communist and post-communist societies. Specifically, the empirical analyses will try to give answers to following questions:

Was the preferred reporting style in communism structural or personalized?

How, if at all, did it change during the transitional period?

To what extent did media and political actors personalize their communication in the transition from communism to post-communism?

How, if at all, did their communication practices change?

Did the personalisation in media reporting have any influence on personalisation in politicians' mediated communication, or were it the politicians who set trends?

Did the relationship between these two political communication actors change during the transitional process?

How can the extent to which the media and political actors have personalized their communication be explained?

Were politically-related factors more important than media-related ones?

Did the most important factors contributing to personalisation of mediated political communication change during the transition?

And finally, which theory is best suited to explain how the personalisation of mediated political communication developed in communist and post-communist societies – modernization, „americanization“, or perhaps continuation?

5. Personalisation in media reporting

This first empirical chapter addresses the issue of personalisation in media reporting. More specifically, the main aim of this chapter is to explore the degrees of Yugoslav and Croatian political leaders' visibility in the national press and the ways in which their personae have been presented to the public over time. Consequently, the main question that this chapter is designed to answer is: Which continuities and changes can be observed with regard to the ways in which leadership was personalized in communist and post-communist media reporting?

After the methodology and research design are presented in the first section of this chapter, the subsequent section reports on the analysis of person-centred media reporting. This part of the chapter aims to explore whether the leaders were represented in the media as the communist leader's cult narratives suggest, and did post-communist media reporting revolve around individuals as much as some theories suggest? In addition, the leaders' prominence and the importance that the media accords them by reporting them are examined in relation to the visibility of their parties, in order to get a better understanding of the place that individual and collective political actors had in communist and post-communist political communication. The relevance of this information was discussed in Chapter 2 when the possible effects of person-centred media reporting were examined in the communist and post-communist context. In short, one of the most important effects that the media focus on individual political actors in these systems might have is inhibiting the development of strong institutions in the society. Institutions may be weakened since the media by this kind of reporting can create the image of individuals more powerful than the institutions they head. Since post-communist systems are considered to be characterized by weak institutions controlled by individuals (Schöpflin, 1993), uninstitutionalized party systems dominated by charismatic leaders (King, 2002; Lewis, 2000), and high levels of public distrust in political bodies (Mishler & Rose, 1997), person-centred media reporting might show to audiences who are the real power holders in the country, but might also lock the institutions in the cycle of irrelevance. In addition, these processes might make it easier for individual political actors to abuse power and have the potential to inhibit the transition to democracy.

The analysis of persona-centred media reporting is presented in the last part of the chapter. The specific aim of this is to explore the ways in which a leader's media image is created by references to his/her persona. The findings from this

analysis are important for getting a more accurate account of the role of media in the development of political communication in the examined systems. It was claimed in Chapter 2 that the focus on a leader's persona in media reporting might lead to the promotion of the politics of image rather than substance, that this kind of information might distract the public from what some consider more important political issues (Franklin, 2004), that it may provide voters with manufactured and deceitful information about leaders on which to base their electoral decisions (Meyer, 2002), that a long-term simplification of political issues by presenting them through a persona of the leader can inhibit the development of critical thinking among members of the public etc. Hence, this part of the chapter will analyze the ways in which the media report a leader's persona and try to establish whether there are any grounds for worrying about the effects of such reporting. In other words, if the media did not put a significant focus on leaders' personae, especially private personae, there may not be reasons to worry about the trivialisation and simplification of political communication.

5.1. Methodology

Given that the main aim of this analysis is to determine the extent to which media reporting is person- and persona-centred, quantitative content analysis was a logical choice since it is the method most suited to detecting the frequency of references to certain content and identifying recurrent patterns (Berger, 2011; Deacon, 2007). A more qualitative approach, such as discourse analysis, was considered in order to get a more nuanced understanding of the context in which leaders' personae were mentioned. However, I decided against this, since discourse analysis is a tool better suited for revealing underlying motives and ideologies (Hesmondalgh, 2006; Smith & Bell, 2007), which was not within the scope of this analysis. Also, given that the aim of this analysis was to determine trends over time in the leaders' media visibility, it was important to use a method which would allow certain generalizations from the data. Qualitative methods are not suited to making generalizations, while content analysis is considered to be the best quantitative textual method that allows for generalized conclusions (Berger, 2011; Hesmondalgh, 2006). In addition, two pilot studies carried out on a sample of British and Croatian newspapers confirmed that the context in which the references to persona have been made and their nuanced study can be analysed with the content analysis method. Furthermore, studies looking to establish the extent to which media focuses on individual political actors usually employ content analysis (e.g. Bjerling, 2012;

Grbeša, 2008; Langer, 2011; Rahat & Sheaffer, 2007; Reinemann & Wilke, 2007; Wilke & Reinemann, 2001), so it will be easier to compare the findings from this study with that from other countries by gathering the data through content analysis.

It should also be noted that the findings from this study are based on the manifest meaning of media text, since content analysis is not well suited to the analysis of latent, hidden meanings (Hesmondalgh, 2006). In addition, given that content analysis is limited to providing descriptive information about media texts, this study will not be able to reveal why the media reported in a particular way, i.e. reveal their intentions, nor how the audiences received the messages from the media (Berger, 2011)

The analysis covers a time frame from 1974 to 2013, providing data for all Yugoslav and Croatian political leaders who had executive power and stayed in office for more than three years. In total, the analysis includes four Presidents and six Prime Ministers. Croatia had a semi-presidential political system in the 1990s which means that executive power was divided between the President and the Prime Minister (Ilišin, 2001). Since 2000, Croatia has had a parliamentary political system and according to the Constitution the head executive is the Prime Minister. However, the President kept some of the executive powers, such as the right to co-create foreign policy, appoint ambassadors, command army etc. (ibid.), and also, Presidents are considered the most influential and popular political figures in the society (Baylis, 2007). Therefore, I decided to look at both the semi-presidential and parliamentary system in Croatia as having “dual leaderships” in which there are differing levels of power between Presidents and Prime Ministers. In a semi-presidential system the President can be seen as having more power, but the Prime Minister is also a powerful executive figure. In a parliamentary system more formal power is given to the Prime Minister, but the President is still an important part of the executive. In short, given that both Presidents and Prime Ministers can be seen as having executive power, I decided to include them both in the analysis.

5.1.1. Material

The main material for this analysis is the national daily newspaper *Večernji list*, which is the only existing mass media outlet that dates back to the communist era with a full archive that is readily available. Editions of *Večernji list* are taken as a main source and included in analyses of coverage of every President and Prime Minister. Two other dailies are used to supplement the findings from the *Večernji list*. The first one is *Vjesnik* which ceased to exist in April 2012 so it was not used for the third year of Milanović's analysis. The other is *24sata* which was established in

2005, so it was used only for analyses of Kosor, Josipović and Milanović. Therefore, there are at least two sources used in the analysis of every President and Prime Minister's coverage with an aim to avoid relying on only one source, to increase the validity of findings, and enhance the ability to generalize. These three dailies represent an interesting mix of different types of daily newspapers operating in the Croatian news market. *Vjesnik* was established as a communist publication and was not privatized in the democratic era (Novak, 2005). Therefore, it is an excellent example of a state-owned media. Also, in the commercial media market of democratic Croatia it was considered to be the daily that was closest to being a quality paper (Jergović, 2004). *Večernji list* was privatized at the end of 1990s and can be seen as a representative of a daily that was transformed from a state-owned to a commercial daily (Malović, 2004; Tuđen, 2007). Also, according to its content and format, it is usually characterized as a semi-tabloid (Kanižaj, 2006). Therefore, its ownership, content and format are different from *Vjesnik*'s. Finally, *24sata* is considered to be the only real tabloid in the Croatian market (Car & Andrijašević, 2012). It was established and is still owned by a private media conglomerate (ibid.). Therefore, *24sata* represents a third type of daily in the Croatian newspaper market: a daily established in a democracy, by private owners, with tabloid characteristics. Unfortunately, only in the analyses of Kosor and Josipović is the coverage of all three dailies included. In total, 392 daily newspapers were analyzed (175 editions of *Večernji list*, 168 editions of *Vjesnik* and 49 editions of *24sata*).

The unit of analysis is an article, defined as a totality of words, pictures and illustrations that form an independent part of a newspaper and whose elements usually revolve around the same topic.

5.1.2. Sampling and time frame

The time frame was defined by taking into account two main elements. The first one is the availability of archives. *Večernji list*'s archive dates back to 1959 when the daily was established, so in order to have at least one consistent source the start of the analysis had to be after 1959. Secondly, the first year of analysis of each leader's coverage needed to be the one representative of intense political coverage, since this analysis also aims to discover whether the personalisation of media reporting is a general characteristic of political communication in these systems, or perhaps the focus on the leader and his/her personae is enhanced in intense political periods such as elections or appointments. Given that communist leader Josip Broz Tito was several times appointed President, the decision to take the 1974 appointment as a starting point for analysis was based on the fact that at

that time Tito was declared President for life, so more intense coverage than in a case of regular appointment can be expected. In addition, in 1974 there are two sources available for analysis, so the findings from the main source were able to be “tested” against the other source what enhances the validity of findings and ability to make more generalized conclusions.

The sample included every news story that referred to each of the Presidents and Prime Ministers (either by name or post) and/or their respective parties in the week preceding their election/appointment to office, and any news story that mentioned the President/Prime Minister during two weeks in March spread across their second and third year in office.

The aim was to obtain a sample of articles that was representative of both the intense political coverage and the ‘normal’ coverage of the Presidents and Prime Ministers, and also to be as comparable as possible. Therefore, the first week of analysis is aimed to capture intense coverage and is usually the one preceding the election in which the President/Prime Minister came to power. However, in three cases (Josip Broz Tito, Nikica Valentić and Jadranka Kosor) the leader came to power by appointment, so the first analyzed week is the one preceding appointment. I believe that is the period of the most intense coverage of the leaders and in that way comparable with campaign coverage. In order to find articles representative of ‘normal’ periods I decided to focus on March since it is the only month in which there were no elections (presidential, parliamentary, or local) throughout the examined period. Also, the focus is on either the first or the second week in March to avoid the Easter holidays. Exceptions were made in cases of Josip Broz Tito and Franjo Tuđman whose first years in office were not included in the analysis. In the case of Tito, the exception was made not to include the first years in office since the material (newspapers archive) was not available for these years (1945-1948). Instead, the year in which Tito was appointed President for the last time (1974) was chosen as the first year of analysis, for the reasons listed above. The second exception was made in relation to Franjo Tuđman who acted as the President of Croatia after 1990, but Croatia did not formally declare independence until 1991, so the 1992 presidential elections can be seen as the first formal elections in the independent state. Therefore, I decided to include the last week of the 1992 presidential campaign as representative of Tuđman’s first year in office.

Finally, the sample consists of articles mentioning the leader and/or the party in the first examined week, and only the leader in the second and third week. The ratio of leader to party mentions is usually used as an indicator of person-centred media reporting. In short, if there are more articles mentioning the leader than there

are those mentioning their party, media reporting can be seen as more person- than party-centred. However, since the introduction of a parliamentary system in 2000, Croatian Presidents need to resign from their party membership once they are elected. Therefore, they act as party candidates in the presidential elections which are captured in the first examined week. However, in the second and third examined week they are non-party actors, and hence, there is no party whose media visibility their own media prominence might be compared to. Because of this, the decision was made that in all cases only in the first week does the sample consist of articles mentioning the leader, his/her party, or both of them, and only the leader in the second and third week.

5.1.3. Research design

The code sheet is divided into four sections. The first section was designed to capture structural details, the second section was constructed to examine the presence or absence of references to the leader and his/her party, the third section focused on the dominant topic, and context (political, private, mixed) in which a leader's persona was mentioned, while the final section was designed to capture the extent to which specific features of a leader's persona are visible, and the context (political, private, mixed) in which they are reported.

In the first section articles were coded for the newspapers they come from, year of publication, and week of analysis (first, second, third).

In the second section articles were coded for the presence or absence of references to the leader and their party in the first examined week, and consequently only for the presence of the reference to the leader. If an article mentioned both the leader and his/her party in the first week, it was coded for both.

The main aim of the third section was to determine the dominance of certain contents in the article. The first variable in this section coded for the *main topic* of the article. In order to simplify the comparison across the newspapers which have historically and comparatively different sections, only three coding values were created. One relates to the political content and includes topic such as national, international, and regional political news, economy etc.; the other relates to the non-political content, for example arts, fashion, celebrity, sports etc. The final code value was designed for articles not clearly pertaining to any of these topics. The second variable in this section coded for the pre-dominant *context* in which a leader's persona was mentioned, the three main code values being political, private and political/private (mixed) context. These distinctions were based on the differences between private and political persona as suggested by Corner (2000), Van Aelst et

al. (2011) and van Zoonen and Holtz-Bacha (2000). If the features of a leader's persona were mentioned pre-dominantly in relation to him/her as a person who is performing a political role, the *political context* value was to be chosen. If they were mentioned dominantly in relation to the leader as a person performing roles that are usually associated with private sphere (father, spouse, sports enthusiast etc.), the *private context* value was to be chosen. Finally, if the article referred equally to the features of a leader's persona in both contexts, and/or it made explicit connections between a leader's political and private persona, the value *political/private* was offered.

The final section of this coding sheet was created to examine the references to a leader's persona in a more detailed, nuanced way. The leader's persona was for the purposes of this study operationalized as consisting of the leader's personal qualities, i.e. traits and skills, and his/her performances or actions in different areas of life, by drawing on the work of Corner (2000), Van Aelst et al. (2011) and van Zoonen and Holtz-Bacha (2000). In other words, features of a leader's persona whose media visibility is researched in this study are leader's personal traits and skills and his/her personal life. Leader's persona was operationalized as consisting of seven personality traits (openness, extroversion, conscientiousness, niceness, emotional stability and temper, intellect and assertiveness) by drawing on the "big five" model of personality traits which was developed in psychology and lexical research with an aim to group all human personality traits in several broad factors¹³ (Goldberg, 1992; Hofstee, Kiers, de Raad, Goldberg, & Ostendorf, 1997; John & Sristava, 1999; Peabody & De Raad, 2002). Also, three skills were included in the analysis - *people skills*, skills in *data gathering and processing*, and skills *in dealing with things and tools variables*, drawing upon Fine's "things-data-people" skills sets typology which was created to categorize skills needed for performing different jobs (Fine & Cronshaw, 1999). The list of different life areas and activities was made by drawing upon variables used in previous similar research (C. Errera, 2006; Langer, 2006; Stanyer, 2013; Van Aelst et al., 2011) and supplemented with the category to code for references to a leader's professional life (work), given that work and activities related to it represent a vital part of ones persona, though often neglected in personalisation research. The final *personal life index* consisted of ten variables: *work, youth, education, family life, love life, appearance, life-style, religion, feelings,*

¹³ The big five model is based on the first five above mentioned variables, but two pilot studies conducted on the British and Croatian newspapers revealed that it is useful to split the original Openness and Conscientiousness variables into two, because of the large number of quite different traits that were lumped together in them.

personal relationships, health and finances. A detailed account of which traits, skills and activities were coded under which variable is available in the Appendix 1.

Unlike in other similar studies (C. Errera, 2006; Grbeša, 2008; Langer, 2011; Stanyer, 2013; Wilke & Reinemann, 2001), the affiliation of any of the leader's qualities or life areas is not predetermined to be either political or private. The pilot study conducted on the sample of 285 articles from British newspapers tried out a technique proposed by Van Aelst et al. (2011) which allows for personal qualities to be coded as presented in either a political or private context. This was applied to both qualities and life areas. The pilot study revealed that not predetermining what is political and what is private provides a more accurate and nuanced picture of the mediated leader's persona and media's framing of political and private spheres. However, it also showed that some cases are not easily categorized as either political or private, but they are rather a combination of both. In other words, the political and private are sometimes connected, most often the private is being politicized (e.g. he lied to his wife, so he will lie to his voters too), so a third code value was introduced in order to account for this mixed context – political/private context. In sum, every personality trait, skill and life aspect had a possibility of being coded as presented in either political, private or mixed, political/private context.

Final sample consists of 3133 articles. Inter-coder reliability test was conducted with another coder who coded 300 randomly chosen articles (9,6% of the sample). Average reliability score calculated using Holsti's method of agreement¹⁴ across all categories was 0.96, with individual variable scores ranging from 0.82 to 1. Detailed results for each category can be found in the Appendix 2.

5.2. Person-centred media reporting

This part of the chapter examines trends related to the person-centred media reporting which is characterized by the media's focus on individual political actors, especially leaders. This is often evaluated by the focus that the media puts on collective political actors, such as parties or governments. Hence, the first analyses reveal the leaders' media visibility over time and the comparison of their media prominence to that of their parties.

The specific research questions are:

¹⁴ Holsti's (1969) method of agreement is calculated as $2A / (N1 + N2)$ whereas A is the number of units in which coders agree and N1 and N2 are the number of units coded by each of the coders.

1. Is there merit to leadership cult theories which seem to suggest that communist media were pursuing person-centred reporting by putting significant focus on the leader, or was communist reporting rather more structural in style?
2. How does, if at all, the reporting style change during the transitional period?
3. Who are the political actors that are most prominent in media reporting?
4. Is person-centred reporting a general characteristic of political communication, or rather do the media focus more on individual political actors in certain periods (e.g. intense political periods such as elections)?

Four different indicators were designed in order to help answer these questions. The first indicator is based on the overall visibility of leaders in media coverage and is measured by the average number of articles that a newspaper publishes about a leader per week.

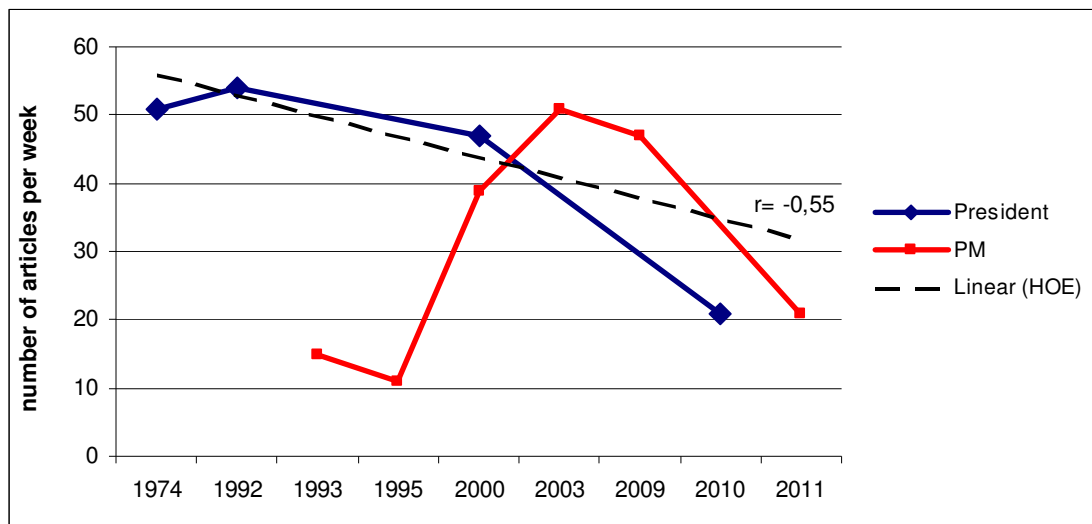


Figure 2. Average number of articles mentioning the Prime Ministers and Presidents per week (trend line related to heads of the executive, i.e. Presidents until 2000, PMs afterwards)

Given that the newspapers have over time varied in size and therefore in the number of articles they publish per week, the second indicator is designed to account for these changes. Hence, the degree of person-centred media reporting is also presented as the number of articles mentioning each political leader standardized by the total number of articles published in a newspaper.

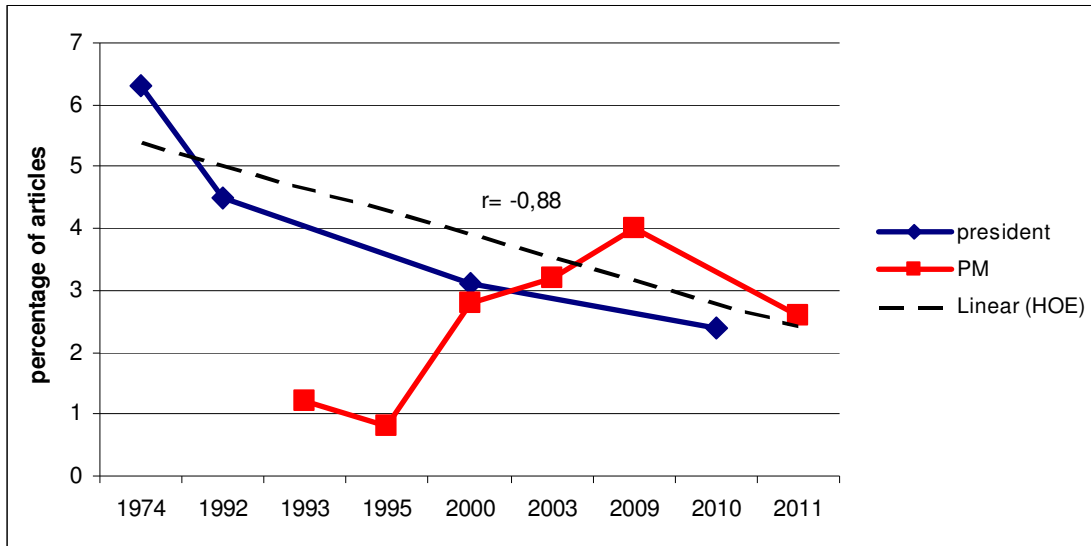


Figure 3. Percentage of all articles in analyzed newspapers mentioning Presidents and Prime Ministers (trend line related to heads of the executive, i.e. Presidents until 2000, PMs afterwards)

The third indicator addresses the relationship between media prominence of leaders and their parties. The number of articles mentioning leaders is compared to the number of articles mentioning their parties, resulting in a ratio of leader to party mentions. Ratios higher than 1 indicate that the leader is more prominent in media reporting than his party, while those lower than 1 show that the relationship is opposite.

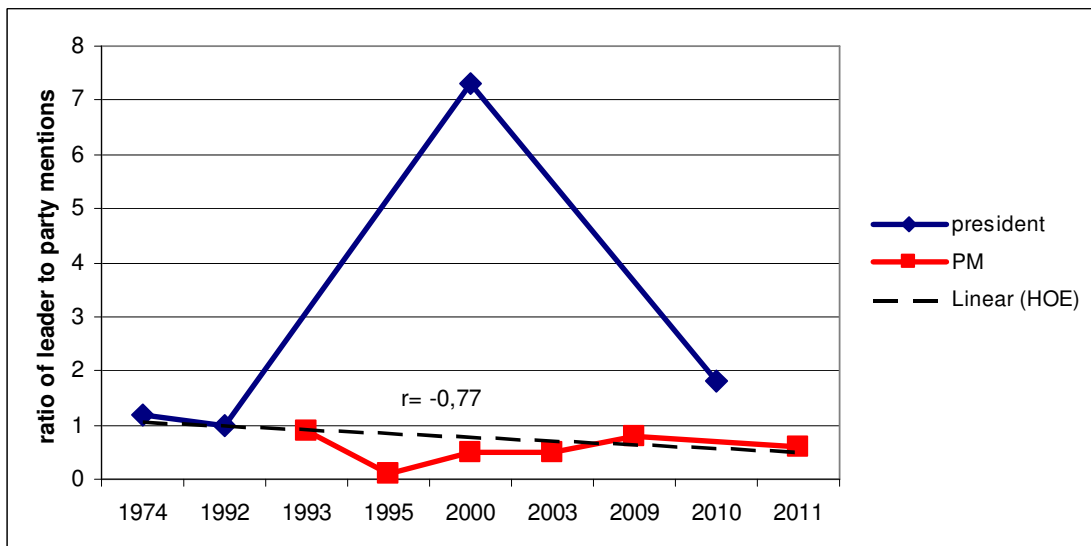


Figure 4. Ratio of President to party mentions compared to ratios of Prime Minister to party mentions (trend line related to heads of the executive, i.e. Presidents until 2000, PMs afterwards)

Finally, the fourth indicator is designed to further deconstruct the content of references to leaders and their parties. More specifically, it explores whether the leader and party are mentioned on their own, together, or a party is mentioned alongside some party official other than its leader.

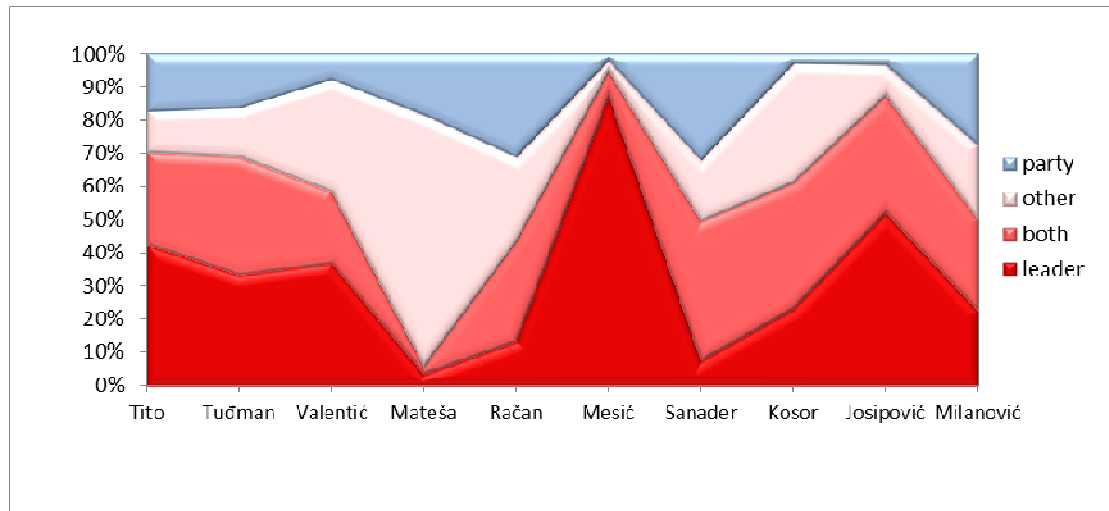


Figure 5. Percentage of articles mentioning political leader and/or his/her party that refer only to leader (leader), only to party (party), party and leader (both) or party and some other party member (other)

5.2.1. Communist leader – one and only

It was argued in Chapter 4 that there are two competing theories of communist media reporting styles – one that claims that communist media reporting had a structural style of presenting news in which societal forces were put ahead of people (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Robinson, 1977), and the other that suggests that the reporting was more person-centred given that it was focused on building a leader’s personality cult (Eatwell, 2006; Janjetović, 2009; Plamper, 2004; Rees, 2004). Specifically, the literature on communist leadership cults suggests that the leader was the central actor in communist political communication, and that his cult was built by an extensive use of mass media. The analysis of Yugoslav media seems to support the theories advocated in this literature, since all four indicators show that communist media reporting should be seen as more person-centred than structural in style. However, I argue that the leadership cult theories can be seen only partly justified by this data, since Tito’s media prominence does not seem to be as extensive as the literature on communist leaders’ cult would suggest.

Specifically, as is evident from Figure 2, Tito was on average mentioned in 51 articles per week, which makes him the second most frequently reported leader among those examined in this study. However, once this average number of

mentions is standardized by the total number of articles published by newspapers, it becomes clear that Tito was the most media prominent political leader. As Figure 3 shows, Tito was mentioned in 6,3% of all articles published by communist newspapers, and no leader in post-communist period was close to reaching his level of mediated visibility. Furthermore, even when his media visibility is compared to that of his party, The League of Communist of Yugoslavia, which was the only party in Yugoslavia and was considered central to all aspects of life (Furtak, 1986), Tito still remains the most media prominent political actor in communist media. As is evident from Figure 4, the ratio of leader to party mentions is in Tito's case 1,2, which means that he was more frequently mentioned in newspaper coverage than his party. Finally, a more detailed analysis of these references to him and/or his party, as is shown in Figure 5, also reveals that he was as an individual the most visible political actor in communist reporting. Of the articles that mentioned him and/or his party, Tito was on his own mentioned in the vast majority of articles (42,6%). In addition, he was mentioned in the majority of articles that mentioned the party (27,8%). Hence, according to Tito's media visibility, it seems that there might be merit to claims made in the leadership cult literature that the communist leader was the single most important political actor in these systems. Whether the media was reflecting power relations in the country, or they were constructing a perception of them (Hughes, 2007), perhaps as instructed by the political elite who controlled them, the degree of the communist leader's media prominence suggests that there indeed might have been in place a cult-building process and that the communist leader might have been the central figure in the political communication of this system.

In spite of this, I think it is questionable whether this data completely justifies the hypothesis of leader's centrality to communist mediated communication. Tito might have been mentioned twice as much as most of post-communist leaders, but he was still mentioned in *only* 6,3% of articles. Also, he was mentioned more frequently than his party, but the ratio of 1,2 points to the fact that the party was not that significantly less visible than he was. Hence, the extent to which communist media put the focus on the leader does suggest that he was the most important political actor, but the amount of this attention does not seem to be as significant as would be expected from the leadership cult literature. However, what this data does show is that, relative to reporting in most post-communist periods, reporting in communism is quite leader-centred.

5.2.2. Leadership cult dies hard

In order to answer the question of how, if at all, the reporting style changed during the transitional period we need to look at the similarities and differences between the reporting in communism and different periods of post-communism. Based on the literature concerned with post-communist media and transitional studies, which suggests that there may be considerable similarities between communist and early post-communist periods, one of the hypotheses proposed in this thesis was that person-centred reporting was transferred from a communist to a post-communist system. In other words, it was hypothesized that post-communist reporting was as personalized as that in communism, and that a possible explanation for this might be found in the theory of continuation. The data from the empirical analysis of communist and post-communist newspapers points to the fact that there are significant similarities in the person-centred reporting in communist and post-communist period, but the theory of continuation of communist reporting style seems valid only for the early post-communist period.

Specifically, all four indicators point to the fact that person-centred reporting related to communist leader Tito is quite similar to the reporting of the first Croatian President Franjo Tuđman, who was the head executive during the 1990s. According to Figure 2, Tuđman was on average mentioned in a slightly larger number of articles per week than Tito. Given that only Prime Minister Ivo Sanader in mid 2000s was prominent to the same level, communist and early post-communist periods can generally be considered the most leader-centred periods of the ones observed. Furthermore, continuity can also be observed between the communist and early post-communist period with regard to the percentage of articles in which leaders were mentioned. There is a significant drop from Tito (6,3%) to Tuđman (4,5%), but no other leader after them received the same or higher levels of media attention. In addition, Figure 4 shows that these two leaders were reported similarly in relation to their parties. While Tito's ratio of leader to party mentions was 1,2, Tuđman's was 1. Although the two Presidents who succeeded Tuđman scored higher, i.e. they were more media visible than their parties, they were not head executives. In other words, of all head executives, only Tito and Tuđman were as media visible or more visible than their parties. Finally, a more detailed analysis of references to leader and/or party points to the same conclusions in the case of Tuđman, as it did in the case of Tito. As is evident from Figure 5, Tito and Tuđman are most similar with regard to the amount of media attention they got in relation to their parties and the extent to which articles mentioning their parties were dominated by references to them as leaders. Specifically, while Tito is on his own around 2,5 times more media visible than his party on its own, there were also more than 2 times more articles

mentioning only Tuđman than those mentioning only his party, the Croatian Democratic Union. Also, the majority of articles that mentioned Tito's party also mentioned him, which is the case with Tuđman and Croatian Democratic Union as well.

The similarities between the ways in which Tito and Tuđman were reported in the media can be seen as reinforcing the theories which suggest that there are significant similarities between these two leaders, the ways in which they ruled, and controlled their parties. Tito was considered to be the most important person that marked the communist era in Yugoslavia, while the early post-communist period in Croatia is claimed to have been marked first and foremost by Tuđman's charismatic presidency (Boduszynski, 2010). In addition, it is suggested that Tuđman has, similarly to Tito, ruled in an authoritarian way, centralized the power in his hands, and not tolerated opposition or dissent. It is argued that Tito strongly controlled his party and party purges followed whenever someone opposed him, a practice which Tuđman often employed as well (Jović & Lamont, 2010; Radoš, 2005; Tuđen, 2007). Finally, both of them seemed central to the survival of their parties. The League of Communist of Yugoslavia rested on Tito's authority as a great leader, the winner of the Second World War and the unifier of Yugoslav nations. Similarly, Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) depended on Tuđman to keep the party members together and secure electoral victory. The HDZ was established as a party that brought together various political interests gathered around a single idea – Croatian independence. The party did not lie on strong programmatic principles so it began revolving around Tuđman from its very start. He was a person who was able to bring together this heterogeneous group of people and keep them in check (Radoš, 2005). This is further confirmed with the developments after Tuđman's death, when several fractions separated from the party and founded new parties, and intra-party struggles continued for years. Furthermore, HDZ was "reliant upon Tuđman's charisma for electoral success" since Tuđman as an individual enjoyed greater popularity and public support than HDZ (Lamont, 2010: 71). In the 1992 Presidential elections Tuđman won 56,73% of votes, while in the parliamentary elections held in the same year HDZ won around 10% less votes (44,71%). The difference was even greater in later elections. In the 1995 parliamentary elections HDZ won 45,23% while in the 1997 Presidential elections Tuđman won 61,41% of the votes ("Arhiva izbora," n.d.). Also, according to a study by the Faculty of political science in Zagreb, 26,8% of HDZ voters voted for this party in 1992, mostly because of Tuđman, while in the 1995 elections Tuđman's contribution was even greater – 57% (Vučković,

2010). In other words, more than half of HDZ voters voted for the party because Tuđman led it.

In short, the similarities between the amount of media attention given to Tito and Tuđman, and the differences between Tuđman and other post-communist leaders, point to the fact that there might be more similarities between communist and early post-communist era than between post-communist leaders.

5.2.3. De-personalisation of media reporting

In spite of the similarities between the extent to which leaders and political parties were media visible in communism and early post-communist period, overall all four indicators show that the media's focus on the most powerful political actors, i.e. heads of the executive, has significantly decreased since the communist era. In other words, when the trends over time are looked at in relation to media prominence of head executives, it becomes evident that the most powerful politicians have over time become decreasingly media visible, and this has resulted in a de-personalisation of media reporting. The trend lines in Figures 2-5 show trends over time related to the reporting of heads of the executive. That is to say, the trends are based on the data connected to Presidents until 2000 and after 2000 to Prime Ministers. They all point to negative direction of development in person-centred reporting, although their trajectories are not linear.

With regard to the first indicator, the average number of articles mentioning head executives per week, there is a weak negative trend visible, with Pearson's coefficient of -0,55. Specifically, while Tito was in the 1970s on average mentioned in 51 articles per week, Prime Minister Zoran Milanović who came to power in 2011 was on average mentioned in 21 articles per week. Similarly, the percentage of articles mentioning leaders has dropped from 6,3% (Tito) to 2,6% (Milanović), with quite a strong negative trend evident in Pearson's coefficient of -0,88. The negative trend is strong also in relation to the ratio of leader to party mentions ($r=-0,77$), since the ratio has decreased from 1,2 (Tito) to 0,6 (Milanović). Furthermore, from the sample of articles mentioning the leader and/or his party, the percentage of articles mentioning solely the leader dropped from 42,6% (Tito) to 22,5% (Milanović), Pearson's coefficient being -0,72. In short, all data related to the person-centred media reporting of head executives points to the fact that the media coverage is decreasingly focusing on the most important and powerful politicians in the country.

While most powerful politicians have during the transitional period lost a significant amount of media attention, there is evidence to suggest that political parties are increasingly being given media attention. Specifically, in the post-2000

period no head of the executive was more media visible than his/her party, with ratio of leader to party mentions varying between 0,5 and 0,8 (Figure 4). However, while the number of articles mentioning solely the leader, i.e. leader-centred reporting, continually decreased over time, the party-centred reporting measured as the percentage of articles in which the party is mentioned on its own, does not show any significant trend (Figure 6). If Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor is excluded from the analysis, and according to some indicators her case can be seen as exceptional among the post-2000 leaders¹⁵, there is a positive trend visible ($r=0,75$), demonstrating that the media are increasingly giving more attention to parties as collective bodies, independent of their members. This positive trend in party-centred reporting, and negative in leader-centred one, has led to parties becoming more media prominent on their own than their leaders are as individual actors in the post-2000 period (with the exception of Kosor). In other words, since 2000 there were more articles that mentioned just the ruling party, than those mentioning only the head executive. In summary, according to the media attention different political actors got in the late post-communist period, ruling parties might be seen as more important political actors than the individual political actors who were given most executive power.

In spite of these trends, Figure 5 also shows that the references to parties are in all cases dominated by references to individual political actors, leaders or other party officials. This points to the fact that although parties are in general quite prominent in media reporting, they are continually seen as almost inseparable from their members. As is suggested in the literature concerning post-communist party systems, individual political actors, especially leaders, dominate parties (Lewis, 2000) and parties are often defined by their leaders and not the other way around, as is the case in Western democracies (Grbeša, 2008; King, 2002). The strength of connection between leaders and their parties is visible from this analysis too. In the case of all post-communist leaders who were also leaders of their parties (Tuđman, Račan, Sanader, Kosor, Milanović), the party is mostly mentioned with connection to them, and less in connection to other party members. At the same time, the party on its own receives the least media attention if the political leader is not also the party leader (Valentić, Mateša, Mesić, Josipović). This reinforces the hypothesis that parties are mostly defined by their leaders and less by other party officials, or at

¹⁵ Kosor is the most media prominent post-2000 leader according to the percentage of articles she was mentioned in. Also, among post-2000 heads of executive she has the highest ratio of leader to party mentions.

least this is what can be inferred based on the ways in which they are presented in the media.

Parties continued to be largely defined by their leaders throughout the post-communist period, but if the analysis is narrowed down only to head executives it becomes evident that the parties are in media reporting increasingly being connected with party members other than the leader. Figure 6 shows that the amount of reporting in which the ruling party is mentioned alongside a party member other than the head of the executive has grown over time ($r=0,73$). This points to the fact leader might be seen, based on media reporting, as the most important or powerful person in the party, but after Tuđman in the 1990s other party officials started getting more space. In this way the media might have contributed to creating a public perception of a more democratic party system in which parties are not solely means that leaders' use to accomplish personal goals, but rather organizations in which different interests and ideas can be shared and advocated.

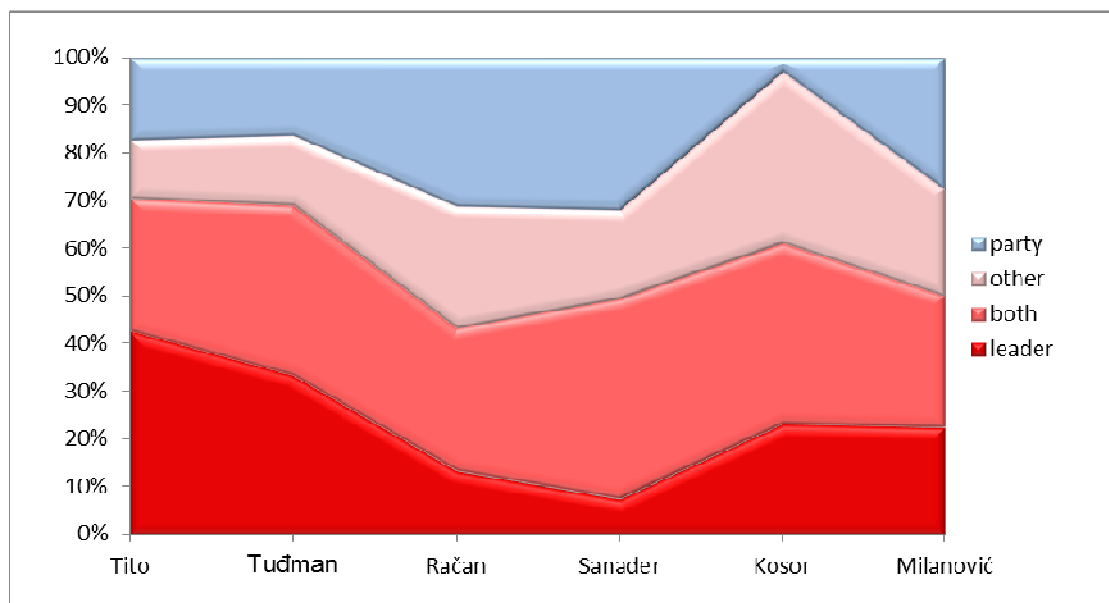


Figure 6. Percentage of articles mentioning head of the executive and/or his/her party that refer only to head of the executive (leader), only to party (party), party and head of the executive (both) or party with some other party member (other)

5.2.4. Differences between actors

The analyses of person-centred media reporting also revealed that the position that the political actor has in the system, the type of political system, and perhaps even the type of political party a politician is a member of, might be connected to the degree to which political leader is media visible.

With regard to the position that a political actor holds, all four indicators show that Presidents who were heads of the executive (Tito and Tuđman) were more

media visible than Prime Ministers who were head executives (Račan, Sanader, Kosor and Milanović). Specifically, Presidents who were head executives were mentioned in a larger number of articles per week (Figure 2), in a larger percentage of all published articles (Figure 3), contrary to Prime Ministers they were as visible or more visible than their parties (Figure 4), and they were mentioned on their own in more articles than Prime Ministers who were heads of the executive (Figure 5 and 6).

It might be tempting to ascribe these differences to the nature of the political systems in which these leaders ruled. In other words, Presidents in presidential systems might be more media visible than Prime Ministers in parliamentary systems since they as individuals might be considered more important and powerful than the collectives they head. However, other factors should not be overlooked. In the case of Tito, there are indications that communist journalists were often instructed to report the leader's activities (Plamper, 2004). This would mean that Tito's high visibility was not due only to his newsworthiness but was also partly an outcome of political strategy. In addition, he was the leader of the only party in the country, so his party leader role might have enhanced his prominence in the papers. Also, his powers and jurisdictions were almost infinite. Since his role was not restricted to, for example, foreign policy and army issues as is the case with post-2000 Presidents, he was shown as the voice of authority on all issues. Some of these factors might have influenced the prominence given to Tuđman too. In the first place, his presidency is considered to be „super-Presidential“ and not semi-Presidential as was officially proclaimed (Jović & Lamont, 2010). In other words, as with Tito, Tuđman was considered to have authority over everything from foreign policy to music, sports and culture. This wide remit might have enhanced his visibility in the media. Also, again similarly to Tito, he was the leader of the most powerful political party during the 1990s – the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). Therefore, he did not appear in the papers only as the President, but also as the leader of the party that had the majority in parliament. It should also be noted that later Presidents Mesić and Josipović were not party leaders and had to resign from party duties once elected to office, which might have contributed to their lower levels of visibility. Finally, the first years of Tuđman's presidency were characterized by war in which the President had even greater powers than in peace and was the central figure in negotiations, international peace conferences etc. Hence, the context surrounding his presidency might have also contributed to the high degree of his media visibility.

Furthermore, the reporting of Presidents and Prime Ministers developed in different ways in the transition from communism to post-communism. While the

Presidents lost a significant amount of media attention, the Prime Ministers had gained it. The data shows that the number of articles mentioning Presidents per week has continually decreased over time ($r=-0,74$), while the number of articles mentioning Prime Ministers has slightly increased ($r=0,5$). Similarly, the percentage of articles mentioning Presidents decreased linearly ($r=-0,99$), while Prime Ministers experienced a positive trend ($r=0,79$). In addition, both of these analyses show that Prime Ministers became more media visible than Presidents in the post-2000 period. This is an important fact since the parliamentary system replaced a semi-presidential one in 2000, so it appears as though the media might have, by shifting the focus to Prime Ministers, depicted the new constitutionally set balance of power in the country. The amount of attention that different political actors received from the media while the semi-presidential system was in force during the 1990s also suggest that media reporting reflects the balance of power in the system. Specifically, the 1990s Prime Ministers Nikica Valentić and Zlatko Mateša were significantly less media visible than President Tuđman (Figures 1 and 2). The media (in)visibility of the 1990s Prime Ministers and the prominence of the President seems to have accurately depicted the power holders in the young Croatian democracy in which President Tuđman ruled in a centralized and authoritarian way.

Finally, all four indicators of person-centred reporting point to the fact that the type of political party of which the leaders are members might also be an important factor contributing to the extent to which they are media visible. Specifically, the heads of the executive who were least media visible, on their own and in relation to their parties, are Ivica Račan and Zoran Milanović, leaders of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), a party of reformed communists. On the other hand, those leaders who were most media visible in the post-communist period were all leaders of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). Also, according to Figure 5, the highest levels of party-centred reporting were noted in 2000, 2003 and 2011, years when the SDP either won parliamentary elections, or was acting as incumbent. This fact might be relevant for explaining different degrees of party- and person-centred media reporting. The HDZ since Tuđman has been a centralized, charismatic party focused on its leader, while the SDP is mostly seen as a programmatic party with decentralized and democratic party structures (Lamont, 2010; Šiber, 2003). Hence, it appears as though the type of party might be connected to the ways in which the party and its leaders are presented in the media. In the case of charismatic parties the media might focus its coverage on the leader since the party revolves around him/her and not around issues or programs, so there is limited information about party's policies that might be reported. On the other hand, programmatic parties'

which promote specific policies and interests could be covered in a more party-centred way since they are providing the media with the kind of information that the media can then use to frame the coverage of politics.

5.2.5. Normal v. intense political reporting

To address the final question, i.e. whether person-centred reporting is a general characteristic of mediated political communication, or rather the media focus more on individual political actors in certain periods, we need to compare the extent to which leaders were media visible in intense and normal political periods. A hypothesis here was that there would be more articles about leaders in intense political periods than in normal ones because events such as elections or appointments focus media attention on political actors. As can be seen from Figures 7 and 8, this is not always the case. When the cumulative average *number* of articles published weekly is compared to the average *number* of articles published in normal political periods, it is evident that intensive political coverage increased the cumulative average for some leaders, but not for all (Figure 7). The same is the case with the comparison of average *percentage* of articles mentioning leaders and the *percentage* of articles mentioning leaders in normal political periods (Figure 8). Specifically, most Prime Ministers were actually more visible in normal political periods than at election time. However, the analysis of post-communist Presidents' mediated visibility shows that they are more prominent at times of elections and that they lose media attention once they come to power. The most extreme is the case of the 2010s President Josipović. If only normal political coverage was included in the analysis, the visibility of Josipović would be cut in half.

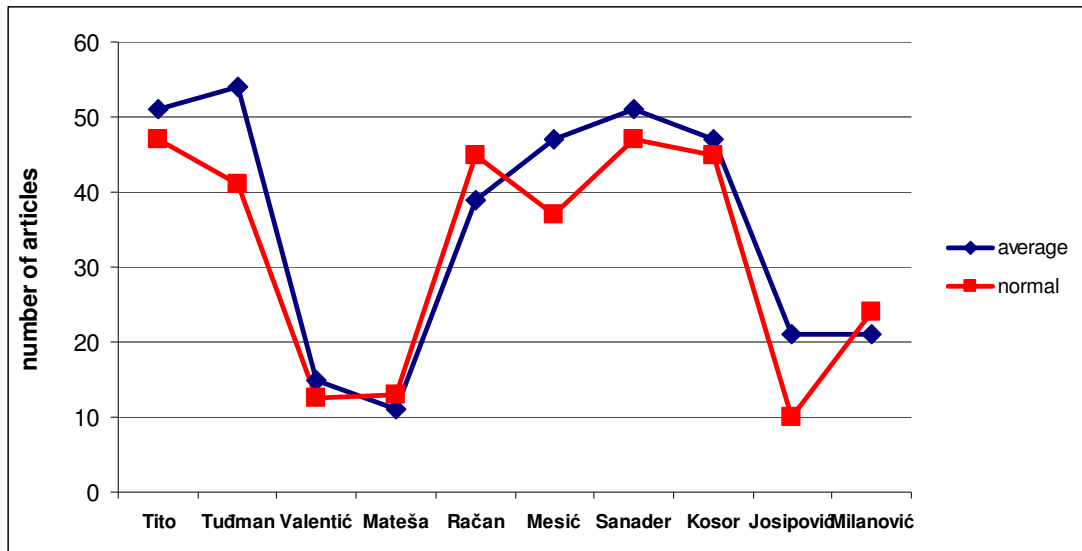


Figure 7. Cumulative average number of articles mentioning political leaders per week compared to the average number of articles mentioning political leaders in normal political periods

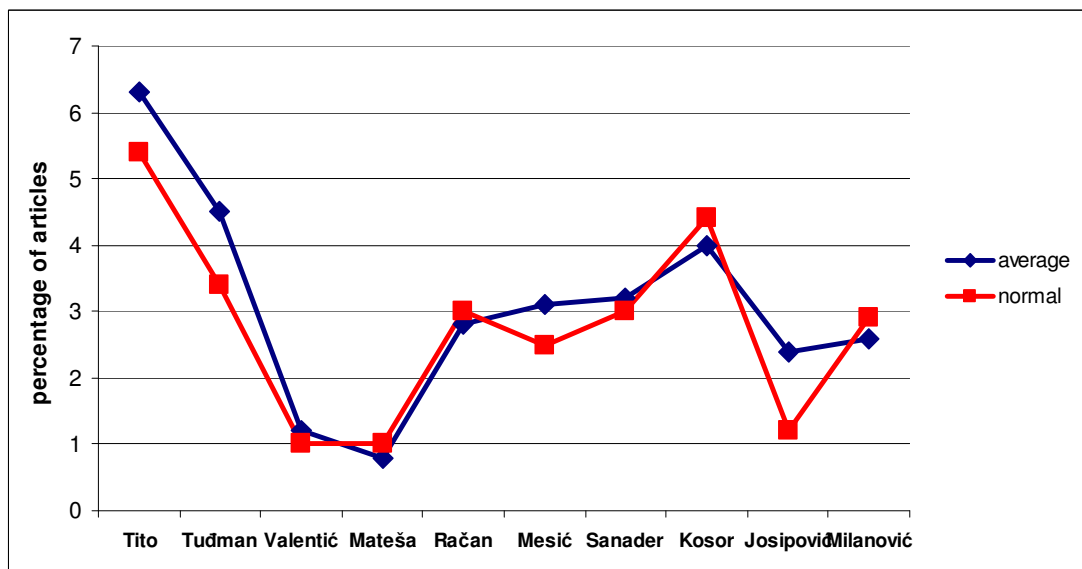


Figure 8. Percentage of all articles in analyzed newspapers mentioning political leaders compared to the percentage of articles published in normal political period in analyzed newspapers mentioning political leaders

The fact that Presidents are more media visible in intense, and Prime Ministers in normal political periods, in both semi-presidential and parliamentary political system, might indicate that the politically-related factors that influence this development might be related to the type of electoral system by which these political actors are elected. All Croatian Presidents were elected by majoritarian voting system, while Prime Ministers have from 2000 competed in a proportional voting system (Kasapović, 2001a). Hence, it is possible to speculate that the media focus on Presidents more during elections because the electoral race is personalized, it is

led between candidates not parties, and the voters vote for individuals. On the other hand, during parliamentary elections in which the competition is led between parties for whom voters cast their ballot, the media might not be as inclined to focus on individual political actors, since parties are at the centre of electoral process. However, once Prime Ministers are in office and start making executive decisions, they, as individuals who have these executive powers, might become more interesting for media and consequently fare more prominently in media coverage.

In summary, although there are significant similarities between leaders' prominence in communist and early post-communist era, political leaders have lost a significant amount of media attention in the process of democratic transition. What might be inferred from media reporting of political actors in transitional period is that individual political actors are slowly losing relevance in post-communist politics, while parties as collectives are gaining importance. However, in spite of these trends parties' media images are still dominated by individuals, especially their leaders. If parties continue to grow stronger, as these trends suggest, a perception of a more decentralized, democratic party system might emerge. Therefore, there seems to be evidence that Croatia is moving from being portrayed as a leader-centred system to a party-centred system, but the transition is far from being finished.

5.3. Persona-centred media reporting

This part of the chapter examines the references to leaders by focusing on the ways in which leaders' personae are mentioned. Specifically, while the previous section discussed data related to person-centred media reporting, this section focuses on persona-centred media reporting, which refers to the media focus on the leader's life and qualities, be those presented in a political, private or mixed, political/private context.

Research questions that this section addresses are:

1. Is there merit to theories advocated by the leadership cult literature which suggest that the communist leader's cult was created by extensive mediation of leaders' life and qualities?
2. What type of information is mediated about leaders?
3. To what extent and in what ways are leaders' private personae mediated?

The sample consisted of 2393 articles mentioning leaders, out of which 1837 contained a reference to the leaders' personae.

5.3.1. (Communist) Leader's cult – name that lends legitimacy

According to the literature on communist leader's cults, those cults are a product of extensive reporting about leader's activities and virtues (e.g. Apor et al., 2004; Eatwell, 2006; Plamper, 2004). If this is so, it would be logical to assume that the leader's persona was very prominent in communism. This analysis shows the contrary. Of all the examined leaders, the only persona that is less media visible than Tito's (70,6%) is that of the 1990s Prime Minister Valentić (70,5%). Hence, almost third of all articles that mentioned Tito did not mention his persona. Although these articles in which the persona was not mentioned were not further analyzed through content analysis, their closer examination reveals several most common ways in which Tito's name was used without mention of his persona. Firstly, there is a large number of articles about all kinds of activities (company meetings, cultural manifestations, sports events, political meetings etc.) that end with a note that the participants have sent a greeting telegram to Tito. For example, out of 21 articles that mentioned Tito in *Vjesnik* on 5th May 1974, 12 did not mention his persona, and in half of those (n=6) the only mention of Tito was in the sentence that reported the greeting telegram that was sent to him. It seems as though sending a greeting telegram to Tito and reporting about it was meant to create the perception of the all-seeing and all-knowing leader who was informed about all that is happening in the country, but most of all that the people themselves wanted to inform him of their activities. In this way, it could be argued, the devotion of the people to Tito and his importance not only in political, but also to all other matters, might have been communicated through media reporting. In addition, there is a substantial number of articles in which different social groups demonstrate support for Tito with regard to various issues. For example, when Italian irredentism became an issue in 1974, the media reported how different groups – academics, sportsmen, pensioners, climbers etc. – expressed support for Tito and asked him to protect Yugoslav interests. It seems that in this way the media might have wanted to create the perception of unity in society, general support for Tito, and also a bottom-up way of decision-making since from the press it appears as though the people are asking Tito to act. Another way in which Tito's name was mentioned without a reference to his persona was in cases when events, places, things etc. were named after him. This is unusual for a living person. However, during Tito's rule many things were named after him, or at least were associated with him – Tito's square, Tito's cup, Tito's fund, Tito's street etc. By being associated with Tito's name it was easier to increase the prestige and popularity of the event/place/thing etc., and at the same time to make Tito seem more important and omnipresent. All these practices can be seen as techniques of cult building (Velikonja, 2008). Hence, it seems that there was indeed

a Tito cult building process in place, but in contrast to what the theory suggests, the cult was to a significant extent built by references to Tito as an object (a person to whom the telegrams are sent, support showed etc.) and by associating various things/places/events with him. In this way it was possible to create the perception of Tito's omnipresence and great importance in the society, without having to report him in great depth.

The technique of mentioning a leader's name to lend legitimacy or increase importance of someone or something continued until the mid 2000s. Officials were sometimes mentioned in the media as President Tuđman's advisors or delegates, as if in that way they became more important or powerful. For instance, in a short article about the health minister Andrija Hebrang, he is twice referred to as Tuđman's representative (Vjesnik, 28.7.1992.), suggesting that his association with Tuđman is of greater importance and better illustrates his relevance than his ministerial job. Račan's case was similar to Tuđman's because the majority of articles in which his persona was not mentioned were those about his deputy, Goran Granić. He was referred to as Račan's or the Prime Minister's deputy, by which Granić, the representative of the second most important party in the coalition led by Račan, was portrayed as the second most important and powerful person in the country.

In the case of later Prime Ministers there seems to be a growing trend towards calling the collective bodies they headed by their names – e.g. Sanader's government, Kosor's party, Milanović's team etc. Although this topic was not systematically pursued, the impression is that when these leaders' personae were not mentioned they were most often associated with their parties and governments. As Langer (2011) points out, this might mean that in the view of the media, Prime Ministers have gained more power and significance in collective bodies.

In general, the extent to which leaders' personae have been referred to in the articles mentioning leaders varies between 70,5% (Valentić) and 84,1% (Mesić). There is a weak positive trend visible ($r=0,58$) indicating that the leaders' personae have become over time more prominent in articles that mention leaders. If only heads of executive are included in the analysis, the trend does not change much, although it is somewhat stronger ($r=0,67$). In spite of the overall positive trend, if we look only at the period from 2000, there is actually a negative trend in place ($r=-0,4$), meaning that the references to personae stopped increasing during Mesić's presidency, but the average of the 2000s and 2010s remains higher than for the periods before.

In addition, the comparison of Presidents and Prime Ministers reveals two quite different trends. With regard to Presidents, there is a strong positive trend ($r=0,89$) which supports the fact that the personae of Presidents have become more prominent in media reporting. On the other hand, there doesn't seem to be any trend in relation to Prime Ministers, where there is a low Pearson's coefficient ($r=0,38$). Presidents Mesić and Josipović had the most prominent personae after 2000, when the Presidents were no longer heads of the executive. I would suggest that one of the main reasons for this development is their loss of power and significance. More specifically, once they stopped being the most powerful and influential political actors, there was less inclination to associate their name with other people, groups, places, events, things etc. because they could no longer to the same extent as before increase the popularity or importance of these elements. This then led to a more persona-centred reporting because when they were reported it was mostly in regard to their actions or personalities.

In sum, it seems as though the explanation for higher and lower degrees of persona-centred media reporting are very complex, and they will be further examined in Chapter 7. At this point it is interesting to note that one of the factors that might influence lower degrees of persona-centred reporting is the amount of power. In other words, media reporting might be less persona-centred in cases of the most powerful political leaders.

5.3.2. Dominance of political information, but rise in politicization of private

Having established the degree of persona-centred reporting, it is now time to deconstruct the structure of a leader's persona as it was mentioned in articles. That is, this section of the chapter will provide a more detailed account of the type of information that is revealed about a leader's persona. As outlined in the methodology section of this chapter, a leader's persona was operationalized as consisting of political, private and political/private part. Accordingly, this analysis reveals the pre-dominant context in which leaders' personae have been reported over time. In other words, even if there were references to leaders private or political/private personae, if there were more and more prominent references to political persona, the article was coded as being pre-dominantly about their political persona.

Figure 9 shows that political persona is the dominant part of all leaders' mediated personae. More specifically, the great majority of references to leaders' personae have been made in a political context, mentioning their political life and/or qualities. Most of these references were mentions of what a leader does in his/her

political function (*work*-related references), but there were also other areas of leaders' lives that were mentioned in a political context. For example, President Tuđman's *lifestyle* was mentioned in a political context when the journalist reported about his busy schedule. The article read: "Torn between his presidential obligations and election campaign, dr. Tuđman is left with little free time for other engagements. This is the reason why he couldn't talk with reporters individually, so a collective interview needed to be organized." (Vjesnik, 30.7.1992.). Similarly, President Josipović's relationship with *religion*, specifically Catholic Church in Croatia, was reported in a political context in the sentence: "Kaptol doesn't know anything about Ivo Josipović, except that he was the first to knock on the door of cardinal Bozanić, even before the campaign has started". (Večernji list, 2.1.2010.). In other words, although it may be expected that references to areas such as *lifestyle* and *religion* are references to leaders' private personae, in most occasions these life areas were actually mentioned in relation to a leader's political role. Alongside life areas, the majority of references to leaders' qualities were also made in a political context¹⁶. To illustrate, Prime Minister Sanader's *emotional stability and temper* were mentioned in a political context in this quote: "It became evident that Sanader gets nervous and cannot control his behavior if someone hits his nerve. Provoked by Račan's claim that he is trying to be the new Tuđman, Sanader started yelling at the Prime Minister that his UDBA had been killing Croats for 45 years." (Vjesnik, 21.11.2003.).

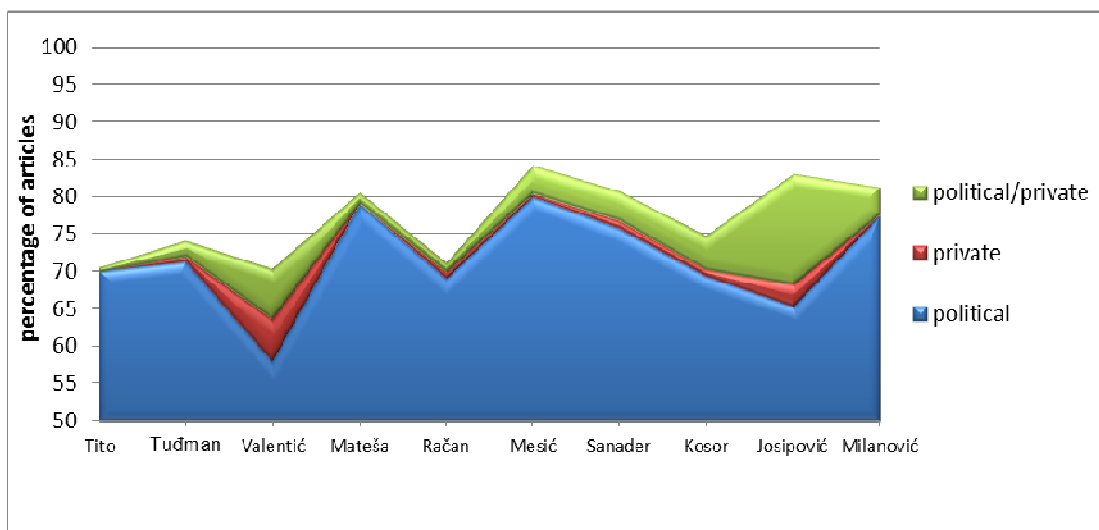


Figure 9. Structure of a leader's persona references presented as percentage of all articles mentioning a leader

¹⁶ In the sample of articles that contain a reference to a head of the executive's quality, the percentage of articles in which these references were made pre-dominantly in a political context ranges from 93% (Sanader) to 100% (Tito, Račan, Milanović).

In half of the cases the references to a leader's political persona take more than 95% of all persona references, with communist leader Tito being the leader whose media image relied most heavily on his political persona (pre-dominant in 99,1% of all persona articles). This information is in line with a theory proposed in the leadership cult literature which suggests that the communist leader was presented to the public as a completely political being, one totally dedicated to the idea of communism and serving his country and his people (Apor, 2004; Davies, 2004). Hence, communist leader's private life and qualities did not contribute to his media image, and they were mostly hidden from the public, while the image that was communicated was that of a leader completely focused on his political role, and living political life.

The only two leaders whose political personae were pre-dominant in less than 90% of all articles that mentioned their personae were the 1990s Prime Minister Nikica Valentić and 2010s President Ivo Josipović. In other words, only in the cases of these two leaders their private personae could be seen as partly contributing to their media images. Given that the private information that was communicated about them was to a larger extent politicized, rather than only publicized, it could be argued that their private life and qualities played an important role in the formation of their political image, i.e. the private information might have contributed to forming impressions about them as politicians. Given that in all other cases the leaders' private personae were not significantly visible in media reporting, and that these two leaders held different positions in different political system during different time periods, the reason for why so much of their private information was mediated might be related to them as individuals. Specifically, I would suggest that one of the most important similarities between these two leaders, that might have contributed to an increase in the visibility of their private personae, is the fact that they both had established careers outside politics at the time they were appointed/elected. Before becoming Prime Minister, Valentić was a famous economist and the head of the Croatian oil company, while Josipović was a university professor and a composer. Hence, their prominent backgrounds outside politics and short time spent in the political world before taking up executive political positions might have influenced the degree to which their private personae were media visible.

Mediated information about leaders' private lives has in all cases been politicized to a larger extent than just published. In other words, when it comes to revealing leaders' private information, it is more common to find this type of information in the media tied to leaders' political roles, than simply reported in

private context. An example of a leader's private matter being published *without* politicization can be found in the following paragraph from *Večernji list*: "Kosor was born in Pakrac 56 years ago, and when she was two and a half years old, her father left her and her mother. She never saw him again. (...) In a way, her mother – Croatian language teacher - left her as well. When Jadranka was six months old, her mother and father got a job in Čakovec and moved, so Jadranka was raised by her grandmother until she was seven years old. Although she now lives with her mother, it is hard to resist the impression that her most important relationship was with her grandmother. They made cookies together and lived idyllically." (3.7.2009.). Similarly, Josipović's *family life* was mentioned in a private context *without* politicization when his wife, Tatjana Josipović, was quoted answering the question about her husband's biggest flaw. As reported in *Večernji list*, Tatjana Josipović stated: "I find it difficult to find a serious flaw with him. What makes me most angry is when he is late for lunch on Sunday and then everything gets cold." (8.1.2010.). However, there are more examples of leaders' private matters *being politicized*, i.e. information from a leader's private sphere is explicitly being tied to his/her political roles. To illustrate, *Večernji list* reported about the mismatch between Prime Minister Kosor's private life and her political convictions in an article that stated: "Kosor, who positioned herself as a conservative politician since her entry into politics in 1995, is actually a two time divorcee and a single mother." (3.7.2009.). In like manner, Prime Minister Milanović and President Josipović's private religious beliefs have been connected to their political roles by stating that "two public officials will congratulate the religious holiday not because of their convictions, but out of respect for the catholic majority in the country. They will be President Ivo Josipović and the new Prime Minister Zoran Milanović, both non-believers, declared agnostics" (*Večernji list*, 2.12.2011.).

Although leaders' political personae are by far the most important element of their media images, while their mediated private personae seem to be particularly significant only in two cases, the ways in which the mediation of these parts of personae develops over time points to the fact that the private persona is increasingly gaining relevance. For the entire examined period there doesn't seem to be any trend related to political persona ($r=0,14$), however if the post-2000 period is isolated it is evident that the political persona-centred reporting has declined ($r=-0,6$). At the same time, the political/private persona has grown in the entire period ($r=0,5$), without losing momentum in the post-2000 period. On the contrary, the trend is even slightly stronger for the post-2000 period ($r=0,52$). Given that the private persona-centred coverage doesn't change much over the years ($r=0,07$), and shows

only a weak positive trend in the post-2000 period ($r=0,3$), the decrease of the political persona-centred reporting and the increase of the political/private persona-centred reporting seem to be the biggest structural changes that happened in the observed periods. These trends appear even more important when they are put in context.

The decrease in the political persona-centred reporting might have led to the decrease in the persona-centred reporting, but the trend for persona-centred reporting is weaker. This means that the political persona-centred reporting was to an extent substituted with reporting about a different part of the persona, mostly a political/private one since that one shows the most significant growth. Put simply, from 2000 there is less and less information about the leaders' political life and qualities in the articles that mention them, while the public has more information about their politicized private lives and qualities. This trend seems particularly important for the 2010s given that prior analyses have shown that the number of articles published per week, as well as their representation in the overall number of articles, have decreased in this period. In other words, newspaper readers in the 2010s not only have less information available about their leaders, but this information is increasingly being related to the leader's political/private persona. Hence, it seems that private information has penetrated the political sphere to a significant extent in the past few years, although it is rarely presented in a completely private context, but rather it is being politicized. It might be inferred from this that the private persona is increasingly being used as a tool in creating a politician's political image. This suggestion is further supported by the fact that all articles, in which a leader's persona was presented predominantly in a political/private context, have been published in the politically-oriented sections of the newspaper. Given that the percentage of articles that mentioned leaders in non-politically oriented newspaper sections have been reduced significantly from 2000 (10,9% Mesić-related articles were published in non-politically oriented sections, while only 1,8% of articles that mention Milanović were published there; $r=-0,62$), this too points to the fact that the politicization of private personae and the interweaving of political and private information has come to partly replace the political information about leaders in the media. That is, in political sections there is less exclusively political information about leaders, and there is increasing penetration of private information, which is being politicized. For example, Prime Minister Kosor's private issues with appearance have been politicized in this statement: "Jadranka Kosor looks like a person who is afraid to make changes to

her appearance. Hence, this begs the question how she will be able to make changes in the country” (Večernji list, 3.7.2009.).

According to the debate about the positive and negative effects of persona-centred political communication, which was presented in Chapter 2, this scenario is the one that worries some critics the most. In short, they argue that the focus on private information in media reporting might trivialize political discourse, distract the public from important political issues and provide voters with irrational base on which they might make their electoral decisions (Franklin, 2004; Langer, 2011; Thompson, 2000). In addition, in the post-communist context it is argued that a special danger comes from abusing private information, which is often manufactured, in order to harm political opponents (Ledeneva, 2006; Örnebring, 2012; Voltmer, 2000), and this is partly what seems to be happening in Croatia. The data show that 18,9% of articles in which the political/private persona was dominant was presented in a positive context, while 28,4% cases were presented in a negative context. That is, when private information is politicized in the media, it more often harms a politician’s reputation, than builds it. This is in line with theories about the use of kompromat, especially compromising information about politicians’ private life, as a form of power struggle between political actors in post-communist societies (Ledeneva, 2006). To illustrate, Vjesnik reported that HDZ official Zlatko Čanjugić in the 1999 campaign for parliamentary elections suggested that SDP’s Ivica Račan did not deserve to be Croatia’s Prime Minister because he danced with drug addicts at rock concerts (Vjesnik, 29.12.1999.), Večernji list covered Josipović’s attack on 2009 independent Presidential candidate Milan Bandić’s political morals saying that he can not talk about morality because he divorced his wife only to be able to get two social apartments (Večernji list, 3.1.2010.) etc.

With regard to heads of the executive, there are two main findings from Figure 10. Firstly, the positive trend related to the political/private persona is even stronger than when all political leaders are included in the analysis ($r=0,82$). Although the trend is not linear, after 2000 there is no return to pre-2000 values. Secondly, there is no decrease in the political persona-centred reporting, which has actually increased ($r=0,44$). Given that the persona-centred reporting also has a positive trend ($r=0,67$), the conclusion which can be drawn from this is that in the case of heads of the executive the private information about leaders has not substituted political information, but rather that it has supplemented it and led to an increase in the persona-centred reporting. This, however, does not change the fact that due to the decrease in the number of articles that mention leaders and their representation in the overall number of articles, newspaper readers in the 2010s received less

information about what their leaders did as politicians, and more about how his/her private persona is related to the political one.

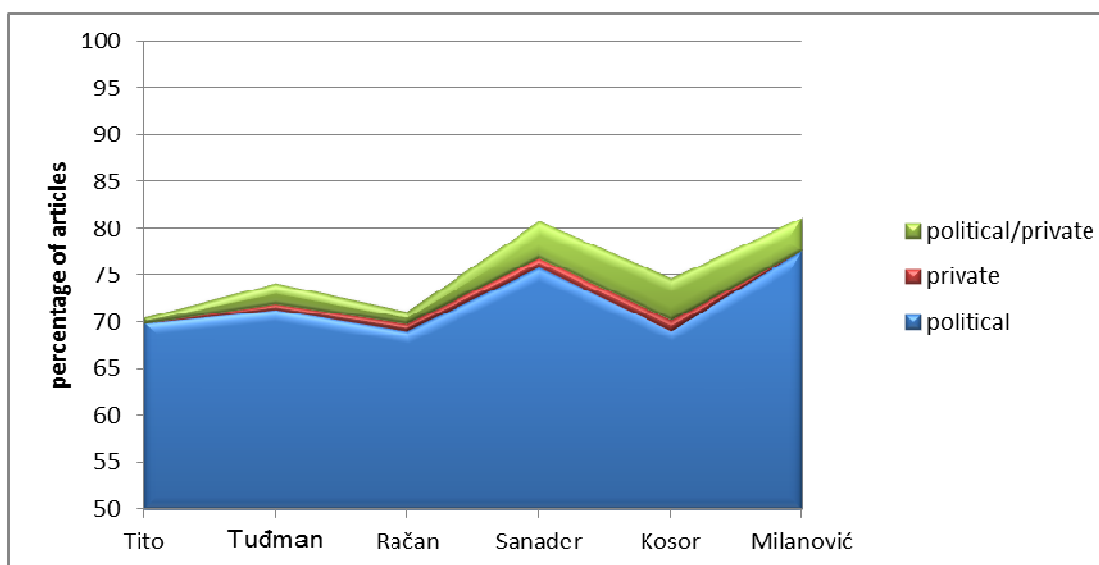


Figure 10. Structure of a head of the executive persona references presented as percentage of all articles mentioning a head of executive

Finally, it is also worth comparing this data for Presidents and Prime Ministers. With regard to Presidents, they show very strong trends for both private persona ($r=0,77$) and political/private persona ($r=0,82$), while political persona remains in all cases dominant and without any significant change over time ($r=-0,06$). In the Prime Ministers' case, the political persona is again dominant, but contrary to the Presidents' case, shows a weak positive trend ($r=0,41$). Also, as opposed to Presidents, private persona has a negative trend ($-0,56$), while the degree of a political/private persona hasn't changed much over time ($r=-0,05$).

This data points to the fact that the politicization of the private and the penetration of the private in the Croatian mediated discourse is mostly related to Presidents, especially since their executive powers have been reduced, and other heads of the executive. It can be speculated, based on this information, that media pays more attention to private matters, and considers them important as a tool in building politician's political image, when it comes to the most powerful leaders or when the political role that the leader has is personalized. Higher degrees of private and political/private persona-centred reporting of post-2000 Presidents might be related to their new role which was mostly down to the representation of the country at home and abroad. In this situation it becomes less important what a leader thinks on political issues, while his private life gets more space in the image building processes, as is especially evident in Josipović's case. The growth in post-2000

Presidents' private and political/private personae can also be seen as a factor in the overall increased visibility of these leaders' personae in the media. It was established before that Mesić and Josipović had the most visible personae in the post-2000 period, and it seems that the focus on their private sphere has significantly contributed to this. Illustratively, if Josipović's private and political/private personae have not been mentioned, his persona would be the least visible in the post-2000 period. On the other hand, the increase in the heads of the executive's political/private persona-centred reporting might indicate that the media are increasingly trying to present a more complex picture of the leader who is the most powerful individual in the country, and this can be seen as a new trend in media reporting since it was not evident in Tito's and Tuđman's case. From the 2000s the mediation of leaders' private information became more common and it could have contributed more than in previous decades to the creation of a politician's image, although this mediated private information seems to more frequently hurt rather than build it. But that again might be seen as a characteristic of a post-communist context in which kompromat is being fed to the journalists as a tool in political struggles.

5.4. Conclusion

It was stated in the introduction to this chapter that its main aim is to explore the continuities and changes between the ways in which leadership was personalized in media reporting in communist Yugoslavia and its successor, post-communist Croatia. These patterns of stability and change were analyzed in relation to two dimensions of personalisation of political communication, person- and persona-centred media reporting.

The most important change that is evident from the analysis of person-centred media reporting is that there seems to be a process of de-personalisation of media reporting in place. Specifically, heads of executive, leaders with most power in the country, have over time become less prominent in the media according to all indicators of person-centred media reporting. There is a continuous decrease in the number of articles published about them, these articles represent increasingly smaller portions of all published articles, and leaders' parties have become more visible in relation to them. However, these trends are not linear and it seems that contextual factors play an important role in the media prominence of all leaders.

In spite of this de-personalisation trend, there seems to be more similarities than differences between communist and early post-communist period, the latter

being quite different to the rest of the post-communist period. The narratives about communist leader's cults which suggest that the leader had a significant place in media reporting can be seen as confirmed by this analysis. The media mentioned Tito in the largest percentage of articles of all examined leaders, and he was also in the view of the media much more important political actor than his party. Similar things can be said about Tuđman, the first post-communist President and head of executive. His dominance over Croatian politics in 1990s was demonstrated by reporting similar to Tito's, but also by making comparisons with Prime Ministers who were in power during his presidency. Prime Ministers Valentić and Mateša were in comparison to Tuđman almost invisible. According to the ways in which political actors were reported, both Tito's and Tuđman's parties revolved around them and were primarily defined by them, a practice that continued throughout the post-communist period. However, in the post-2000 period parties' have grown in importance as measured by their media visibility, and there is also evidence that they are increasingly being associated with party officials other than the leaders which could lead to a perception of decentralization of power in parties. In spite of these new trends, and in line with theories that suggest that post-communist politics revolve around individuals, this analysis has shown that the most media visible political actors are individuals, political leaders. This enduring perception of individuals' power over institutions such as parties might be evidence of the continuing weakness of party system that could be perpetuated by constant emphasis on individuals.

The patterns of stability and change are also observable with regard to the persona-centred reporting. With regard to similarities between communist and post-communist contexts, political persona-centred reporting was dominant in all cases indicating that media did and do primarily report leaders' political life and qualities.

However, there are also certain changes that were observed in persona-centred media reporting. One of the most important ones is the increase in the political/private persona centred reporting, especially in the post-2000 period. In other words, leaders' private matters have been increasingly politicized in media reporting since 2000. In addition, since the degree of political persona-centred reporting has decreased more than the general degree of persona-centred reporting, and given that politicized private information is from the end of 2000s published exclusively in politically oriented sections of the papers, it seems that the private information has come to replace to an extent the political information about leaders. It should also be noted that the media is reporting more of this kind of information while at the same time decreasing the amount of coverage dedicated to

leaders, but also that politicized private information is more frequently presented in a negative than positive context. These trends could be seen as worrying for those who consider private information trivial and politically irrelevant, because media might be seen as increasingly invading leaders' private sphere and using private information to harm their political images, while at the same time decreasing the amount of pure political information about leaders, and the amount of leaders' coverage in general.

This chapter aimed to explore the personalisation of mediated political communication through the lens of media reporting. In the next chapter the focus will be put on the ways in which political leaders were reported as personalizing political communication.

6. Personalisation in leaders' mediated communication

The second empirical chapter examines the degree to which political leaders' mediated communication was personalized over time, explores the ways in which the leaders were reported as personalizing political communication, and compares the features of personalisation in media reporting and leaders' mediated communication. Hence, two main research questions are posed in this chapter. Firstly, what patterns of stability and change can be observed with regard to the ways in which political leaders in communism and post-communism were reported as personalizing their communication? And secondly, what are the similarities and differences in how mediated political communication was personalized in media reporting and leaders' mediated communication? The first part of the chapter will elaborate on the methodology used to answer these research questions.

The subsequent section addresses research questions from the perspective of person-centred political communication. Specifically, this part of the chapter looks into whether leaders' communication strategy can be seen as person- or party-centred, based on their mediated statements. The aim is to explore whether the de-personalisation trends found in media reporting can also be found in leaders' mediated communication. Similarly to media, the leaders might have increased the visibility of their parties and their importance in political communication, and public discourse in general, by a greater emphasis on them. On the other hand, if leaders have persistently downplayed the role of political parties in the post-communist system by not acknowledging them in their mediated communication, and putting themselves as individuals at the centre of political communication, this could have hindered the institutionalisation of the party system and the development of strong parties in general. For the advocates of party democracies this is usually seen as a development detrimental to democratic processes.

The final part of the chapter looks at the persona-centred leaders' mediated communication and aims to explore the extent to which leaders can be seen as putting themselves at the centre of their communication; how, if at all, they were reported as using information from their private sphere to construct their image; and what similarities and differences exist in the ways in which leaders might have been seen to use their private personae in different time periods. As Langer (2011:10) nicely sums up, the penetration of the private into the public sphere "raises in its most concentrated form anxiety at irrationality in politics, as we are invited to judge politicians through the prism of mediated intimacy and authenticity rather than

through (supposedly) rational judgments of policy, record, and ideology”, while at the same time “the process may affect the recruitment of political elites, as it threatens the right to privacy and becomes a deterrent to run for public office”. The analysis of persona-centred leaders’ mediated communication should shed light on the question of which political communication actor initiated certain trends of personalisation. Should political leaders be seen as those who have started publicizing and politicizing their private sphere, or did the media start revealing this kind of information and consequently made political actors adapt to their communication strategy and pursue a more personalized communication themselves? Finally, is it even possible to discern clear-cut trends? Although the final answer to this question will be given in the next chapter, the comparison of persona-centred media reporting and leaders’ mediated communication in this chapter will set the ground for that discussion. In short, the analysis of persona-centred leaders’ mediated communication might give us an indication of who is “to blame” for the penetration of the private into Croatian mediated political communication, and also whether there is any reason to worry about the infringed politicians’ privacy since the politicians might have initiated the process themselves by making their private matters public to a greater extent than the media.

6.1. Methodology

Given that the aims of this analysis are to reveal the extent to which a leader’s mediated communication is person- and persona centred, and establish recurring patterns in the ways in which leaders are seen to communicate, content analysis was deemed the most appropriate research method. Content analysis enables the researcher to detect the frequency of references to a particular content (Berger, 2011; Deacon, 2007) and it allows the analysis “of a greater number of examples of a particular type of text by applying the same criteria to each instance” (Davies & Mosdell, 2006: 98), so it is good for establishing the features of leaders’ mediated communication in a comparative perspective.

Following Grbeša (2004: 61) whose research, among other things, examined the extent to which Croatian politicians in their mediated statements express partisanship as opposed to not mentioning their parties (i.e. person-centred communication), the unit of analysis is a mediated statement which is defined as “the totality of words within article that was reported as having been said by the candidate”. However, it must be born in mind that the analyzed leaders’ communication is mediated, which means that it is the result of a journalistic

selection processes and is subject to editing. In other words, analysis of leaders' mediated statements might reveal more about what type of leaders' statements the media found newsworthy, than what the leaders aimed to achieve with it. Hence, although the ability to infer intention and strategy on behalf of leaders is limited, what this analysis can show is how leaders' communication strategies might have been perceived based on their mediated statements. The public mostly receives information about leaders from the media (Car & Andrijašević, 2012; Robinson, 1977), so their mediated communication for the majority of public might be the only source of information on how leaders behave and what kind of messages they communicate. From this perspective, the analysis of leaders' mediated statements can reveal what kind of image leaders' might be seen as aiming to construct and what kind of communication strategies they could have been perceived to pursue.

The sample comprises all statements made by Croatian and Yugoslav political leaders contained in articles from the sample in Chapter 5. Hence, the time span covered by this analysis is from 1974 to 2013 for the reasons explained earlier, and the statements are taken from the articles published in national daily newspapers *Večernji list*, *Vjesnik* and *24sata*. The reasons for using the first sample to construct the second one are twofold.

Firstly, by using the first sample to create the second one, this empirical investigation represents an even more detailed analysis of media reporting. This can reveal in which kinds of leaders' statements the media is most interested in and to what extent are person- or persona-centred statements newsworthy.

Secondly, the findings related to the personalisation in media reporting and personalisation in leaders' communication that are derived from the same material and time period are better suited for comparisons than if this wouldn't be the case. In other words, the comparability of the extent to which media personalize political communication and the degree to which leaders are seen to do so is increased by using this design. As Lengauer and Winder (2013: 14) point out, "there exists a substantial lack of comparative studies contrasting party and media communication by applying common conceptual and operational definitions". Hence, there is a limited number of existing research approaches that might have been used for the comparison of personalisation in politicians' communication and media reporting. Of studies that have dealt with this issue, Langer (2011) used content analysis to study personalisation in media, and historical qualitative analysis to analyze personalisation in leaders' communication. Partly due to the differences in methods she was only able to draw some tentative conclusions about the interplay between these two political communication actors. Lengauer and Winder (2013) applied the

same method, content analysis, to media reporting and parties' press releases, to determine how the media and political actors personalized political communication. In my view this is a better approach since it is easier to make comparisons from data gathered by the same method. The fact that they analyzed two types of materials, i.e. press releases and media reporting, meant that they were better able to determine whether political actors intended to personalize their communication. However, the analysis of press releases does not convey how politicians' strategies might have been perceived in the public, since arguably press releases are intended for the media and they do not have to be communicated to a larger public in the original form. In other words, this approach to studying personalisation in politicians' communication does not reveal how the politicians might have been perceived to personalize their communication among public, since it is unclear which information from the press releases reached the public. The comparison of media reporting and leaders' mediated statements might be more revealing in this regard. In addition, Lengauer and Winder's analysis focused on a single event (the 2008 Austrian parliamentary campaign). Gathering press releases for a longitudinal study in this project would be difficult, if not impossible, given that there are no databases that might have been used. Hence, because of the extensiveness of research carried out in this thesis, creating a sample for the analysis of leaders' communication by using the sample from previous analysis simplifies and facilitates gathering and analysis of data.

6.1.1. Research design

The coding sheet was divided into four sections. The first section focused on structural details, the second one was created to code for references to party, the third was designed to reveal some general characteristics of the references to personae, and the final one was constructed to provide a more nuanced, detailed account of the features of persona leaders focus on in their statements.

The variables in the first section were designed to code for the newspaper that published the statement, the year and week of analysis they were published in, and the author of the statement.

The second section had only one variable that was constructed to account for the presence or absence of the reference to a leader's party in the statement. The variable in the third section was designed to reveal the *pre-dominant context* in which the references to the persona has been made (political, private, political/private) based on the same grounds that were explained in the case of analysis of media reporting. As in the analysis of media reporting, a leader's

persona was operationalized as consisting of 22 life areas and qualities – work, youth, family, love life, appearance, lifestyle, religion, feelings, relationships, health, finances, openness, intellect, conscientiousness, extroversion, niceness, assertiveness, emotional stability and temper, people skills, data analysis skills and skills in use of things and tools. Again, as in the previous analysis, all of these life areas, traits and skills had the option of being coded as mentioned in a political, private or political/private context. The rationale for using these variables and coding for different types of context have been explained in the research design for the analysis of media reporting (Chapter 5).

In sum, the research questions posed in this chapter are answered through a historical quantitative content analysis of Yugoslav and Croatian leaders' mediated statements from 1974 to 2013. The sample comprises 627 statements, including every statement reported to have been made by political leaders whose communication is analyzed in this thesis in the three examined daily newspapers. A trained second coder coded 70 randomly selected statements (11%). Average reliability score calculated using Holsti's method of agreement across all categories was 0.96, with individual variable scores ranging from 0.83 to 1. Detailed results for each category can be found in the Appendix 4.

6.2. Person-centred leaders' mediated communication

The first analysis is that of the person-centred leaders' mediated communication. It aims to reveal the extent to which leaders in their mediated communication focused on themselves as opposed to their parties, given that the person-centred dimension is concerned with the focus that is in political communication put on the individual political actors, and the strength of this emphasis on individuals is usually evaluated against the prominence of collective political actors.

Specific research questions that this section of the chapter aims to answer are:

1. To what extent can the communist leader be perceived as promoting his party by emphasizing it in his mediated statements?
2. How, if at all, has leaders' focus on collective political actors changed during the transitional period according to their mediated statements?
3. Which political actors can be seen as attributing most relevance to parties according to the amount of attention they gave them in their mediated communication?

4. What similarities and differences can be observed with regard to the extent to which individual and collective political actors were visible in media reporting and leaders' mediated statements, in different periods of transition?

Two indicators were designed to help answer these questions. The first one is based on the number of references to parties that the leaders made in their mediated statements. Specifically, this indicator tells us in what percentage of mediated statements the leader mentioned his/her party. In other words, this indicator reveals the degree to which leaders' mediated communication might be seen as party-centred, and the aim of this analysis is to examine the importance that the leaders were perceived to give to a collective political actor in mediated public discourse.

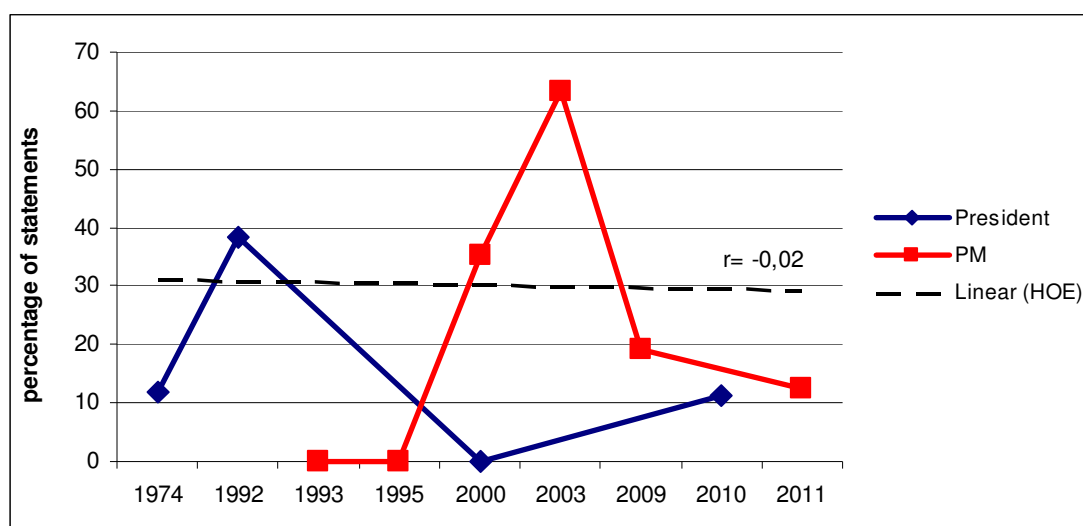


Figure 11. Party-centred leaders' mediated communication

The second indicator shows us the ratio of leader to party mentions in leaders' mediated statements. In other words, it compares the number of statements in which the leader made a reference to his/her persona with the number of statements in which the leader mentioned his/her party. If in one statement the leader mentioned both his/her persona and his/her party, it was counted for both variables. For the reasons outlined at the beginning of previous chapter, only those statements reported in the first week of analysis are included in this sample.

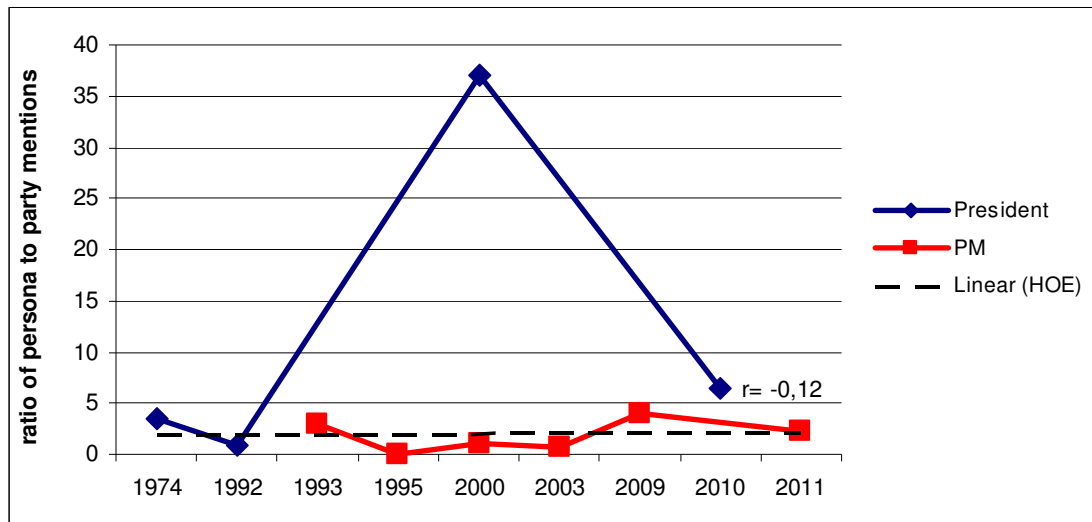


Figure 12. The ratio of leaders' persona to party mentions in leaders' mediated statements

6.2.1. Communist leader's mediated communication - What party?

The data from the communist era reinforces the findings related to the person-centred media reporting. Specifically, the party was as a collective political actor as insignificant in leaders' mediated communication as it was in the media reporting. Communist leader Tito barely mentioned the SKJ (The League of Communist of Yugoslavia) in his mediated statements; he refers to it in only 11,8% of his statements. Also, he mentions his persona 3,5 times more frequently than the SKJ. The data from the previous chapter pointed to the fact that Tito was portrayed in the media as the most important political actor, mentioned without a reference to SKJ 2,5 times more frequently than the party has been mentioned without a reference to him or some other party member. Hence, it seems that Tito and the media can be seen as pursuing similar, person-centred, styles of communication. Consequently, it might be argued that the mediated political communication in communism was in general personalized, centred on the leader, while the collective political actor, the party, seemed far less important in political processes according to the amount of attention that it was given in media reporting and the mediated leader's communication.

In addition, unlike in the analysis of media reporting, there are no apparent similarities between the mediated leaders' communication in communism and early post-communism, i.e. between communist leader Tito and first Croatian President Franjo Tuđman. The only leader who pursued a less party-centred communication than communist leader Tito was President Ivo Josipović in the 2010s, while the only leader whose communication was more party-centred than Tuđman's was Prime

Minister Sanader's in the 2000s (Figure 11). Furthermore, Tito made a reference to his persona 3,5 times more frequently than to his party, while Tuđman actually made more references to his party than to his persona (Figure 12). Hence, communist leader Tito and the first post-communist leader Tuđman might have been seen as pursuing quite different communication styles based on their mediated communication. The impression that might have been created by their mediated statements was that Tito put all the emphasis on himself and neglected the party, while Tuđman could be seen as putting a significant focus on his party as soon as the multi-party democratic system was introduced. This shows that although the communist and early post-communist leader were reported to a similar extent in media, these political leaders might have been perceived as differing greatly in their communication. Hence, the similarities between the personalisation of mediated political communication in the communist and early post-communist era seem to be related only to the ways in which media content was personalized, while the leaders' mediated communication differed to a great extent.

What is also evident from Figures 11 and 12 is that there is no trend over time which would suggest that the leaders have since communism focused more, or less, on their parties in their communication, nor are there significant trends related to heads of the executive, Presidents or Prime Ministers. In other words, while the analysis of media reporting found that the heads of the executive have over time become significantly less media visible, with political parties' media visibility growing over time, the same trend was not found with regard to leaders' mediated communication.

6.2.2. From differences to routinisation

Although there are no significant trends over time related to person-centred mediated leaders' communication, it seems that the positions that a politician has in the party and political system can be important factors contributing to his/her degrees of person-centred mediated communication. Specifically, in the post-communist era, all leaders who were heads of the executive and party leaders centred more on their parties in their communication, than those who didn't hold these positions. And furthermore, those leaders who were not heads of the executive and were not party leaders more frequently put the focus in their statements on themselves rather than on the parties of which they were members.

The 1990s head executive and party leader, President Tuđman, was reported as pursuing less person-centred communication than his Prime Ministers Valentić and Mateša. Similarly, in the post-2000 period, head executives and party

leaders, Prime Ministers Račan, Sander, Kosor and Milanović, put greater focus on their parties than themselves in comparison to the mediated communication of Presidents Mesić and Josipović. Hence, it appears as though those political actors that can be seen as emphasizing political collectives and by this perhaps increasing the importance of political parties in the system, are party leaders who hold the highest executive positions.

However, even the extent to which these actors were reported as focusing on political parties does not seem to have contributed significantly to making parties appear more powerful or important in political systems. According to Figure 11 only Prime Minister Sanader mentioned his party in more than half of his mediated statements, while head executives who succeeded him were reported as referring to their parties in less than 20% of their statements (Kosor, Milanović). In addition, only party leaders and head executives who might have been seen as putting more focus on their parties than on themselves in their communication are President Tuđman and Prime Minister Sanader. Their persona to party ratios are 0,9 and 0,7, respectively (Figure 12). Hence, although heads of the executive and party leaders might have been perceived as giving more importance to parties by mentioning them more frequently than other actors, their communication should still not be considered party-centred since the references to party did not constitute a major part of their mediated communication. Similarly, the findings from the media reporting analysis pointed to the fact that the parties were not the most important political actors in the mediated political communication according to the amount of attention they were given in media reporting, and also that they were in the majority of cases mentioned in connection to their leaders. Therefore, it seems that in mediated political communication in general the parties appeared secondary to leaders and were mostly defined by their leaders, what might have created a perception of individuals' greater importance relative to, and power over, political parties.

The differences between the extent to which different political actors are reported to pursue party- or person-centred communication seem to have decreased in the late post-communist period. Specifically, since the end of 2000s it seems that there was a routinisation of person-centred leaders' mediated communication since the leaders were not reported as differing greatly in their degrees of party- and person-centred communication.

Figures 11 and 12 show that, unlike in the first two decades of post-communism, the differences between party leaders and heads of the executive and those who didn't hold these positions, are less prominent. Party leaders and head

executives Prime Ministers Jadranka Kosor and Zoran Milanović, were reported as mentioning their parties as rarely as the President Josipović who was not a party leader nor head executive (Kosor in 19,8%, Milanović in 12,5%, and Josipović in 11,4% of statements). They also more frequently focused on their personae than on their parties in their communication (Kosor's ratio of persona to party mentions is 4, Milanović's is 2,3, and Josipović's is 6,4). This suggests that in 2010s leaders might have been perceived as practicing more person- rather than party-centred communication, and that this person-centred communication has become a standard feature of leaders' mediated communication.

6.2.3. Leaders as agents of personalisation

In order to answer the final research question posed in this section, i.e. what are the similarities and differences between person-centred media reporting and mediated leaders' communication, the data related to these two political communication actors needs to be compared. What was already established was that the de-personalisation trend which was discovered with regard to media reporting is not a feature of Croatian mediated political communication in general, since there are no de-personalising trends related to leaders' mediated communication. The differences between the ways in which the media and leaders can be seen to pursue person-centred communication are further confirmed by the comparison of ratios of leader-to-party mentions from the media analysis and statement analysis (Figure 13). The data show that while the media have over time put more focus on parties at the expense of the heads of the executives, which resulted in the de-personalisation of media reporting, the same trend can not be observed with regard to leaders' communication. There are no trends whatsoever connected with the person-centred leaders' mediated communication, not even when only heads of the executive, Presidents or Prime Ministers are looked at, indicating that the degree to which the leader pursues a person- or party-centred communication might be mostly dependent on the leader himself/herself and/or be contextual. However, some micro trends could be observed with regard to different time periods. Specifically, in the first two decades of post-communism both the media and leaders pursued less person-centred and more party-centred communication, while in communism and late post-communism (i.e. the 2010s) the differences between the degrees of person-centred communication between these two political communication actors grew significantly. In other words, this comparison reveals that leaders were reported as personalizing political

communication to a greater extent than the media at all times, but especially in communism and late post-communism.

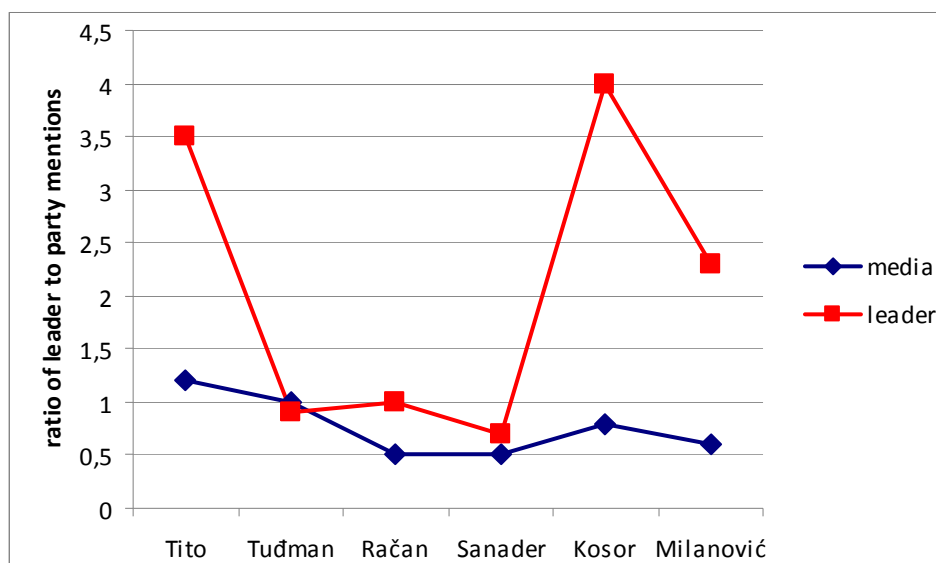


Figure 13. The comparison of person-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication

Note: the person-centred media reporting was calculated as the ratio of articles mentioning leaders to articles mentioning their party. The person-centred leader's communication was calculated as the ratio of leaders' statements in which they referred to their personae to statements in which they referred to their party. Thus, the figures for each series refer to different Ns.

In sum, the analysis of person-centred leaders' mediated communication revealed that the communist leader was rarely reported as mentioning his party, while at the same time putting considerable amount of attention on himself. Given that the media reporting also focused more on the leader than on the party, the conclusion is that political individuals in communism might have been perceived much more important than collectives according to the attention they received in mediated political communication. Furthermore, the analysis found no trends which would suggest that the leaders have over time focused more or less on political parties in their mediated communication. However, there are still considerable differences in the extent to which their mediated communication was person-centred, up until the late post-communist period. This points to the fact that the reasons why leaders' mediated communication was person-centred might have been quite leader-specific, although it seems that party leaders who were head executives tended to be portrayed as mentioning their parties more frequently than those who didn't hold these positions. Finally, leaders in both communism and post-communism can be seen as pursuing person-centred communication to a far greater extent than media. This would mean that political actors are those that could

be perceived as raising the importance of individual actors above political institutions in the mediated public discourse.

6.3. Persona-centred leaders' mediated communication

The persona-centred dimension of personalisation of political communication refers to the focus on a leader's life and qualities, whether those have been presented in a political, private or political/private context. This section of the chapter reports the analysis of the persona-centred leaders' mediated communication and answers these research questions:

1. To what extent was the communist leader reported as communicating information about himself and how, if at all, did the reported leaders' focus on their personae changed during the transitional period?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the type of information that leaders' are reported to communicate about themselves?
3. How, if at all, are leaders seen to use the information from their private sphere in their communication?
4. What similarities and differences can be observed with regard to the ways in which leaders' personae were portrayed in media reporting and leaders' mediated statements, in different periods of transition?

In order to establish the extent to which the communist leader was reported to focus on himself in his communication, and how, if at all, this style of communication changed in the transitional period, the degree of the persona-centred leaders' mediated communication was established as a percentage of all leader's statements in which he/she mentioned his/her persona (Figure 14).

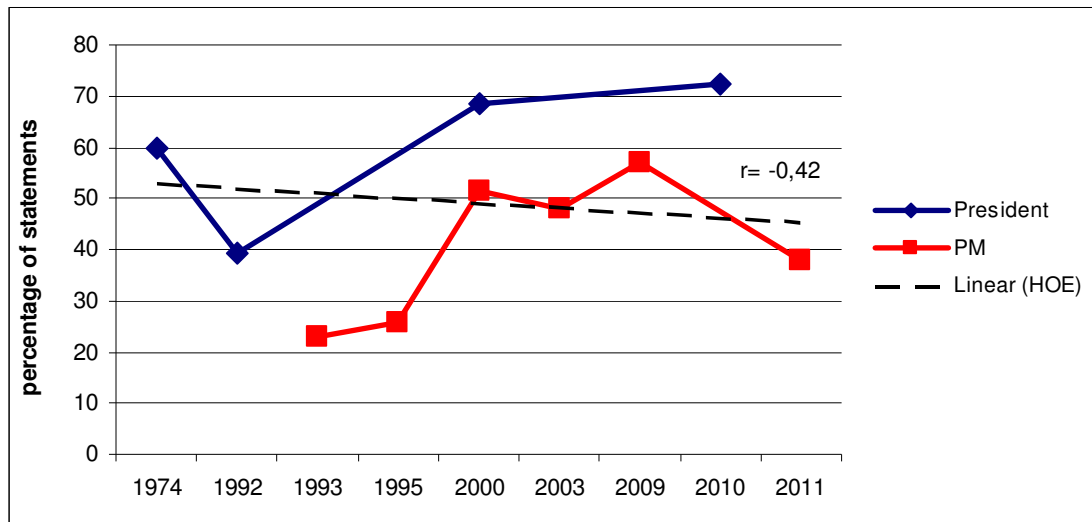


Figure 14. The persona-centred leaders' mediated communication (the percentage of leader's mediated statements that contain a reference to a leader's persona)

6.3.1. Differences between dimensions of personalisation

What this analysis shows is that there are several significant differences in the trends related to person- and persona-centred leaders' mediated communication and the factors that might have contributed to it.

Firstly, it was previously argued that in post-communism those leaders who were heads of the executive and party leaders were reported as pursuing less person-centred communication than those who did not hold these positions. In contrast, the data presented in Figure 14 shows that in the 1990s the head of the executive and party leader Franjo Tuđman's mediated communication was more persona-centred than that of his Prime Ministers, Valentić and Mateša, who were not heads of the executive and party leaders. However, in the post-2000 period this changes. Specifically, since 2000 it seems that those leaders whose mediated statements suggest they pursued less person-centred communication, can also be seen as putting less focus on their personae in their statements.

In addition, while there were no trends related to President's and Prime Minister's person-centred mediated communication, weak positive trends can be observed with regard to the persona-centred mediated communication of these actors. In other words, both Presidents ($r=0,49$) and Prime Ministers ($r=0,58$) have over time increased the focus on their personae. And furthermore, Presidents have at all times put more emphasis on their personae than Prime Ministers. The fact that Presidents were reported as being more willing to emphasize something they did, thought, and what they are like etc. might be connected with the fact that Presidents are usually seen as those who make decisions independently and as individuals might be more powerful than Prime Ministers heading executive collectives. Hence,

if as individuals they are responsible for something, it appears as if they make it clear in their communication. What is interesting, though, is that the highest degree of persona-centred mediated communication is related to two Presidents who were not head executives, i.e. they were not powerful enough to make important decisions independently. It could be speculated that one of the reasons why Presidents Mesić and Josipović were reported as emphasizing their personae to such a high extent lies precisely in the fact that they were stripped of many executive powers. In other words, once they were no longer the most important political actors in the country, they might have been more inclined to put the focus in their communication on their actions and qualities, in order to communicate the message that they still count in the political system. Prime Ministers were also reported as communicating more persona-related information in the post-2000 period, but a more likely reason for this is the fact that they became head executives in this period and consequently, more important and powerful in making executive decisions. Hence, once they became head executives it became more important what they think, do, and what they are like as individuals, and this is the type of information that the media increasingly reported them talking about. In spite of their increased persona-centred mediated communication in the post-2000 period, Prime Ministers were still reported as putting less emphasis on themselves than Presidents, so it does not come as a surprise that the trend related to the head executives is a weak negative one ($r=-0,42$). In other words, the analysis shows that the most powerful individuals have over time been reported as decreasing the number of references to their personae, and one of the most important reasons for this might be the change in the country's political system in 2000.

In sum, the positions that political actors have in the political system and party can be seen as contributing to the extent to which they are reported to communicate in a person- and persona-centred way, but how their positions influence their mediated communication and dimensions of personalisation seems to depend upon other factors. Being a head executive and party leader might be connected with higher degree of persona-centred communication, but lower degree of person-centred communication. However, it can also be connected to lower degree in both person- and persona-centred communication. In addition, those who hold the position of a President seem more likely to be reported as communicating in a persona-centred way, but not necessarily in a person-centred way. Hence, it appears as though the position in a political system and party might contribute to personalisation in leaders' mediated communication, but its influence depends on other factors, some of which might be the type of political system, electoral system,

the extent to which the media communicates persona-related information etc. Also, this development points to the fact that some factors might influence dimensions of personalisation in a different way, i.e. they might contribute to lower degrees of one dimension, but higher of the other.

Secondly, the comparison of trends in person- and persona-centred leaders' mediated communication also suggest that these two dimensions follow different trends and it shouldn't be assumed that just because one dimension became routine in political communication, the same will happen with the other one. Specifically, while the indicators of person-centred leaders' communication pointed to the fact that person-centred communication became a standard feature of leaders' mediated communication in the 2010s, this is not the case with persona-centred leaders' mediated communication. There are significant differences in the degrees of reported emphasis on the personae not only between the President and the Prime Ministers, but also among the Prime Ministers in this time period. Specifically, President Josipović mentioned his persona in 72,4% of his mediated statements, which makes his communication the most persona-centred of all leaders. Prime Minister Kosor, who was in power when Josipović was elected in 2010, referred to her persona in 57% of her statements, while Prime Minister Milanović who came to power in 2011 put the emphasis on his persona in only 37,9% of his statements, making 1990s Prime Ministers Valentić and Mateša the only ones who were reported as pursuing less persona-centred communication than him. Therefore, it seems that the person-centred mediated communication became the standard among leaders in the 2010s, but persona-centred did not. In other words, all political leaders in late post-communism were reported as putting more focus on themselves than on their parties, but they differed greatly in how much emphasis they are seen as placing on their personae.

6.3.2. Who is putting the focus on leaders' personae?

In order to establish the similarities and differences in the persona-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication, it is necessary to compare the data related to the two political communication actors. What this comparison reveals is that the media reporting was at all times more persona-centred than heads of the executives' mediated communication (and of all leaders in general). Specifically, when media reported leaders they more frequently referred to what those leaders did, thought, said, felt, and what they were like, than did the leaders themselves. Furthermore, while the prominence of leaders' personae has increased over time in the media, it has decreased in the leaders' mediated communication.

These are completely different conclusions to those reached based on the comparative analysis of person-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication. It is also interesting to note that those leaders whose personae were more visible in the media have been reported as putting less focus on themselves in their statements, while those leaders whose personae were less prominent in the media could be seen as pursuing more persona-centred communication than other leaders. It seems almost as if the leaders were portrayed as trying to compensate with their communication for the lack of mediated information related to them, while they might not have thought it was necessary to put too much focus on themselves if the media was already doing so. However, this is just a speculation.

Finally, what Figure 15 also shows is that the extent of persona-centred media reporting was more constant than that related to leaders' mediated communication, which was also the case with person-centred mediated political communication. In other words, the degree of persona-centred media reporting differ less from one leader to the other than the degree of the persona-centred leaders' mediated communication. This, again, might indicate that the contextual factors play a more important role in influencing the extent to which leaders were reported as emphasizing their personae than in affecting media reporting. This hypothesis will be tested in the next chapter.

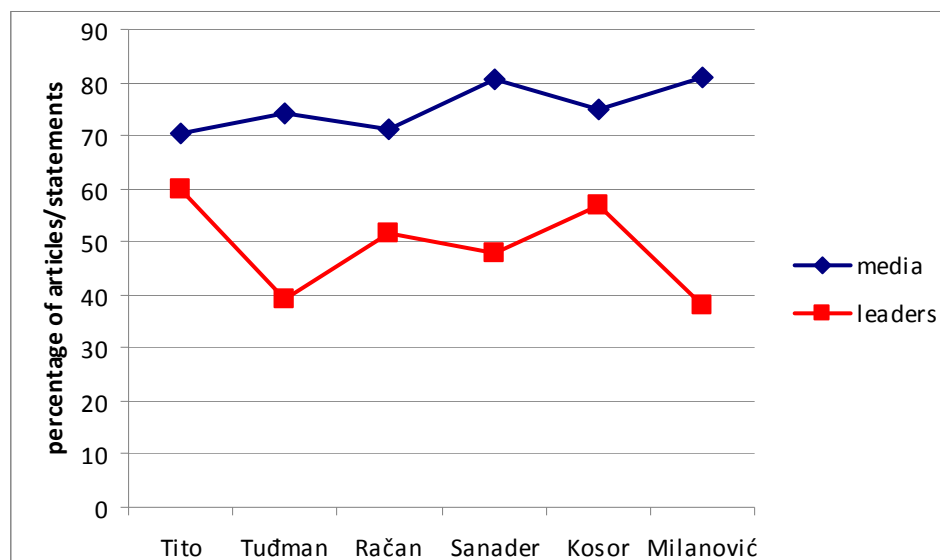


Figure 15. The comparison of persona-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication

Note: the persona-centred media reporting was calculated as number of articles that mentioned a leader's persona over total number of articles in which a leader was mentioned. The persona-centred leader's communication was calculated as number of statements in which the leader referred to his/her persona over total number of statements made by the leader. Thus, the figures for each series refer to different Ns.

6.3.3. The dominance of politically-based image

The next step in this analysis is to determine the content of leaders' references to their personae. In other words, the following analysis will look at the type of information that the leaders were reported as revealing about themselves. Specifically, this section of the chapter will examine how leaders' were reported as creating their public images and how, if at all, they can be seen as using their private sphere in this process.

It is evident from Figure 16 that all leaders were pre-dominantly reported as talking about their political personae, but also that only three leaders (Mateša, Račan and Milanović) communicated information exclusively from their political sphere. All other leaders made at least some reference to their private and/or political/private sphere. For example, Kosor was reported as revealing information about her *family life* in a private context. *Večernji list* published her statement: "I feel like half of me is missing" as a comment of living without a father, who left her and her mother when she was only two years old (3.7.2009.). However, in a larger extent of her statements she was reported as politicizing, rather than just revealing information from her private sphere. To illustrate, she was reported as saying: "I will no longer have time to write my poems due to prime ministerial duties" (24sata, 5.7.2009.). In this way she was portrayed as making a connection between her private *lifestyle* and political role, i.e. she politicized her private *lifestyle*. President Josipović is the leader who was reported as politicizing his private matters to a largest extent. For instance, in an interview for *Vjesnik* he was reported as saying: "I have two independent careers so I am not dependent either upon politics or the party" (7.1.2010.). By declaring this, Josipović made direct connections between his private careers of a university professor and musician and his work in politics.

Alongside Josipović, only President Tuđman, and Prime Ministers Valentić and Kosor, were reported as mentioning their private and political/private information in more than 10% of their mediated statements in which they referred to their personae. Specifically, between 15 and 20% of these leaders' reported references to their personae were dominantly related to their private sphere. The large differences between these leaders (i.e. they ruled in different time periods, hold different positions in party and the political system, were chosen by different voting systems, worked in different media environments etc.) suggest that the leaders' focus on their private spheres is more leader-specific than characteristic of a time period or developing continually over time.

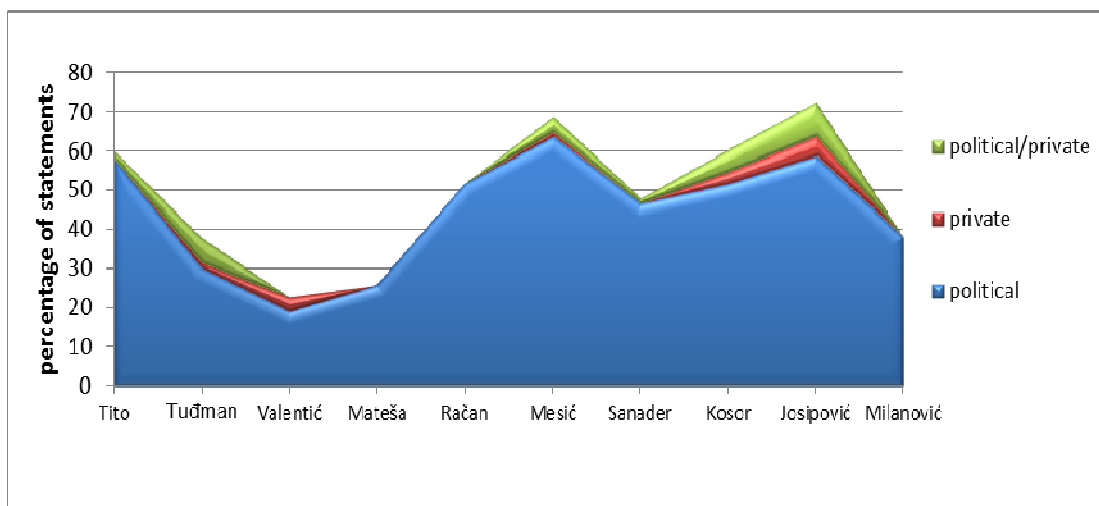


Figure 16. The structure of persona references in leaders' statements (the percentage of all statements in which a leader pre-dominantly referred to his/her political, private or political/private persona)

However, the data show that the number of references to leaders' private personae has increased over time, but the increase was not drastic ($r=0,33$). The same can be concluded based on the trend related to the prominence of the political/private personae ($r=0,24$). The trends are similarly weak when only head executives are included in the analysis ($r=0,3$ for private persona, $r=-0,1$ for political/private persona). Two of the latest three leaders are among those who were reported as putting the most emphasis on their private matters. However, Prime Minister Milanović did not mention his private life or qualities in any of his mediated statements, although he succeeded Josipović and Kosor who were reported as frequently communicating their private matters. This reinforces the hypothesis that the extent to which leaders focus on their private personae in their mediated communication are first and foremost leader-specific. Also, this suggests that although some leaders are reported as communicating their private matters to a significant extent, there is no permanent trend which would follow from their communication styles. In other words, the leaders who come after those who are seen as communicating their private life and qualities do not seem to be inclined to pursue the same communication style as those communicating private matters.

Given that there is little evidence to suggest that post-communist leaders are increasingly communicating information about their private sphere, and that even those head executives who put the most emphasis in their mediated statements on their private matters did so in under 10% of their statements, there does not seem to be reason to worry that political actors are trivializing political communication. There are leaders who do not seem to hesitate to share their private information with the public, but these should be viewed more as an exception than a rule. Also, it is

important to note that those leaders who do communicate private information do not seem to have an impact on how other political actors communicate. Hence, revealing private information in communist and post-communist context seems to be a leader-specific development which does not influence the communication styles of other political actors.

6.3.4. Publicizing and politicizing the private

In order to answer the final research question posed in this section of the chapter, i.e. to establish what similarities and differences can be observed with regard to the ways in which leaders' personae were portrayed in media reporting and leaders' mediated statements, the extent to which media reporting and leaders' mediated statements were pre-dominantly centred on politicians' private and political/private spheres is compared in Figures 17 and 18. As mentioned, four leaders can be seen as putting more emphasis on their private sphere in their mediated statements than the rest, i.e. Presidents Tuđman and Josipović, and Prime Ministers Valentić and Kosor. However, what the comparison of the private persona (Figure 17) and political/private persona-centred media reporting and mediated leaders' statements (Figure 18) point to is that only President Tuđman and Prime Minister Kosor have publicized and politicized their private life to a greater extent than the media.

It is worth noting that the head executive who politicized and publicized his/her private matters the most, even more than the media, was the only Croatian female leader, Jadranka Kosor. As van Zoonen argues, "the prominent attention given to the private persona and family life of female politicians runs the risk of attracting attention to their non-standard gender choices, which may be the reason why so often female politicians tend to retreat within the boundaries of the political sphere" (2006: 299). However, according to the way in which Kosor's statements were reported it does not seem that she retreated "within the boundaries of the political sphere" (ibid.). Strategic communication of her private matters might be one explanation of her reported emphasis on her private personae. Another explanation might be that Kosor was mostly responding to the agenda of other political actors and the media who put the focus on her private persona. Still, given that the sample for this analysis was derived from the media coverage of her communication, a likely explanation might also be that the media tended to report statements in which she talked about her private issues more than her other statements. By doing this the media might have contributed to creating a perception of the only female leader as that who most frequently talked about her private life.

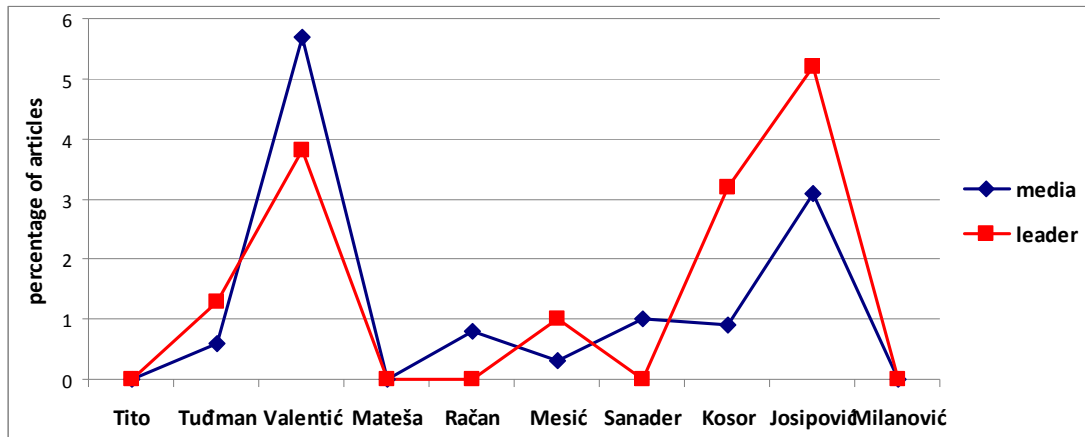


Figure 17. The comparison of private persona-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication

Note: the private persona-centred media reporting was calculated as number of articles that pre-dominantly focused on a leader's private persona over total number of articles in which a leader was mentioned. Private persona-centred leader's communication was calculated as number of statements in which the leader pre-dominantly focused on his/her private persona over total number of statements made by the leader. Thus, the figures for each series refer to different Ns.

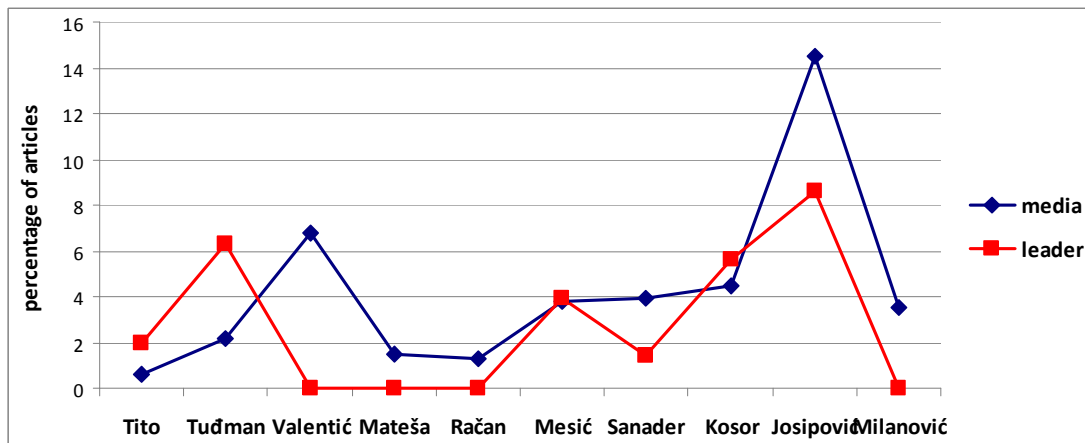


Figure 18. The comparison of political/private persona-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication

Note: the political/private persona-centred media reporting was calculated as number of articles that pre-dominantly focused on a leader's political/private persona over total number of articles in which a leader was mentioned. Political/private persona-centred leader's communication was calculated as number of statements in which the leader pre-dominantly focused on his/her political/private persona over total number of statements made by the leader. Thus, the figures for each series refer to different Ns.

What is also evident from Figures 17 and 18 is that the media have increased their focus on private and political/private personae in reporting leaders who came to power immediately after Tuđman and Kosor. In other words, the data show that after the leaders were reported as practicing more private and political/private persona-centred communication than the media, their successors

were reported with an increased emphasis on their private matters. This might point to the fact that the perception of greater leaders' disclosure of private information and its politicization consequently make media more comfortable and willing to report these personae. However, it is also evident that even if this trend exists it is short-lived and easily stopped, given that media's private and political/private persona-centred reporting decreased with subsequent leaders. It should be noted that at this point these causal connections are just speculations because this analysis was not designed to reveal them. Whether the personalisation of leaders' communication is connected to media reporting, and vice versa, will be examined in the next chapter.

Finally, the comparison of private and political/private persona-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication reveals that in the case of the heads of the executive media focus on these personae is more constant than leaders'. Media's private persona-centred reporting varied from 0,6% to 1% in the 1990s and 2000s, indicating a weak positive trend ($r=0,4$), while at the same time only Tuđman and Kosor were reported as making any reference to their private personae making the trend over time for leaders' mediated communication weaker than that in the media ($r=0,3$). The differences are even greater in the case of the prominence of the political/private persona. The media visibility of the leaders' political/private persona has grown steadily, but not linearly, from the communist era ($r=0,83$), while the leaders' reported focus on their political/private personae has varied significantly over time, which is also demonstrated by a very low Pearson's coefficient ($r=-0,1$). This, again, might point to the fact that the factors that influence heads of the executive to focus more or less on their private and political/private sphere in their communication are more leader-specific and/or contextual, than might be the case with media reporting.

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the continuities and changes in the ways in which leaders' were reported of personalizing their communication, and also the similarities and differences between the personalisation in media reporting and leaders' mediated communication.

While the analysis of personalisation in media reporting revealed that there are some strong trends related to the person- and persona-centred media reporting, the situation is less clear with personalisation in leaders' mediated communication. Specifically, there are hardly any strong trends over time related to either person- or

persona-centred leaders' mediated communication, and many analyses actually showed that the extent to which leaders were reported as personalizing their communication and the ways in which they did so were leader-specific. This is especially true for the leaders' person-centred communication, given that the analysis showed only some micro-trends (similar degrees of person-centred communication of the heads of the executive in the 1990s and 2000s, and of all political leaders in the 2010s). In general, it seems that leaders' reported focus on themselves and/or their parties might be mostly dependent on contextual factors, since in general it varies considerably from leader to leader.

With regard to the persona-centred leaders' mediated communication, the situation is a bit different since some patterns of continuity and change can be observed. For example, all political leaders were reported as pre-dominantly focusing on political rather than private and political/private personae. Hence, it could be speculated that leaders' communication strategies were in general based on selective exposure of political persona for the purpose of creating their political image. Only certain political leaders might have been seen as revealing information from their private sphere, and those who did communicate private information were reported as politicizing this information to a greater extent than just making it public. In addition, there are some weak positive trends associated with the prominence of the private ($r=0,33$) and political/private personae ($r=0,24$). However, what these Pearson's coefficients depict is not actually the lack of change but rather considerable differences between leaders in the degrees to which they have publicized and/or politicized their private matters. Again, the exposure and politicization of their private sphere seems mostly to be leader-specific.

A general conclusion which may be drawn from the many comparisons of personalisation in media reporting and leaders' mediated communication is that the personalisation trends in the media tend to be more stable and persistent, while there are more differences among the leaders in the ways in which they are reported to personalize their communication.

In addition, many other differences were observed between the personalisation in media reporting and leaders' mediated communication. The media reporting was at all times less person-centred than leaders' mediated communication, but at the same time more persona-centred. Furthermore, in most cases the leaders exposed their private issues to a greater extent than the media, but the media usually politicized leaders' private matters more than the leaders were reported to do so themselves. However, both media and leaders can be seen as politicizing leaders' private lives much more frequently than just publicizing it,

indicating that both political communication actors might have strategically used the private in order to create (or destroy) leaders' political image.

After establishing the extent to which media reporting and leaders' mediated communication was personalized in communist and post-communist context, the next chapter will focus on trying to explain how these different trends developed.

7. Explaining personalisation(s)

The first two empirical chapters reported the findings from the content analyses of newspaper articles and mediated leaders' statements based on what it was possible to determine the extent to which media reporting and leaders' mediated communication in Yugoslavia and Croatia were person- and persona-centred. The aim of this chapter is to examine the ability of a new method in political communication, fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA), to explain how and why the trends found in previous chapters occurred, or in other words, which factors might have contributed to higher and lower degrees of the person-, persona- and private persona-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication in the communist and post-communist context. Given that most of the trends detected were not linear, i.e. the degrees to which the media and political actors personalized their communication were to an extent leader-specific, it is all the more important to determine which factors might have been at play with relation to each leader and dimension of personalisation, because it is unlikely that the same factors, especially not structural ones, will have the same importance in all cases.

Accordingly, the main research question that this chapter aims to answer is: How can different degrees of personalisation(s) in media reporting and leaders' mediated communication be explained? More specifically, are personalisation(s) in media reporting and leaders' mediated communication media driven, caused by politically-related factors, or rather are the factors that best explain personalisation a combination of media- and politically-related ones? And also, does applying fsQCA, a method at the moment considered superior to others in tackling these questions (Downey & Stanyer, 2010; Stanyer, 2013), allow for reaching conclusive answers to them?

It is important to analyze the combination of factors that can help explain different degrees of personalisation(s), given that explaining personalisation(s) is, after establishing the degree to which political communication is personalized, the next most important step in personalisation research. There has been a lot of scholarly discussion about this question, sometimes framed as who or what is "guilty" of personalisation, but only recently has this issue started to be empirically addressed. These empirical studies found that usually there is not one but several paths to personalized political communication, and also that the personalisation(s) are not, as was usually argued, caused solely by either media or political factors, but rather by their combination (Downey & Stanyer, 2010; Stanyer, 2013). Given the

perception that communist and also post-communist media and politics are dominated by political elites, it is interesting to investigate whether politically-related factors play a more important role in the personalisation(s) in these contexts, or whether the media-related factors play a role as well. If media-related factors can be identified as relevant factors in influencing personalisation(s), this would mean that the media in communist and post-communist societies is not only an instrument in the hands of political elite, but rather an independent actor that is able to contribute to shaping trends in mediated political communication.

7.1. Approaches to explaining personalisation

There are several ways in which scholars have in the past tried to explain different degrees of personalisation. One approach to explaining personalisation is to look at how personalized communication of one political communication actor influences communication of another actor. For example, scholars following this approach are trying to determine whether personalisation in the media triggered the personalisation in politicians' communication, or vice versa. Langer (2011) used content analysis to determine the extent to which media content in the UK is centred on leaders' private personae, and also historical qualitative analysis to establish the extent to which and ways in which the leaders communicated information about themselves. By comparing the results of these two analyses, Langer tentatively concluded that the politicians might have been those who have started personalizing political communication, while the media have followed. Similarly, Rahat and Sheafer (2007) used time-series to examine whether the person-centred political communication in Israel was triggered by the media, politicians or by institutional changes. They applied content analysis to establish the visibility of politicians as individuals during election campaigns from 1949 to 2003, i.e. to determine the degree of the person-centred media reporting. They measured the "personalisation in the behavior of politicians" through the percentage of private member bills passed in Israel's parliaments relative to the number of all laws passed. Finally, the degree of the "institutional personalisation" was measured by the degree to which the electorate was included in the creation of candidate lists for General Elections. Rahat and Sheafer concluded that the increase in the personalisation was triggered by institutional changes. They claim that the opening up of the candidate selection process led media to focus more on individual politicians, and consequently politicians started acting more individually as a response to these changes. The authors also accounted for the introduction of television in Israel's political

communication and based on their regression analysis concluded that the penetration of television “may facilitate personalisation”, but “the cause of an upsurge in personalisation is mainly institutional” (ibid., 76). Although this kind of examination of the causes of personalisation is important, it overly simplifies the causes of personalisation. In other words, this approach fails to control for other factors that might have contributed to the increase in personalisation(s), many of which were discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 (e.g. country’s political system, electoral system, characteristics of voters and political actors, legal framework, degree of commercialisation and tabloidisation of media system etc.).

Consequently, we can see scholars who look at the causes of personalisation as complex combinations of different political and media-related factors as those following a second, more nuanced approach to explaining personalisation(s). In addition, those who try to understand why personalisation occurs by examining its connection to various variables, differ according to the ways in which they analyze the connections between the personalisation and relevant variables. One group of scholars thinks of variables that are usually identified as having a potential to influence personalisation as contextual factors. For example, Kriesi (2010), Mayerhöffer and Esmark (2011) and Swanson & Mancini (1996), examined whether or not a specific variable was present or absent in contexts in which higher or lower degrees of personalisation were observed. Illustratively, Mayerhöffer and Esmark (2011) found that although the factors they looked at (type of electoral system, degree of party loyalty, degree of media commercialization, type of political system and the degree of prime ministerial influence) predicted that the perceived personalisation in media reporting would be highest in Spain, it was actually highest in Denmark and Finland. This was surprising given that these countries were characterized by contextual factors which were assumed to lead to lower degrees of personalisation. However, this study has not proven empirically that any of the factors actually lead to higher or lower degrees of personalisation. It only established that higher degrees of personalisation were not found in contexts characterized by some of the factors that the literature suggests increase personalisation.

A more sophisticated approach to explaining personalisation(s) was introduced in the Downey and Stanyer’s (2010) study which aimed to explain different degrees of the personalisation of mediated political communication across 20 democracies. They applied fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA), a relatively new method developed by Charles Ragin (Ragin, 2008b), in order to establish which combinations of causal conditions can help explain the high degree

of personalisation observed in some countries. Stanyer (2013) later used fsQCA to explain why the media focus more on leaders' private lives in some countries more than in other, as well as media's focus on politicians' sexual misdemeanors and preferences. In these analyses he examined a variety of factors that are considered to have an influence on personalisation, such as the degree of party identification, the strength of a country's tabloid sector, the type of political system, the degree to which campaigns are professionalized, leaders' ideological positions, age, the privacy legislation etc. In all analyses it was claimed that there are several paths or causal recipes that may lead to a high degree of personalisation. In other words, these authors argued that there are several possible combinations of factors that can produce the same result – a high or low degree of personalisation. Hence, the authors using this approach to explaining personalisation(s) claim to be able to determine what causes personalisation, which can be seen as a step further from establishing correlations between personalisation and other variables, and two steps further from examining variables that might influence personalisation(s) as contextual factors.

7.1.1. Fuzzy sets or fuzzy findings?

Given that the use of fsQCA seems to be the most advanced approach to explaining different degrees of personalisation, this method will be applied in order to test factors that might have influenced higher and lower degrees of person, persona- and private persona-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication that were detected in the analyses presented in previous chapters of this thesis. Since it is a relatively new method and there have not been many application of it in media research, its both potential and limitations are not yet fully known. Hence, I will also be examine whether this method is as suitable as has been claimed for establishing the causal connections between different factors and personalisation(s).

Ragin and Rihoux explain that fsQCA is “grounded in Boolean algebra – the algebra of logic and sets – and thus is ideally suited for identifying key set-theoretic relations” (2004a: 4). Furthermore, they claim it was designed to “unravel causal complexity by applying set-theoretic methods to cross-case evidence” (ibid., 3). Hence, it is a case-oriented method by which it appears possible to examine how different sets interact, and consequently, which combinations of, what Ragin calls “causal conditions”, i.e. variables that are tested in the analysis, produce the researched “outcome” (2006, 2007, 2008a, 2008b). Given Ragin's explanations of what the method is designed to do, and the method's vocabulary (causal conditions,

causal configurations, outcome etc.), it is evident that fsQCA may be understood as a method able to examine causation, or in other words, cause – effect relationships. This is also how the pioneers in using this method for personalisation research have presented their findings (Downey & Stanyer, 2010; Stanyer, 2013).

However, Seawright (2004: 16) warns that “inferences in fuzzy-set QCA are based on statistical test that measures degree of association”, not causation, and hence that “the QCA results must also be associational in nature”. In other words, he claims that fsQCA is not able to prove cause – effect relationships, but rather it can determine whether or not certain combination of variables is associated with another variable. Ragin and Rihoux (2004b) partly accept this criticism of the method emphasizing that they consider it well suited for establishing “explicit connections” between sets, not necessarily causation. In spite of this, the language of fsQCA and claims of its “capacity for analyzing complex causation” (Ragin & Rihoux, 2004a: 4) still might trick scholars using this method into thinking that they have discovered a causation rather than explicit connection between a combination of variables and tested “outcome”. Although I believe that the method’s vocabulary is misleading and that it should be changed so as not to connote causality, I will use terms such as “causal conditions” and “outcomes” throughout this chapter in order to be in line with method’s technical and reference concepts.

In sum, it does not seem that by applying this method it will be possible to completely answer the research questions posed in this chapter. It will not be possible to determine what has caused personalisation(s). However, it will be possible to empirically prove what combinations of factors are explicitly connected or associated with a certain degree of personalisation. In spite of the fact that it will not be possible to determine causation, there are several reasons why fsQCA is well suited for the analysis of personalisation of media reporting and leaders’ communication in this thesis.

Firstly, this method is well suited for small-N analysis (Ragin & Rihoux, 2004a). Given that the information about personalisation is related to 10 Yugoslav and Croatian political leaders, this means that there are only 10 cases that need to be analyzed. Hence, fsQCA as a method which is designed for small-N analysis is well suited.

Secondly, the variables tested through fsQCA are not considered independent variables that are additive in their effects. On the contrary, fsQCA assumes that variables are interacting with each other rather than having an independent influence (Ragin, 2008b). This is important for personalisation research since it helps avoid generalisations about the interplay between the media and

political system in which personalisation was observed. In other words, it helps avoid assuming that the political system is the one influencing the media system, or vice versa. Also, fsQCA assumes that the outcome, such as the degree of the person-centred media reporting, is not connected to a single variable, but rather a combination of variables (Ragin, 2008a, 2008b). In most research that deals with the causes of personalisation it is assumed that variables work together to produce a certain degree of personalisation, and rarely that there is one single cause (Maier & Adam, 2010). Hence, a method which acknowledges that variables interact, and do not act independently, is well suited to this research.

In addition, fsQCA also allows for several different combinations of causal conditions, the so-called causal paths, recipes, or solutions, to explain the same outcome. In other words, it is possible that one variable is an important causal condition in explaining high degree of person-centred media reporting in one case, but not the other. This characteristic of fsQCA makes it better suited for studying the variables connected to personalisation than using correlational methods, such as regression analysis, since correlational methods assess “how well dimensions of variation parallel each other across a sample or population” (Ragin, 2008a: 196). Hence, the correlational method would be well-suited if there is a certain variable that is important in all or most of cases. However, since it can be assumed that different combinations of variables will be associated with the same outcome, and that there may not be variables that are important in all solutions to an outcome, fsQCA seems to be the best option for this research.

Finally, rather than looking at the presence or absence of a certain variable, fsQCA calibrates variables to enable accounting for differences in the degree to which a certain condition is present or absent. As Ragin (2009: 90) puts it: “a fuzzy set can be seen as a continuous variable that has been purposefully calibrated to indicate degree of membership in a well-defined set. Such calibration is possible only through the use of theoretical and substantive knowledge”. Specifically, each variable is calibrated using values from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating nonmembership in the set, 1 indicating that a certain case is a full member of the set, and 0.5 value being a cross-over point, that of maximum ambiguity. Those cases whose membership is more “in” than “out” of the set will have a score somewhere between 0.5 and 1, and those whose membership is more “out” than “in” will score between 0.5 and 0. The variables are calibrated according to external standards which have to be based on the social knowledge, scientific knowledge and/or the knowledge that the researcher has derived from the study of cases (Ragin, 2008a). Being able to calibrate a variable, i.e. account for different degrees to which the variable is

present in a certain case, is important for explaining personalisation since previous research has shown that only acknowledging the presence or absence of the variable does not give conclusive findings (such as in Mayerhöffer & Esmark, 2011). In addition, calibration of variables allows the researcher to see the extent to which a variable needs to be present in order to be connected to a certain outcome. For example, it is possible that the media system does not need to be completely based on private ownership in order for this variable to be connected to the media's focus on politicians' private lives, but rather that it just needs to be more privately than state owned.

There are also several important limitations of the method that need to be taken into account, alongside the fact that fsQCA does not seem able to reveal causal connections between variables. In the first place, although Ragin (*ibid.*, 184) argues that there should be an agreement about the external standards according to which variables are calibrated, he also admits that the existing knowledge base is imperfect and that the "agreed-upon standards" are lacking. This leads to different scholars setting different benchmarks, i.e. deciding what it takes for a case to be a full member of the set, non member, more in that out, or more out than in of the set, because the researcher has the autonomy to decide how the variables are calibrated as long as there is a reasonable explanation for the benchmarks used in the set. Stockemer (2012) emphasizes that slight changes in a variable's benchmarks, which can usually be justified by theoretical knowledge, will give different results. Hence, coding sensitivity which can be seen as a result of the missing agreed upon external standards for calibrating variables is one of the limitations of this method. Ragin and Rihoux (2004a) suggest that at this point the best practice is to be transparent about the calibration technique and a variable's benchmarks, and in that way enable other researchers to retest the data.

In the second place, Seawright (2004: 16) warns of another limitation of the fsQCA, namely its assumption that there are "no causally relevant omitted variables". In other words, the fsQCA software will produce solutions to the tested outcome based on the variables that were decided by the researcher to be the most relevant for the analysis. It will not recognize the fact that an important, causally relevant, variable was not included in the analysis. Ragin and Rihoux (2004b) acknowledge this limitation, but suggest that a researcher's choice of variables should be trusted, since it is arguably grounded in theoretical and substantive knowledge.

And thirdly, Stockemer (2012) argues that a limitation of fsQCA is that it tends to produce unique solutions. Its causal paths sometimes help explain only

one, or perhaps a few, cases. This can be seen as a problem in an intermediate- or large-N comparative analysis, but I argue that this is not an important limitation in this project since a small number of cases is analyzed and it is expected that some solutions will be unique to certain leaders.

7.1.2. Calibration of variables and outcomes

In order to conduct the analysis, the first step is deciding which causal conditions will be tested in relation to which outcome. The second step includes calibration of both the outcome and causal conditions using fuzzy sets (Ragin, 2009). Which causal conditions are included in the analysis and why will be discussed in the following sections, while the details of their calibration can be found in the Appendix 5. The fsQCA will be used in order to examine which combinations of causal conditions are explicitly connected to six different outcomes, specifically the person-centred media reporting (in the tables that report results this variable is marked as “m_person”) and leaders’ communication (“l_person”), persona-centred media reporting (“m_persona”) and leaders’ communication (“l_persona”), and private persona-centred media reporting (“m_private”) and leaders communication (“l_private”). All outcomes are calibrated based on the data collected by content analyses of media coverage and leaders’ mediated statements as presented in Chapters 5 and 6. Hence, the outcomes are not calibrated based on theoretical knowledge or secondary data, but based on empirical evidence gathered in this project.

Each outcome is tested in relation to seven to nine variables. In Chapters 3 and 4 the politically- and media-related factors that according to the existing literature have the potential to influence different dimensions of personalisation were discussed. In addition, the close examination of cases presented in the analyses in Chapters 5 and 6 revealed that there are several important causal conditions which can be derived from the close knowledge of cases. Given that Ragin and Rihoux (2004a) advise that the choice of causal conditions needs not only to be theory-informed, but also case-informed, the causal conditions tested in this project will be a combination of those which can be identified by existing knowledge and those derived from the examined cases. In addition, as was argued in Chapters 3 and 4, not all factors are relevant for all dimensions of personalisation. In other words, variables that are considered causally relevant for person-centred media reporting might not be considered important for private persona-centred media reporting or leaders’ communication. Hence, a set of causal conditions which is tested in relation to a certain outcome is different from outcome to outcome, although some variables

are included in more than one analysis. In addition, sometimes one outcome is examined as a causal condition in relation to another outcome. Specifically, the degree of the person-centred media reporting is included as a causal condition in the examination of factors connected to person-centred leaders' communication, and vice versa; the degree of the persona-centred media reporting is tested as a causal condition for persona-centred leaders' communication, and vice versa; and the degree of the private persona-centred media reporting is examined as a variable potentially connected to the private persona-centred leaders' communication, and vice versa.

In total there are 12 politically-related causal conditions and five media-related causal conditions, but two of the media-related conditions are "macrovariables" (Ragin, 2009) which were formed by joining two lower order variables in order to reduce the complexity of the analysis. It should be noted that gathering comparable data from the 1970s to 2010s to calibrate these variables was very demanding. Some variables that were initially considered were not included in the analysis because there was little or no available data that could have been used for their calibration (e.g. audience media preferences, the degree to which the audience is fragmented, the degree to which the selectorate participates in the candidate selection process, strength of public service broadcasting, degree of media products' diversification etc.). In addition, given that there are no longitudinal and/or reliable data about media ownership, consumption, newspaper circulation, and advertising revenues, some of the variables that were considered crucial for fsQCA analyses were calibrated using primary data gathered during the analysis of media content, which is explained in greater detail in the Appendix 5. Although this data represents more an illustration of media trends than a fact, it was used for calibration of some media-related variables given that there was no alternative source of information for calibration.

Politically-related causal conditions

First of all, three politically-related variables were case-informed. It was observed that those political leaders who were also party leaders were reported in a less person-centred way and they were also reported as pursuing less person-centred communication. Hence, the membership of the *set with politicians who are party leaders* ("party_leader") was based on whether the politician was a party leader (full member) or not (non-member), and this causal condition was tested for person-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication outcomes.

Furthermore, it was observed that on some occasions Presidents, their personae and private personae were more media visible than that of the Prime Ministers, and also that some Presidents were reported as pursuing more persona- and private persona-centred communication than Prime Ministers. Therefore, the membership of the *set with politicians who are Presidents* (“president”) was based on whether the politician was a President (full member) or not (non-member), and this causal condition was tested for person, persona- and private persona-centred media reporting and leaders’ persona- and private persona-centred mediated communication outcomes.

Finally, it was also observed that the strongest negative trends in the person-centred media reporting were related to heads of the executive, and that the media reported those leaders who were not heads of the executive in a more persona-centred way than others. Consequently, the membership of the *set with politicians who are Heads of the Executive* (“hoe”) was based on whether the politician was a head of the executive (full member) or not (non-member), and this causal condition was tested for person and persona-centred media reporting.

Another nine politically-related variables were theory-informed. The type of political system is the most common variable considered to be a causal condition of higher degrees of personalisation (Dalton & Wattenberg, 1993; Downey & Stanyer, 2010; Hanspeter Kriesi, 2010; Maier & Adam, 2010; Mayerhöffer & Esmark, 2011; Stanyer, 2013). In essence, it is argued that in a presidential political system where executive power is vested in an individual, the President, the media tend to focus more on him/her as an individual political actor than on collectives, such as parties or governments. As was argued in earlier chapters, political leaders in presidential systems may also tend to emphasize themselves more than their parties since they are the ones who are given the mandate to govern and they are the ones making decisions. Hence, the type of political system is tested as a variable in relation to person-centred media reporting and leaders’ mediated communication (“pol_sys”).

Another politically-related variable often considered in personalisation research is the type of electoral system (Hanspeter Kriesi, 2010; Mayerhöffer & Esmark, 2011; Swanson & Mancini, 1996). In short, it is argued that majoritarian electoral systems in which voters cast votes for individuals rather than parties increase person-centred media reporting and also leaders’ communication, and perhaps even make leaders focus more on their personae in order to differentiate themselves from other candidates. On the other hand, proportional electoral systems, especially those with closed lists, are thought of as having the opposite effect. Namely, making media focus on political parties for which the voters vote.

Consequently, the type of electoral system was tested as a condition that may be connected with person-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication, as well as their persona-centred communication ("elect_syst").

The third causal condition which is theory-informed is "*low party identification*" ("party_id") which was tested for person-, persona- and private persona-centred leaders' mediated communication. It is argued in the literature that low degrees of party identification make leaders focus more on themselves to attract voters and act as brand differentiators (Garzia, 2011; Kuhn, 2004; Langer, 2011). In addition, these leaders might be more willing to share private information since they need alternative ways of bonding with voters, and communicating private information is considered to be a good way of doing this

Four more politically-related variables deemed relevant as causal conditions were also used in Stanyer's (2013) study so they were calibrated in the same way because external standards for calibration should be used whenever possible. One of these causal conditions is "*centrist political leaders*" ("centrist"). The literature suggests that those political actors who are not ideologically extreme might be more willing to put the focus on themselves, their personae, even their private personae, in order to act as brand differentiators. In other words, since their parties' policies might not be enough to differentiate them on the political scene, leaders try to differentiate based on information about themselves. Hence, this condition was tested in relation to person-, persona-, and private persona-centred leaders' mediated communication.

Furthermore, it is argued that those leaders who are relatively new to politics might be more willing to volunteer information about their political and private personae in order to try to bond personally with voters and make voters more familiar with them. Also, those who have spent a few years in politics before running for high office have more private information to share than political information so it can be expected that those leaders focus more on their private personae, but also that the media report more about their private life and qualities since there is not much to report about their political personae. Hence, the causal condition "*short time spent in politics before election/appointment*" ("years") was examined in relation to persona-centred leaders' mediated communication and private persona-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication.

The causal condition "*member of the baby boom generation*" ("boomer") was case-informed in Stanyer's study since he observed that leaders whose private lives were more media visible were mostly those born after the Second World War. He argued this is because "boomer" leaders were more comfortable in talking about

themselves and revealing their private spheres. Since there was some indication that in the Yugoslav/Croatian case some leaders who were members of the baby boom generation might also be more willing to communicate information about their personae, especially private personae, this variable was tested as well. However, unlike in Stanyer's project, it was tested for persona-, and private persona-centred leaders' mediated communication, and not media reporting. The variable was calibrated using a crisp set; namely, if a leader was born before 1946, he/she was considered non-member, and if he/she was born after 1946, he/she was considered full member of the set.

The final causal condition calibrated according to Stanyer's standards is "*weak statutory protection of private lives*" ("privacy_law"). It is argued that the media in countries where politicians' private lives are strongly protected by law are less willing to intrude into politicians' privacy and/or report their private lives (Stanyer & Wring, 2004). Hence, this causal condition was tested for the private persona-centred media reporting.

Another variable connected to law is introduced as a possible causal condition that might influence the private persona-centred media reporting, "*weak statutory protection against libel*" ("libel_law"), given that the literature suggests that the law against libel in journalism was frequently used in post-communist countries to silence reporters and divert them from reporting leaders' privacy (Badrov, 2007).

The final politically-related causal condition is the "*high level of authoritarianism in the society*" ("authoritarian") which was tested in relation to the person-centred leaders' mediated communication since the leadership cult literature suggests that the communist political elite put the focus on the leader rather than the collective, partly due to the high degree of authoritarianism in the society, in the sense that the people wanted a strong leader (Apor et al., 2004).

Media-related causal conditions

As mentioned, there are five media-related causal conditions tested in this project, two of them being "macrovariables" formed by joining the two lower order conditions. One of these macrovariables is the "*autonomous journalistic culture*" ("j_culture") which was formed by joining the causal condition "*nondeferential media*" and "*high media independence from political influences*" by the "logical or" command which forms the higher order variable by taking the maximum of each case membership (Ragin, 2009). The logic here was that the more autonomous the journalistic culture, the more the media will report in line with media logic, i.e. its content will be person-, persona- and private persona-centred in order to attract

readers, and consequently, advertisers. Also, the leaders might be more willing to pursue a person-centred communication in order to behave in line with media logic and get into the news. Hence, this causal condition was tested for all dimensions of the personalisation in media reporting, and also person-centred leaders' mediated communication.

Another macrovariable is the "*commercialized media system*" ("commercial"), which was also formed using the "logical or" command. The two lower order variables were "*high degree of private media ownership*" and "*high degree of advertising in the media*". In essence, it is suggested that in a commercialized media systems, that can be seen as characterized by high degree of private media ownership and advertisers' influence, the media would act more according to media logic and put the focus on leaders, their political and private personae, and the leaders might also be more willing to reveal their private information in order to be more interesting and newsworthy both to the media and voters. Consequently, this variable was tested for all dimensions of personalisation in media reporting, as well as for the private persona-centred leaders' mediated communication outcome.

The "*strong tabloid sector*" ("tabloid") variable was tested for the private persona-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication since it is argued that the stronger the tabloid sector, the more emphasis the media gives to leaders' private affairs, and the leaders might also be more willing to volunteer their private information in order to act according to media logic and in that way, make the news (Kuhn, 2004; Stanyer & Wring, 2004).

The final two media-related variables are linked to television. The "*large television reach*" ("tv_reach") variable was included since the introduction of television is often considered to have increased the media's focus on leaders' political and private personae (Meyrowitz, 1985). Also, it is argued that the leaders have had to adapt to television's tendency to communicate persona- and private persona-related information (Jamieson, 1988; Meyer, 2002). Hence, this causal condition was tested for the persona- and private persona-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication.

The final media-related variable was the "*leaders who participated in a television debate*" ("tv_debate") given that previous research has revealed that the media focuses more on leaders' personae when they participate in a television debate (Reinemann & Wilke, 2007; Tsfati, 2003). Hence, the leaders were considered full members of the set if they participated in a television debate prior to the elections in which they came to power and full nonmembers if they haven't. This variable was tested in relation to the persona-centred media reporting.

The summary of the outcomes and their related causal conditions, as well as the details of variables calibrated using fuzzy sets, can be found in the Appendix 5. The analysis was conducted by following the procedure from Ragin (2009) and using fsqca 2.0 software. The software is based on counterfactual reasoning, meaning that it constructs truth tables in which all possible combinations of causal conditions and their relations to the outcome are listed. If there are five causal conditions (k) tested, then the number of possible causal recipes/combinations is 32 (2^k). The truth table also reveals which combinations of causal conditions are connected with real outcomes, i.e. those entered by the researcher in order to be tested, and these are the only combinations which the researcher continues to examine. Each combination of conditions is presented with values for consistency and coverage, which help the researcher decide which of the combinations are empirically relevant. Both of these values range from 0 to 1. As Ragin (ibid., 112) frames it, *consistency* shows “the truth value” of the solution. In other words, it shows the degree to which a certain causal recipe is connected to the examined outcome (Ragin, 2006). If a certain solution leads to different outcomes, its consistency will be low. In all analyses but those examining causal paths to the lower degrees of the persona-centred media reporting and higher degrees of the private persona-centred reporting, the consistency cut-off value was not lower than 0,75, as suggested by Ragin (2009). In the two mentioned analyses it was lowered to 0,5 in order to establish at least one causal path. The *coverage* values assess the extent to which the solution “accounts for instances of the outcome” (Ragin, 2006: 292), or put simply, it shows how much of the outcome a certain solution explains. If there are many paths to the same outcome, it can be expected that the coverage will be small. Also, given that some solutions do not have empirical value on their own, i.e. the cases they explain have already been accounted for by other solutions, the value of the *unique coverage* is presented. Those solutions with very low unique coverage can be seen as empirically irrelevant (ibid.). In the tables which report the findings from the fsQCA (tables 7.1. – 7.12.) the causal paths that are connected with a certain outcome are presented with values for consistency and coverage. The software calculates these values using complex equations (for more details see Ragin, 2009), and presents them as numbers from 0 to 1, correct to six decimal places, so this is also the way in which they are presented in the tables.

7.2. Findings

7.2.1. Outcome: The person-centred media reporting

The analysis of causal conditions that are explicitly connected with higher degrees of person-centred media reporting revealed two causal paths. The first causal recipe suggests that the media reporting is person-centred when journalistic culture is autonomous, the politician is a directly elected President but not a party leader, and when the leader him/herself is seen as pursuing a person-centred communication. In the second causal recipe, having an autonomous media is not necessary, rather it is the deferential journalistic culture that is an important media-related factor. Other associated factors in this solution are presidential political system in which the President is the head of the executive, with this President's mediated communication being person-centred. The first path helps explain why post-communist presidents Mesić and Josipović were more visible in the media than the parties whose members they were, while the second path accounts for why communist President Tito was so prominent in media reporting. It is evident from these causal recipes that media focuses more on Presidents whose communication is person-centred in both communist and post-communist context, but these conditions are not sufficient on their own. It is also interesting to note that journalistic culture is an important element in both solutions, but as expected, both autonomous and deferential journalistic culture is associated with higher degrees of person-centred media reporting. It can be argued that in communism the deferential media put the focus on the political leader by following the cues of the political elite. However, in the post-communist period the important condition which is connected to the media's focus on individual political actors is the autonomy of the media, arguably because independent media operate according to media logic in which reporting about individuals is one of the news values.

Table 1. Causal recipes for the person-centred media reporting

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
	-----	-----	-----
j_culture*party_leader*president*elect_syst*I_person	0.357143	0.357143	1.000000
~j_culture*president*hoe*elect_syst*pol_sys*I_person	0.238095	0.238095	0.869565

The fsQCA also allows exploration of causal paths that are connected to lower degrees of person-centred media reporting. According to this analysis there is only one causal recipe that helps explain the party-centred reporting. Specifically, when the journalistic culture is autonomous and the reported politician is a Prime Minister and party leader in a parliamentary political system, the media does not

pursue person- but rather party-centred reporting. This path accounts for the lower degrees of mediated visibility of the post-2000 Prime Ministers Račan, Sanader, Kosor and Milanović. This causal path shows that even when the journalistic culture is autonomous, the PMs and party leaders in a post-communist parliamentary system are still less visible than their parties. It is also interesting to note that while higher degrees of leaders' person-centred communication are connected to higher degrees of person-centred media reporting, the degree to which leaders personalize their communication does not seem to be an important factor in the de-personalisation of media reporting which was observed in the post-2000 period. In other words, the media content was de-personalized, notwithstanding the ways in which the politicians were seen to have communicated. Hence, it can be suggested that the growth in media autonomy and the change of the political system are among the most important factors connected to the de-personalisation of media reporting in post-2000 Croatia. The more independent media might be seen as (re)acting to institutional changes and putting more focus on political parties because they were by the introduction of the parliamentary system given a more important and powerful place in the political system.

Table 2. Causal recipe for the lack of the person-centred media reporting

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
	-----	-----	-----
j_culture*party_leader*~president*~pol_sys	0.517241	0.517241	0.750000

7.2.2. Outcome: The person-centred leaders' mediated communication

There are three intermediate solutions connected to higher degrees of the person-centred leaders' mediated communication. The first causal recipe suggests that leaders are reported as focusing more on themselves than on their parties even when their parties have strong support among voters (higher degrees of party identification) if they are not ideologically extreme, the society exhibits high degree of authoritarianism, and the journalistic culture is autonomous. This path helps explain the high degree of person-centred leaders' mediated communication in the case of the political leaders who were in power in the 2010s, Prime Ministers Kosor and Milanović, and President Josipović. The second causal recipe suggests that leaders who belong to centrist parties and communicate in an autonomous media environment, but belong to parties characterized by low party identification, are not

party leaders, are elected through a majoritarian system and the media focuses more on them than on their parties, are also reported as pursuing person-centred communication. This causal recipe helps explain the ways in which President Mesić's mediated communication was personalized. Finally, the last causal recipe suggests that leaders elected by majoritarian system in a presidential political system characterized by a deferential journalistic culture, high degree of authoritarianism in the society, and higher degrees of person-centred media reporting, put more emphasis on themselves in their communication than on their parties. This path accounts for the high degree of Tito's person-centred mediated communication. Hence, the first two paths help explain the person-centred leaders' mediated communication in the post-communist system and suggest that necessary factors are autonomous media and centrist orientation of leaders' parties, but these conditions are not sufficient on their own¹⁷. The most interesting finding from these causal paths is that some leaders can be seen as pursuing person-centred communication even if the party identification is high. Having in mind that those were leaders in power in 2010s, this can mean that the person-centred leaders' mediated communication became normalized in the consolidation period since leaders pursue it even though they have strong support among voters.

Table 3. Causal recipes for the person-centred leader's communication

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
j_culture*authoritarian*centrist*~party_id	0.416667	0.333333	0.937500
~j_culture*authoritarian*elect_syst*pol_sys*m_person	0.138889	0.083333	1.000000
j_culture*centrist*party_leader*party_id*elect_syst *m_person	0.131944	0.104167	1.000000

Table 7.4. reports two paths that are associated with low degrees of leaders' person-centred mediated communication. Based on these recipes it can be concluded that necessary conditions for leaders to be portrayed as putting less focus on themselves than on their parties are them being party leaders in parliamentary political systems, being elected through proportional electoral systems and working in an autonomous journalistic culture. However, these conditions are

¹⁷ As necessary conditions are understood those that appear in all solutions to the outcome, while sufficient conditions are those that appear in all solutions, but without any other conditions alongside them.

not sufficient, since this combination of factors needs to be supplemented either by a low degree of authoritarianism in the society or by a low level of party identification. While the first causal recipe accounts for the low degree of Prime Minister Račan's person-centred mediated communication, the second helps explain Prime Minister Sanader's mediated communication. It should be noted that while low levels of authoritarianism in society act as predicted, i.e. forming conditions for political leaders to focus more on institutions and issues than on individuals, the connection of lower degrees of party identification to lower degrees of leader's person-centred mediated communication is unexpected.

Table 4. Causal recipes for the lack of the person-centred leader's communication

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
	-----	-----	-----
j_culture*~authoritarian*~party_leader*~elect_syst* ~pol_sys*~m_person	0.446429	0.160714	0.757576
j_culture*~party_leader*party_id*~elect_syst* ~pol_sys*~m_person	0.357143	0.071429	0.833333

7.2.3. Outcome: The persona-centred media reporting

The fsQCA yields four combinations of factors that are connected to higher degrees of the persona-centred media reporting. However, the third and fourth solution have a unique coverage of 0, meaning that the cases they explain have already been accounted for in other solutions. In other words, these causal recipes should be seen as empirically irrelevant (Ragin, 2006), and so only the first two solutions will be discussed. According to these causal paths, necessary conditions for higher degrees of persona-centred media reporting are autonomous journalistic culture and higher degree of television reach. However, they are not sufficient and need to be accompanied by either the fact that the reported leader is not head of the executive or the fact that he/she holds the Prime Ministerial position. The first causal path helps explain why the media pursued persona-centred reporting when covering post-communist Presidents Mesić and Josipović. The second path accounts for the high degree of the persona-centred media reporting in the cases of the post-2000 Prime Ministers Sanader, Kosor and Milanović.

The analysis of causal paths that are associated with lower degrees of persona-centred media reporting resulted in only one solution. Specifically, when journalistic culture is deferential, and there is lower television reach, weaker

commercial media sector and no television debates, the media pursue less persona-centred reporting. This solution accounts for lower media visibility of communist leader Tito's persona. However, it should be noted that this causal path has a very low consistency (0,5), meaning that this combination of factors is not always connected to this outcome.

Table 5. Causal recipe for the persona-centred media reporting

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
j_culture*tv_reach*~hoe	0.369565	0.021739	1.000000
j_culture*tv_reach*~president	0.586957	0.141304	0.964286
j_culture*commercial*tv_reach	0.451087	0.000000	1.000000
j_culture*tv_reach*I_persona	0.434783	0.000000	1.000000

Table 6. Causal recipe for the lack of the persona-centred media reporting

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
~j_culture*~commercial*~tv_reach*~tv_debate*~party_id	0.750000	0.750000	0.500000

7.2.4. Outcome: The persona-centred leaders' mediated communication

According to this analysis, there are four possible combinations of variables connected to high degrees of leaders' persona-centred mediated communication. However, given that the third and fourth recipes have very low unique coverage, i.e. the cases they explain have already been explained by other solutions, only the first and the second recipe are deemed empirically relevant. Based on these two causal paths it can be concluded that the only necessary condition for a higher degree of persona-centred leaders' communication is a high degree of persona-centred media reporting. However, this condition is necessary but not sufficient, and in the first solution it is important that alongside this factor the leader is a directly elected President who has been in political life for a long time. This recipe accounts for the high degree of communist leader Tito's persona-centred mediated communication. On the other hand, the high degree of persona-centred media reporting is associated with a higher degree of persona-centred leaders' communication also when the leader is new to politics, he/she is a centrist and the television reach is substantial. This recipe accounts for the ways in which the Prime Minister Kosor and

President Josipović were reported to personalize their communication. The conditions which feature in this solution which is connected with leaders in the post-communist system act as expected. Specifically, larger television reach was thought to be connected to the fact that leaders pursue more persona-centred communication. Similarly, centrist political ideology was assumed to be associated with leaders' more inclined to communicate information about themselves and in that way act as brand differentiators for voters. However, while those with fewer years in politics in the post-communist system might consider pursuing more persona-centred communication, in the communist system the opposite condition is connected to the same outcome. In other words, in combination with other factors, the fact that Tito was a long standing figure in Yugoslav politics is also associated with his persona-centred mediated communication, which can be seen as a communist system peculiarity.

Of the four intermediate solutions which help explain low degrees of leaders' persona-centred mediated communication, two do not cover any cases on their own (i.e. their unique coverage is 0), so they are excluded from further analysis. According to the other two empirically relevant paths, there is one necessary condition for a low degree of persona-centred leaders' mediated communication – high party identification. This condition is necessary, but not sufficient. Hence in the first path it needs to be accompanied by the fact that the leader in question holds a Prime Ministerial position and is relatively new to politics. This solution accounts for the low degree of persona-centred mediated communication of the 1990s Prime Ministers Valentić and Mateša, but also Milanović in the 2010s. The other causal path suggests that alongside high party identification, not even the fact that the television is quite prevalent makes leader communicate large amount of information about themselves if they are ideologically extreme, belong to a pre-boomer generation and the commercial media sector is quite weak. This solution helps explain the degree to which the first post-communist President Tuđman communicated information about himself. It was expected that high party identification will be an important variable connected with the fact that leaders communicate less information about themselves. However, it is surprising that the PMs who are new to politics do not communicate more information about themselves. Also, it is important to note that in this solution all the conditions connected to a low degree of persona-centred leaders' mediated communication are politically-related. Hence, although there is a path in which the media-related variables also play a role, it seems that there are situations in which some leaders may not be affected by the media environment. Consequently, it can be suggested

that the media in this post-communist context has not “colonized” politics to a significant extent, as opposed to what Meyer (2002) argues is the case in some Western systems.

Table 7. Causal recipes for the persona-centred leader's mediated communication

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
	-----	-----	-----
president*elect_syst*~years*m_persona	0.260870	0.130435	0.888889
tv_reach*~years*m_persona*centrist	0.478261	0.347826	0.916667
president*elect_syst*tv_reach*m_persona*centrist*party_id	0.206522	0.032609	1.000000
commercial*president*elect_syst*tv_reach*boomer *m_persona*centrist	0.130435	0.086956	1.000000

Table 8. Causal recipes for the lack of the persona-centred leader's mediated communication

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
	-----	-----	-----
~party_id*~president*years	0.703704	0.037037	0.904762
~party_id*~president*boomer	0.629630	-0.000000	0.894737
~party_id*~centrist*years*~boomer*~commercial	0.148148	-0.000000	1.000000
~party_id*~centrist*~boomer*tv_reach*~commercial	0.222222	0.074074	1.000000

7.2.5. Outcome: The private persona-centred media reporting

There is a single path that leads to higher degree of the private persona-centred media reporting, but its consistency is quite low (0,5), meaning that the combination of causal conditions from this solution is not always or even in the majority of cases associated with the high mediated visibility of leaders' private lives. This causal recipe suggests that when the media are autonomous, television is widespread and the leader is new to politics, the media increasingly reports about his/her private life. This combination of factors helps explain the high degree of media visibility of the private lives of the 1990s Prime Minister Valentić's and 2010s President Josipović.

Table 9. Causal recipe for the private persona-centred media reporting

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
	-----	-----	-----
j_culture*tv_reach*years	0.933333	0.933333	0.500000

On the other hand, the analysis of low degrees of private persona-centred media reporting produced three causal paths. According to these paths, there are five necessary conditions for this dimension of personalisation, but they are not sufficient on their own. The necessary conditions are the weak tabloid sector and weak commercial media sector, strong libel and privacy laws and low degree of the private persona-centred leader's mediated communication. In the first causal path these conditions need to be supplemented by a low television reach and a leader who has been long in politics, so this solution helps explain the low media visibility of communist leader Tito's private life. The second causal path alongside the necessary conditions and the fact that the leader needs to be a long known political actor also emphasizes the importance of the autonomous journalistic culture. This solution accounts for the low private persona-centred media reporting of Prime Minister Račan. Finally, the third causal path suggests that the five necessary conditions in combination with the autonomous media are associated with low media exposure of a leader's private life if he/she is a President. This solution helps explain why 1990s President Tuđman's and 2000s President Mesić's private lives were not very media visible.

Table 10. Causal recipes for the lack of the private persona-centred media reporting

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
	-----	-----	-----
~tabloid*~tv_reach*~libel_law*~privacy_law *~commercial*~years*~l_private	0.085714	0.085714	1.000000
j_culture*~tabloid*~libel_law*~privacy_law*~commercial *~years*~l_private	0.271429	0.185714	1.000000
j_culture*~tabloid*~libel_law*~privacy_law*~commercial *president*~l_private	0.185714	0.100000	1.000000

7.2.6. Outcome: The private persona-centred leaders' mediated communication

There is a single intermediate solution that helps explain the high degree of leaders' private persona-centred mediated communication, which is not surprising given none of the leaders was considered to be a full member of this set, and only President Josipović was considered to be "mostly in" the set membership. Hence, this single solution helps explain the degree to which he put the focus on his private life in his mediated statements. The solution suggests that his reported focus on his private life is associated with a fact that he is a centrist and a President who is member of the baby boom generation, who was quite new to politics when he came to power, and works in a media environment characterized by strong tabloid and commercial media sector in which the media put significant focus on his private life.

Table 11. Causal recipe for the private persona-centred leader's mediated communication

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
	-----	-----	-----
tabloid*tv_reach*commercial*centrist*president*years *boomer*m_private	0.272727	0.272727	1.000000

The analysis of the low degree of leaders' private persona-centred mediated communication resulted in four possible causal combinations, each of which seems to be relevant for a particular time period. The combination of weak tabloid and commercial media sector, coupled with a low degree of media's private persona-centred reporting about a leader who is not new to politics and is a member of the pre-boomer generation, is one possible recipe connected to low degree of reported leaders' emphasis on his/her private life. This recipe helps explain why communist leader Tito was not reported as communicating information about his private life. The other three solutions place high party identification as a necessary condition associated with low degree of private persona-centred leaders' mediated communication in a post-communist democracy. But this condition is not sufficient on its own. Specifically, the second recipe suggests that those who also hold a Prime Ministerial position and more extreme ideological views in a media system characterized by weak tabloid sector and low degree of commercialization, are not willing to communicate information about their private life. This recipe accounts for low degrees of private life mediated revelations of 1990s Prime Ministers Valentić and Mateša. Similarly, when the party identification is high, tabloid sector weak, the degree of media commercialization low and the leader is not centrist, but he/she is

also not a member of the baby boom generation and the media does not report about his/her private life, the leader is not reported as revealing private information either. This is another recipe that helps explain leaders' communication in the 1990s, specifically that of President Tuđman. A somewhat different combination of factors account for low degree of private life revelation of the post-2000 leaders. Here, the recipe suggests that those leaders whose parties have stronger support among the public (higher party identification), hold Prime Ministerial posts and the media does not intrude into their privacy to a great extent, also are not reported as emphasizing their private sphere. This recipe accounts for the low degree of private persona-centred mediated communication in the cases of Prime Ministers Račan and Milanović. It is important to note that a high degree of party identification is again a significant causal condition that is connected with lower degrees of personalisation in leaders' mediated communication, since the same was observed in the case of the persona-centred leaders' mediated communication.

Table 12. Causal recipes for the lack of the private persona-centred leader's mediated communication

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
	-----	-----	-----
~party_id*~president*~m_private	0.435897	0.179487	0.944444
~tabloid*~commercial*~years*~boomer*~m_private	0.282051	0.076923	1.000000
~party_id*~tabloid*~commercial*~centrist*~president	0.256410	0.051282	1.000000
~party_id*~tabloid*~commercial*~centrist*~boomer* ~m_private	0.230769	0.076923	1.000000

7.3. Discussion

Based on the findings from the fsQCA, there are several interesting points that need to be discussed in greater detail. Firstly, these analyses can be seen as another piece of evidence that suggests that personalisation is neither connected to solely media-related nor to politically-related variables. There was one causal path which was based solely on politically-related causal conditions, that which helped explain why political leaders are reported as not willing to communicate information about their personae. However, all other solutions related to both media reporting and leaders' mediated communication, and also related to all examined dimensions of personalisation (person-, persona, and private persona-centred communication), showed that both higher and lower degrees of personalisation(s) are connected with

a combination of media and politically-related factors. This supports the hypotheses of those considering personalisation to be a complex phenomenon associated with a range of conditions that stem from both the political and media system (e.g. Downey & Stanyer, 2010; Maier & Adam, 2010; Swanson & Mancini, 1996). Accordingly, these findings speak against theories suggesting that either political or media-related factors should be seen as main drivers of personalisation, since it appears as though the answer lies less in the either-or relationship, and more in the interaction between these two types of factors.

Secondly, it seems that the personalisation in leaders' mediated communication is indeed more leader-specific than personalisation in media reporting, as was suggested before. Specifically, there are fewer causal paths explaining higher and lower degrees of all dimensions of personalisation in media reporting than in leaders' mediated communication. This might mean that conditions associated with personalisation in media reporting are more durable or might have longer term influences, while different leaders (re)act to certain causal conditions as they see fit, and not by following the practices of their predecessors or other leaders working in similar conditions as they are.

Thirdly, some of the factors that were included based on the review of the communist and post-communist literature, such as the degree of authoritarianism in the society and the characteristics of a journalistic culture, were shown to be important. Specifically, findings revealed that a high degree of authoritarianism is connected to the higher degree of leaders' person-centred communication, in both a communist and post-communist setting. In other words, it seems that there is some merit to the theory suggesting that leaders tend to put the focus on themselves rather than their parties because the society prefers strong leaders over strong institutions. In addition, the ways in which the characteristics of journalistic culture were connected to different dimensions of personalisation were also as expected based on existing theories. Specifically, the findings showed that both deferential and autonomous media can be connected to the person-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication, arguably because deferential media in communism were putting the focus on the leader due to instructions from the political elite, and in post-communism because they were following media logic which is partly characterized by the focus on individuals rather than abstract collectives. Also, the analysis showed that autonomous journalistic culture, that in which the media act according to their own logic, are a necessary condition for the increased person-centred media reporting. This means that autonomous media do indeed tend to focus more on leaders' personae, perhaps because they consider

them more newsworthy. In addition, it was suggested in Chapter 5 that the media focused less on Tito's persona and more on connecting things/issues/places with his name in order to create a perception of Tito's omnipresence and importance in the society, in line with the leadership cult idea. The findings from fsQCA showed that deferential media were in communism connected with lower prominence of Tito's persona. Hence, the deferential communist media can again be seen as participating in the building of Tito's leader cult, although being only one of the factors that are connected to the degree of his persona-centred media reporting.

However, it is interesting to note that not all combinations of variables associated with the ways in which media reporting and leaders' mediated communication was personalized in communism and post-communism differ significantly. On the contrary, some combinations of factors connected to personalisation in communism seem similar to those found in post-communism, or at least something that might be expected in democratic systems. For example, the low prominence of Tito's private life in the media was connected to factors such as the weak tabloid and commercial sector, strong privacy and libel laws, lower degree of television reach etc. Somewhat surprisingly, deferential journalistic culture was not connected with this outcome. Hence, although the causal conditions connected to the same outcome in communism and post-communism usually differ, they are not completely different and the variables associated with personalisation in media and leaders' mediated communication in communism are at times not that different from the factors connected to the same outcomes in post-communism.

Furthermore, in relation to the person-centred media reporting (i.e. the focus that is in the media content put on the leader instead on the collective such as a party or a government), this analysis highlighted some important relationships between political systems and the actors that work in them. Specifically, while the type of the political system is usually considered as one of the most important causal conditions contributing to the greater focus on the individual, this analysis shows that the political system is important mostly in relation to the position that the actor has in the system. In other words, Presidents are usually presented in a more person-centred way no matter whether they rule in a parliamentary or a presidential system, arguably because they are considered more powerful as individuals who do not depend greatly upon their parties. On the other hand, the media visibility of Prime Ministers can be seen as depending on the political system in which they operate since the analysis showed that party-centred media reporting is associated with Prime Ministerial positions only when the Prime Minister rules in a parliamentary system, alongside other factors. In sum, this analysis showed that it

is important to distinguish between political actors when the degree of person-centred media reporting in a certain system is measured and explained, especially if a system is characterized by dual leadership as many post-communist systems are. It also showed that the influence of the type of the political system should not be overstated, since it seems relevant only relative to the position that the political actor has in the system.

With relation to the persona-centred political communication, the often discussed influence of television reach was confirmed. Although there seems to be an agreement that the introduction of television has increased media's focus on leaders' personae, both the political and the private (Jamieson, 1988; Langer, 2011; Maier & Adam, 2010; Meyer, 2002; Meyrowitz, 1985; Patterson, 1993), television reach is surprisingly rarely considered as a factor when explaining personalisation, perhaps because studies trying to explain personalisation look only at recent decades in which television was already a major media factor in established Western democracies. It was possible to examine the influence of television reach in this study given that only around 60% of Croatian people watched it in the 1970s (Robinson, 1977), so there was a significant growth in television reach. Consequently, the analysis showed that the spread of television is a necessary factor connected to the increase in persona-centred media reporting. This shows support for theories formulated by Meyrowitz (1985) about the influence of television on the media exposure of politicians' personae, and also on other media outlets, such as newspapers, that also adopted this kind of communication. Given that the solution which explains the causal conditions connected to the higher degrees of persona-centred leaders' mediated communication in post-communism also includes widespread television reach, this analysis can be seen as also confirming the hypothesis put forward by Jamieson (1988) who claimed that politicians needed to adapt to the new media environment and this meant increasingly communicating information about their personae.

7.4. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to determine the ability of the new method in media studies, fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis, to explain trends in personalisation(s) in media reporting and leaders' mediated communication that were observed in communist Yugoslavia and post-communist Croatia.

Although fsQCA is claimed to be able to reveal causality (Ragin & Rihoux, 2004a), its language connotes that the relationship between tested variables is one

of cause of effect (i.e. causal conditions, outcomes, causal paths etc.), and its findings have been in media studies presented as proving causal connections (in Downey & Stanyer, 2010; Stanyer, 2013), the statistical test on which fsQCA is based can only prove associations between variables, and not causal relationships. This fact was emphasized not only by critics (e.g. Seawright, 2004), but also by method's inventor and its advocates (Ragin & Rihoux, 2004b). Given that this method is relatively new and it is still being modified, I would suggest that changing the method's vocabulary and making it clear in method's explanations that it is a technique of establishing associations and explicit connections, without claims to revealing causality, might improve it.

In spite of the fact that fsQCA is not able to reveal what caused personalisation(s), the analyses reported in this chapter did point to some interesting conclusions with regard to the combinations of factors that are associated with higher and lower degrees of the person-, persona-, and private persona-centred media reporting and leaders' mediated communication. In the first place, it was established that there are usually several combinations of factors that are associated to the same degree of personalisation. Also, in almost all cases the combinations of conditions that were found to be explicitly connected to a certain degree of personalisation were not completely media or politically-related, but rather a complex interaction between the two types of factors. Hence, this analysis confirmed the findings from other studies (e.g. Downey & Stanyer, 2010; Stanyer, 2013) which found that personalisation can be seen as connected not only to politically-related causal conditions, but also media-related ones. It is particularly important to note that this complex interplay of media and political factors was found in a communist and post-communist context in which political factors are usually considered more important and influential than media-related ones.

In addition, this study showed that it is important to adapt the variables to the context that is being researched. In other words, the variables that were introduced based on the knowledge of the communist and post-communist context (e.g. authoritarianism in the society, journalistic autonomy) and examination of cases that were analyzed (e.g. being a party leader, position in the political system etc.) showed at times as more important than the variables tested in other similar studies or those which the mainstream personalisation literature identifies as relevant (e.g. the strength of tabloid sector, type of political system).

Finally, this analysis again showed how important it is to differentiate between different dimensions of personalisation and be clear about how these dimensions are defined, measured and their causal conditions examined. The

complexity of personalisation of political communication was showed not only by different paths that lead to the same outcome, but also significant differences between conditions that are relevant for different dimensions of personalisation. Although there were some differences between conditions tested for each dimension of personalisation, it is important to note that those variables tested for several dimensions were not found to be equally important for all dimensions. Hence, this again speaks to the complex nature of personalisation and conditions that are associated with its dimensions, and should act as a warning against generalizations and simplifications of issues related to this phenomenon.

8. The comparative perspective: the peculiarity of the Croatian case

The first three empirical chapters reported findings from analysis of the personalisation of political communication in communist Yugoslavia, and one of its successors, Croatia. This empirical chapter will examine the personalisation in media reporting in a comparative perspective. Namely, it will look at the cross-national similarities and differences between the trends observed in a communist and post-communist context and that revealed by analyses of other, mostly Western, countries. There are two main aims of this comparison. First is to examine whether the trends found in this case study are in any way extraordinary, i.e. counter-intuitive given existing scholarship and trends detected in other contexts. The second is to establish whether the findings from Yugoslavia and Croatia can in any way inform the scholarship on personalisation, but also political communication in general.

This seems important since, if the person and/or persona-centred media reporting trends in a new democracy are somehow different from those suggested by the personalisation literature and observed in other countries, it would point to the fact that personalisation scholarship has limitations and its explanatory power does not go beyond established Western democracies in which this theory has mostly been tested. Hence, the personalisation literature would have to be modified or supplemented with theories which might explain developments related to the mediated visibility of political leaders in contexts other than Western ones. If the trends in media's focus on leaders and their personae, and their origins, are significantly different in Croatia from those in established Western democracies it might also mean that there are some new trends of political communication and theories of their development or diffusion that have not yet been discovered or acknowledged. Specifically, this chapter will discuss whether existing theories related to the development of modern trends of political communication, namely Americanization and modernization, can help explain this case study, and if they can not, what are the alternatives.

In the first part of the chapter the data related to the person-centred media reporting in communist Yugoslavia and post-communist Croatia will be examined in a comparative perspective, while the second part of the chapter will focus on cross-national comparison of the data related to the mediation of leaders' private lives. In both parts special emphasis will be put on the comparison of Yugoslav/Croatian

data with that from Langer's study (2011) of personalisation in the UK. Given that it is difficult to compare data from various studies on personalisation due to inconsistencies in the conceptual and methodological approaches to the study of personalisation, Langer's study is the most appropriate for a detailed comparison of person-centred media reporting and mediation of leaders' private lives since it conceptualizes personalisation in a similar way to this thesis. There are also significant similarities in research designs. More details about the conceptual and methodological similarities and differences between the Langer's study and this project are given later on in the chapter.

8.1. Person-centred media reporting

The longitudinal content analysis of Yugoslav and Croatian daily newspapers reported in Chapter 5 revealed that there is a trend of de-personalisation of media content evident in the transition period from a communist to a post-communist regime. Specifically, all four indicators which were designed to capture the extent to which communist and post-communist reporting was person-centred (i.e. centred on an individual political actor instead of a collective one) showed de-personalisation trends. In addition, these trends were particularly strong when only heads of the executive were included in the analysis. To summarize the findings, in the transition from communist to a post-communist regime Croatian media have decreased the number of articles they published about leaders per week, these articles have been taking lesser and lesser proportion of all published articles, and the visibility of parties has grown relative to that of leaders to the point that the parties were in the 2010s more visible than their leaders. The aim of this part of the chapter is to examine the person-centred media reporting in a comparative perspective.

Personalisation theory in general suggests that media reporting has over the past few decades become more focused on individual political actors, especially political leaders, while the mediated visibility of collective political actors, such as political parties and governments, has decreased (e.g. Bjerling, 2012; Langer, 2011; Maier & Adam, 2010; McAllister, 2007; Poguntke & Webb, 2005). There is also a growing body of evidence that supports this thesis, at least in the Western countries in which this kind of research has been carried out. Wilke and Reinemann (2001) used content analysis to examine the campaign coverage of German General Elections from 1949 to 1998 in the daily newspapers. They found that the percentage of campaign-related articles that contained a reference to political

candidates increased from 1969 to 1998, although the increase was neither drastic nor linear. Langer (2011) used the same method to examine the visibility of British Prime Ministers in *The Times* and the *Guardian* from 1945 to 2009. She showed that British media have over time put increasing focus on political leaders, but as in the German case, the trend was not linear. The personalisation thesis can be seen as confirmed in the case of the UK, but also in those of the US, France, Canada and Austria, by the research done by Dalton and Wattenberg (2000). They examined the visibility of political leaders relative to that of their parties in the newspapers' campaign coverage from the 1950s to 1990s in the five above mentioned countries. They discovered that in all these countries newspapers in the 1990s focused more on political leaders than parties than was the case in the 1950s. In addition, in all cases the mediated visibility of individual political actors was greater than that of their parties in the 1990s. Rahat and Sheaffer (2007) came to a similar conclusion by doing research on Israel. They also used content analysis to research the prominence of political leaders and their parties in newspaper campaign coverage from 1949 until 2003. They reported that since the 1980s the number of articles that dominantly focused on the candidates grew significantly, while articles focusing on parties and those paying equal attention to the individual and the party, both decreased. Based on this evidence it could be suggested that the hypothesis that politicians have become increasingly media visible in the past few decades is warranted and empirically proven, at least in the case of Western democracies. Maier and Adam (2010) reached the same conclusion in their state of the field analysis.

In light of mainstream personalisation theory and the evidence that supports the person-centred hypothesis in some Western countries, the findings gathered by the examination of the Yugoslav and Croatian media seem counter-intuitive. Specifically, while it appears as though politicians are becoming more and more media visible in Western democracies, young post-communist democracy experienced completely different trends. This has several important implications that need to be considered.

Firstly, it has been hypothesized that post-communist countries have been in their transition phases quite susceptible to Western influences, especially those from the US, with political communication not being an exception. With regard to the Western influences on the media, it is often assumed that post-communist media have with the introduction of free market "adopted 'Americanized' style of reporting that relies heavily on such elements as 'infotainment', personalisation and trivialization" (Vltmer & Schmitt-Beck, 2002: 21). Hence, it is frequently suggested

that the tabloidisation of media and the trends in post-communist reporting have been imported from the West, particularly from the US (Gulyas, 1998; Lauk, 2008; Slavko Splichal, 2001). This hypothesis about the transfer of American-style communication trends is in line with the “Americanization” theory that suggests that modern trends and communication styles are being disseminated from the US around the world (Swanson & Mancini, 1996). However, the data gathered in this project refutes this hypothesis, at least as far as the adoption of person-centred media reporting is concerned. Although it is impossible to generalize and claim that all post-communist countries have not imported a person-centred style of reporting politics from the US, or Western democracies in general, the evidence from Croatia calls for caution in making generalizations about the Western influences on post-communist countries. It could actually be the case that the post-communist countries have not relied as much on the American or Western communication practices as is often assumed. The reluctance of post-communist journalists to adopt Western-like practices of reporting has been documented in other areas of communication as well. For example, it is argued that journalists in post-communist societies retained their focus on comment and analysis rather than reporting, i.e. they are described as opinionated, interventionist, prone to showing partisanship (Coman, 2000; Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Lauk, 2009; Voltmer, 2008). As Gross (2004: 123) puts it: “From Albania to Serbia, post-1989 journalism consists of tendentious, opinionated, highly politicized, and often inaccurate reporting”. In contrast, “Western journalists are generally less supportive of any active promotion of particular values, ideas and social change, and they adhere more to universal principles in their ethical decisions” (Hanitzsch et al., 2011: 273). Hence, “Americanization” theory might not be best at explaining the communication developments in post-communist countries.

Secondly, as explained in Chapter 3, some of those scholars who question the explanatory power of the “Americanization” theory tend to subscribe to the “modernization” hypothesis. In essence it suggests that the communication practices have been becoming more similar around the world due to the process of modernization that these societies have been undergoing (Plasser, 2002; Swanson & Mancini, 1996). The increased media focus on individual political actors is usually considered to be one of these modern communication trends which have developed across the world due to changes which the societies have gone through (e.g. weakening of cleavages, rise of politically self sufficient citizens, technological development of media, deregulation of media market etc.). However, this hypothesis likewise does not seem to explain the de-personalisation trends observed in Croatia. On the contrary, it seems that the more changes the country underwent, the less

focus its media put on the political leaders and the more prominence was given to the parties. Specifically, as the post-communist country moved towards the consolidation phase of the transition process, liberalized its media market and built its civic society, the media have not put more focus on individual political actors, as would be expected according to modernization theory, but rather less. This calls into question not only the ability to apply modernization theory beyond the Western world, but also the explanation of what are considered to be modern trends of political communication. Personalisation is usually considered to be one of those, alongside tabloidisation, rise of infotainment, professionalisation of journalists and campaigning etc. (Swanson & Mancini, 1996). However, as the example of Croatia shows, it is not only that tabloidized media do not have to practice person-centred media reporting, but that party-centred reporting and decreased leaders' media visibility might also be considered as new trends in political communication. Given that this type of reporting is usually considered to be superior to personalized reporting, at least by the supporters of the party democracy (Langer, 2011; Manin, 1997), it seems that the post-communist country's media reporting trends resemble those that advocates of party democracy would like to see in established Western democracies. Ironically perhaps, if we consider that Western countries and their media systems were thought of as role models for new post-communist democracies (Gross, 2004; Lauk, 2009), these young democracies might in their consolidated phases actually be role-models for their older counterparts.

Finally, the hypothesis suggested in this thesis, that of continuation of communist media reporting practices in the post-communist era, is as incapable of explaining the de-personalisation trends as "Americanization" and "modernization". In spite of what can be seen as a favourable context for the continuation of communist practice of person-centred reporting, post-communist media content transformed from person-centred to party-centred. Although it is difficult to generalize based on this case study, there is a possibility that the development of trends in post-communist reporting might be better explained by a process of "democratization" rather than any other theory. The fsQCA reported in the previous chapter showed that, based on examined variables, lower degrees of person-centred reporting in the late post-communist period were associated with the autonomous media and Prime Ministers who ruled in parliamentary systems. All these factors can be seen as related to the democratization processes. In the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic society the degree of media freedom rose, and institutional settings to de-centralize and de-personalize power were introduced in order to prevent a rise of another all-powerful leader, as was Tito, and

to an extent Tuđman in the early post-communist period. Hence, the rise in media independence and institutional changes by which Prime Ministers became head executives can be seen as both processes related to democratization, and de-personalisation of media reporting. Although it is only possible to speculate about the causal connection between democratization and de-personalisation of reporting at this point, the “democratization” theory in comparison to Americanization and modernization theory does seem to be the most plausible explanation of how the de-personalizing trend developed in Croatia.

Therefore, it can be concluded, based on the Croatian case study, that existing theories that aim to explain modern trends in political communication might not have the same explanatory power when tested in the context of post-communist countries. Rather, the development of political communication trends in these societies should perhaps be looked at through the prism of “democratization”, although further comparative research among post-communist countries is needed to determine whether this theory might be applicable more generally in the post-communist context.

8.1.1. Croatia and the UK compared: Post-communist media as a role model?

Although the differences between trends observed by scholars in various Western countries and trends found in this case study seem straightforward, caution is needed when using other scholars’ data for comparative analysis due to differences in conceptual and methodological approaches to personalisation. These other studies (i.e. Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000; Langer, 2011; Rahat & Sheaffer, 2007; Wilke & Reinemann, 2001) conceptualized personalisation as a focus on individual political actors in media reporting, sometimes relative to the focus put on their parties. Hence, they seem well suited for comparison with the data gathered in this project for the person-centred media reporting. These studies have also all used the content analysis method and focused on the examination of daily newspapers in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. However, their sampling methods vary and their coding procedures are often scarcely described. Therefore, in the words of Maier and Adam (2010: 226) who analyzed the state of the field, it “becomes extremely difficult to judge whether differences found between countries are real or a methodological artifact”.

In order to test whether the degrees of person-centred media reporting and the de-personalisation trends observed over time in Yugoslavia and Croatia are indeed extraordinary and contradict the existing scholarship on personalisation, the findings from this study will be compared with those from Langer's (2011) study of

personalisation in the UK. Several researchers has shown that the UK media has over the past few decades increased their focus on individual political actors (Boumans et al., 2013; Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000; Langer, 2011; den Harder, 2013). Hence the UK seems a good example of a Western society that is claimed to have been experiencing a trend towards personalisation in media reporting.

Langer's (2011) data seems best suited for comparison with data from this thesis for several reasons. Firstly, both Langer's study and this project used content analysis of newspaper articles for determining the degree of political leaders' mediated visibility. While Langer focused on the mediated visibility of British Prime Ministers (i.e. British heads of the executive), this project examined the media's focus on all Yugoslav and Croatian leaders that had executive powers. Hence, in order to make the data from this study more comparable to Langer's data, only information related to Yugoslav and Croatian heads of the executive is used for comparison. Secondly, the time-frames of the two analyses overlap to a great extent. Langer analyzed mediated visibility of leaders in the UK from 1945 to 2009, while this study focused on the period 1974 to 2013. Thirdly, the sampling methods of the two studies resemble each other to an extent. Langer aimed to analyze mediated visibility of political leaders in normal coverage so she focused on articles mentioning leaders published in two consecutive weeks in November during a leader's first three years in office. In this study sampling was also done during the first three years of a leader's rule, but both intensive and normal coverage was targeted. Hence, in order for the data to be as comparable as possible, only the articles published during normal periods (one week in March during second and third year in office) are included in the cross-national comparison. However, since the variable which coded for the mention of leader's party had to be coded in intense political coverage¹⁸, the leader to party ratio indicator from this project will be based on the articles published during the intense periods. Finally, Langer used some of the same indicators as were used in this project for determining the degree of the person-centred media reporting, namely the average number of articles mentioning the leader per week, the percentage of articles that refer to the leader in relation to all published articles, and the ratio of the leader to party mentions. Given that the same variables were analyzed in the same way in both projects, the comparison of the UK and Yugoslav/Croatian data should result in reliable and valid findings.

¹⁸ Party mentions had to be coded only in the intense coverage (election campaign period) because in the post-2000 period the Presidents had to resign from all party duties once elected so it was impossible to research leader to party mentions in the normal coverage (second and third year in office).

It should also be noted that Langer's data for the UK has been updated with the information gathered for David Cameron who came to power in 2010. The data related to Cameron was collected during a pilot study done for this thesis. Langer's method was used to analyze the mediated visibility of David Cameron in The Times in two consecutive weeks in November during his first and second year in office. Since the analysis was carried out in early 2012 it was not possible to analyze the first three years in office. Given that coding for variables designed to capture the degree of the person-centred media reporting was quite straightforward (the articles were coded only for the presence or absence of reference to Cameron and his party), the reliability of findings related to Cameron's media visibility should be quite high.

In sum, data from Langer's (2011) study and this one are compared according to two indicators of the person-centred media reporting: the average number of articles mentioning the head of the executive per week (Figure 19), and the ratio of head of the executive to party mentions in examined newspapers (Figure 20). In both comparisons the data from The Times which represents the UK media has been compared to the data from all three examined Yugoslav/Croatian newspapers, namely the state-owned quality paper Vjesnik, half-tabloid Večernji list which was privatized at the beginning of the 2000s, and the privately owned tabloid 24sata. Also, the UK data has been presented from the 1970s so that it covers the same time-period as the Yugoslav/Croatian data. Consequently, several conclusions can be drawn from these comparative analyses.

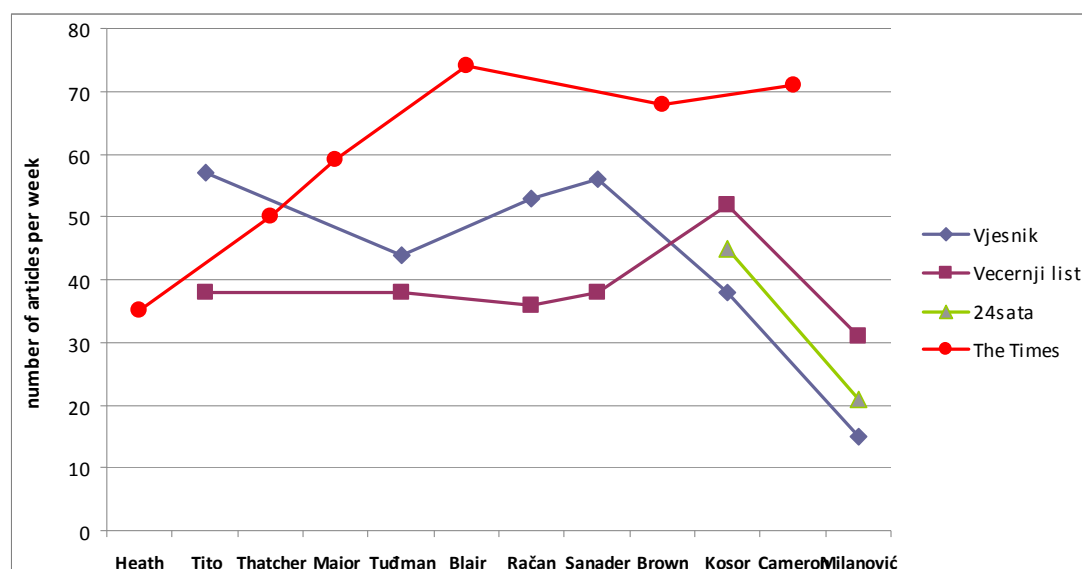


Figure 19. Average number of articles mentioning the head of the executive per week

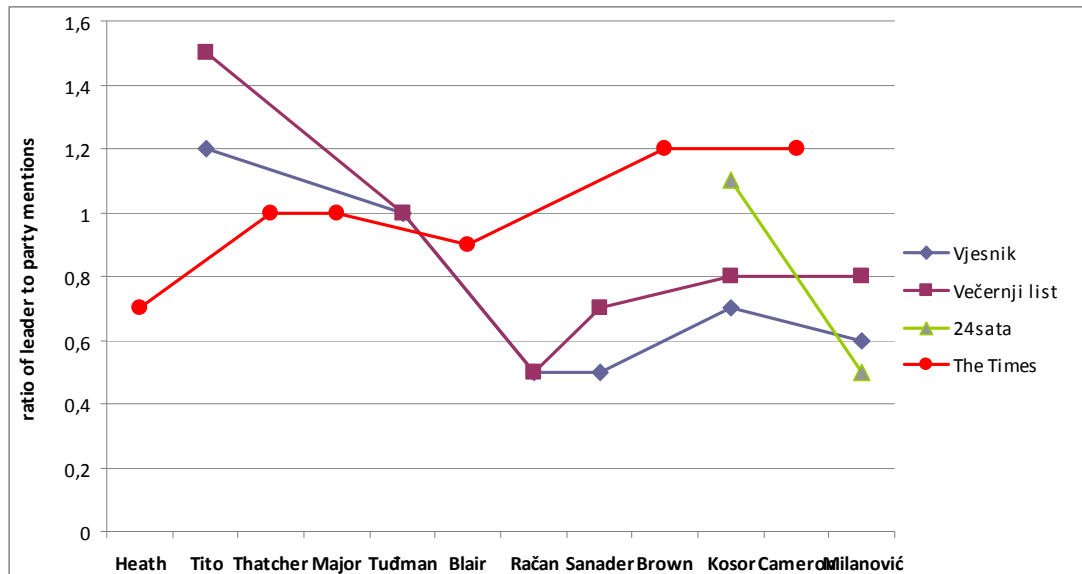


Figure 20. Ratio of articles mentioning heads of the executive to articles mentioning their party

Firstly, it appears as though the hypothesis that the post-communist country experienced different trends in the person-centred media reporting than the Western one is warranted. Both indicators show that since the 1970s the political leaders became more media prominent in the UK media, specifically The Times, and that these leaders have over time become more media visible than their parties, which is the opposite trend to that found in the case study of Yugoslavia and Croatia. In other words, while the example of The Times suggests that the UK experienced a personalisation trend in media reporting, the analysis of Croatian newspapers points to the fact that this media has undergone a process of de-personalisation in media reporting during the period of democratic transition. Although Langer (2011: 79) concluded that “parties continue to play a crucial material and symbolic role in British politics” given that the increase in the mediated visibility of the British Prime Ministers relative to their parties was not drastic, the comparison with a post-communist country reveals that the parties in the UK have a decreasingly important place in public discourse, while in the post-communist context they might be gaining relevance by increased visibility in the mediated public sphere.

Secondly, there seems to be a difference between the Western and the communist style of reporting, at least as far as the focus on political leaders is concerned. Specifically, both indicators show that the communist papers have put more emphasis on their leader in media content than did The Times at the beginning of the 1970s. British Prime Minister Edward Heath who was in power in the first half of the 1970s was on average mentioned in The Times 35 times a week, while communist leader Josip Broz Tito was mentioned in Večernji list 38 times, and in

Vjesnik 57 times a week. Similarly, Heath's Conservative party was more media visible than him, with a 0,7 leader-to-party ratio in *The Times*. On the other hand, Tito was more visible in both communist papers than *The League of Communist of Yugoslavia*. The ratio of leader-to-party mentions in *Večernji list* was 1,2, and in *Vjesnik* 1,5. The results of this comparison run counter to Galtung and Ruge's (1965) expectations of the news values in Western and communist countries. They speculated that Western countries would pursue a more person-centred style of reporting, while a communist press would put more focus on structures and collectives. However, the comparison presented above revealed the opposite – that the Yugoslav communist press used a more person-centred reporting style than did that in the UK. This finding then seems better grounded in the theories related to communist leadership cults and Western scholarship on personalisation. Specifically, as the fsQCA showed in the previous chapter, Tito's high media prominence in communism was explicitly connected with a deferential journalistic culture in which journalists were instructed to communicate information about him via mass media. This can be seen as one of the techniques of communist cult building (Apor et al., 2004; Lauk, 2008; Plamper, 2004; Rees, 2004). On the other hand, the personalisation scholarship suggests that (Western) media were in the past focused on issues and collectives, while nowadays this has changed towards more emphasis on the individual (Langer, 2011; Maier & Adam, 2010; McAllister, 2007; Poguntke & Webb, 2005), and this seems to partly explain why the UK media did not focus as much on political leaders several decades ago.

Thirdly, it seems that post-communist media reporting could be far less person-centred than is usually considered in the existing literature. For example, Lewis (2000) claimed that the post-communist politics revolve around individuals, while Örnebring (2012: 500) declared that “many trends present in ‘Western’ political systems are even more pronounced in postcommunist Central and Eastern Europe”, personalisation being one of them. However, as the comparison of the Croatian and the UK media reporting shows, UK newspaper was pursuing a more person-centred approach to reporting in the majority of the post-1990 period. Specifically, while the media visibility of Croatian parties increased in the post-communist period in all newspapers, the parties' visibility in the UK decreased to the point that Brown and Cameron's ratios of leader-to-party mentions were similar to those of Tito in Yugoslav papers in the 1970s. In addition, even the Croatian tabloid has not put as much focus on the leader as did *The Times* in comparison to the emphasis on the party from the end of the 2000s. Furthermore, in the post-1990 period *The Times* has continually been publishing more articles about British leaders than any of the

examined Croatian newspapers have published about their heads of the executive. In the post-2000 period The Times was mentioning the head of the executive in more articles per week than did the Yugoslav communist media in the 1970s. The biggest differences can be observed in the 2010s when The Times was publishing on average 71 article about Cameron per week, while Večernji list was mentioning Milanović in less than half as many (n=31) and Vjesnik almost five times fewer than The Times (n=15).

It might be tempting to ascribe the differences between the UK and Croatian newspapers' reporting to their format and type. Specifically, it might be expected that The Times has, as a quality paper, focused most on reporting politics, and consequently perhaps, political leaders. However, two facts suggest that the differences in observed trends should not be seen as a result of the newspapers' format and type. Firstly, a quality paper was analyzed in the Yugoslav/Croatian case as well, and its degree of person-centred reporting and trends over time are significantly different from those observed in The Times. Hence, the comparison of only quality papers also points to the fact politicians have become increasingly visible in the UK media, while their visibility has decreased in the Croatian media. Secondly, all the Croatian newspapers, the quality paper, half-tabloid and the tabloid, have experienced the same trend. Hence, the de-personalisation trend is not characteristic only of a specific newspaper type, but of Croatian print media in general. Therefore, the differences between the development of person-centred reporting in the UK and Yugoslavia/Croatia should not be seen as stemming from differences in analyzed materials.

In sum, the comparison of person-centred media reporting in post-communist Croatia and the UK points to the fact that the de-personalisation of media reporting found during the transitional process from the communist to a post-communist system can indeed be seen as an extraordinary trend in modern political communication. In addition, generalizations about the Western influence on European post-communist countries and the centrality of individual political actors to these societies should be made with care given that the evidence from this case suggests that post-communist media reporting can actually be less focused on individuals than that in an established Western democracy. Also, given that it is often thought that the increased emphasis on individual political actors at the expense of issues and collective political actors is detrimental to democratic processes, post-communist countries might represent a good testing ground for an investigation of personalisation effects. Specifically, if increased focus on individuals is said to be harmful to the quality of democracy (Langer, 2011), then decreased

focus on individuals and increased media visibility of political parties might be beneficial to the democratic processes, especially in young democracies. Hence, post-communist countries, such as Croatia, might constitute a promising testing ground to investigate whether de-personalisation of media reporting can improve the quality of democracy and democratic processes in any way.

8.2. Mediation of leaders' private lives

While it seems important that party-centred media reporting could be seen as the new trend in political communication, the de-personalisation of media reporting evident in the decreasing focus on individual political actors does not say anything about the content of references to leaders. In other words, although the degree of leaders' mediated visibility is decreasing, what can be seen as a positive development by advocates of party democracy, the content of mediated information needs to be taken into account in order to make judgments about the quality of this communication. As was argued in Chapter 2, when it comes to mediated information about political leaders, the biggest concern is the type of information that is communicated. Specifically, the question that is most frequently raised is the extent to which this information is related to a leader's private persona, given that this type of mediated information may trivialize political communication and decrease the quality of public discourse (Franklin, 2004; Garzia, 2011; Langer, 2011; Meyer, 2002). Consequently, this part of the chapter compares trends in the mediation of leaders' private lives detected in the case study of a communist and post-communist country, with the trends observed in Western democracies. By making this comparison it is possible to establish whether the personalisation of media reporting in a post-communist context can be seen to run counter to mainstream personalisation scholarship, and whether there is indeed merit in the claim that post-communist media reporting can be considered a role-model for supporters of rational political debates in mediated discourse.

As reported in Chapter 5, the most significant change in the type of leaders' mediated information in Yugoslavia/Croatia was the rise in the number of references to their private and political/private personae. In other words, the data show that the leaders' private personae have been increasingly media visible in the post-communist period, and they have mostly been politicized, i.e. the private information has been explicitly connected with leaders' political personae, and not just publicized. For example, it was claimed that President Josipović and Prime Minister Milanović go to church as public officials although they are personally not religious

(Večernji list, 2.12.2011.), and that Prime Minister Kosor will be incapable of reforming the country since she is afraid to make changes to her appearance (Večernji list, 3.7.2009.). This seems in line with mainstream personalisation scholarship which suggests that the media have over the past few decades increasingly focused on the leaders' private life and qualities (Langer, 2011; Maier & Adam, 2010; Stanyer, 2013; Van Aelst et al., 2011), although the empirical evidence is at best ambiguous.

Langer (2011) analyzed the references to British Prime Ministers' family life, appearance, lifestyle, upbringing and religion in *The Times* from 1945 to 2009 and found that there was a clear increase in the amount of attention the media paid to British leaders' private lives. Den Harder (2013) came to the same conclusion by analyzing political interviews in *The Times* from 1990 to 2010, and he also found evidence that the same trend can be observed in France and Netherlands. However, he did not specify what qualifies as a "mention" of a leader's private life in his analysis. The increase in the mediated visibility of leaders' private lives in the UK and France was also observed by Stanyer (2013) who looked at the number of references to leaders' birthdays, spouses and holidays in the national press, but also to the number of books published about the leaders' private life in the 1990s and 2000s. He reported that alongside the UK and France, there was also an increase in the media visibility of leaders' private lives in the US, and to some extent in Australia. On the other hand, in Italy and Spain the trends were visible but very weak, while in Germany there was actually a decreasing trend. That is to say, in Germany the number of mediated references to leaders' private life has decreased since the 1990s. Similarly, Rahat and Sheafer (2007) reported that they have not found an increase in the mediated visibility of Israel's politicians' private lives and qualities from 1949 to 2003 in the daily newspapers, but they do not explain what they counted as references to politicians' private lives and qualities.

To sum up, it appears as though there is evidence that in some Western countries, such as the US, the UK, France and Netherlands, the media have focused more on politicians' private lives in the past few decades. But there are also countries in which there was little or no change in the media visibility of leaders' private lives, and also those, such as Germany, in which there was a decrease in the amount of references to leaders' private matters. This division between countries in which the media is more likely to report leaders' private personae and those in which leaders' private matters are not as media visible was also observed by Stanyer and Wring (2004), at a time when very little empirical evidence existed on the topic. They claimed that there are "laissez-faire media cultures" in which the

media does not refrain from reporting politicians' private personae, and those "more conservative" media cultures in which journalists are less willing to report politicians' private lives (ibid., 6). Given that this thesis has revealed that a post-communist country experienced an increase in the mediated visibility of leaders' private spheres it appears as though Croatian media culture resembles more a laissez-faire type than a conservative one, at least in its consolidated period. Hence, while it was shown in the example of Croatian media reporting that a young European democracy does not need to follow Western trends, the same can not be said about the trends related to the content of mediated information about leaders. On the contrary, it seems that Croatian post-communist democracy is experiencing the same trends as some established democracies, such as the UK, the US, France or Netherlands.

One of the implications of this is that the theories of "Americanization" and modernization of political communication could shed some light on why and how trends in the mediation of leaders' private lives in a young post-communist democracy developed. They were deemed unlikely to have significant explanatory power in the case of the rise of the party-centred media reporting, but it seems they might help explain the trend related to the private persona-centred media reporting.

If we look at "Americanization" theory, it might be argued that the increase in the mediated visibility of leaders' private lives in Croatia was possibly a trend imported from the US, or some other Western country, simply because in these countries this trend developed earlier. The existing evidence seems to suggest that the mediated visibility of leaders' private lives grew in the US from the end of the 1980s when George Bush Snr came to power, while in France and the UK the start of this trend can be traced to the 1990s (Langer, 2011; Stanyer, 2013). On the other hand, the mediation of Croatian head executives' private lives was not a significant feature of media reporting until the 2000s, peaking with Prime Minister Kosor in the 2010s. Hence, this trend developed in Croatia almost a decade later, so the media might have been imitating the West when it started to put more focus on leaders' private lives. Also, as was already mentioned, it is sometimes suggested that American style of reporting had a significant influence on the trends in some European post-communist countries (Slavko Splichal, 2001; Voltmer & Schmitt-Beck, 2002). Although Croatian media did not imitate the person-centred style of reporting, they might have done so with the disclosure of politicians' private matters. There is some evidence that Croatian newspapers imitated some of the reporting practices from Western countries. For example, Malović claims that the daily *Večernji list* has copied some of the practices of British Daily Mirror, especially its

graphic design and news presentation style (2003 in Kanižaj, 2006). Similarly, there is evidence that some Croatian political actors have imitated American practices of political advertising. Kunac et al. (2013: 75) argue that the two major political parties have in the 2011 General elections “uncritically adopted style of advertising from other countries, especially the US”. Hence, imitation of American communication practices does not seem to be strange to Croatian political communication actors. Consequently, the development of the discussed trend in a new democracy may perhaps be better explained by a “shopping model” according to which some modern trends, but not all, are imported and perhaps adapted to suit national contexts (Plasser, 2002: 18), while other communication practices are developed by the process of modernization.

Indeed, there are indications that modernization theory might also be well suited to explain the rise of the examined trend in post-communist Croatia. In other words, the changes and developments in the country itself might have led to higher media visibility of leaders’ private lives. The fsQCA revealed that the highest degree of private persona-centred media reporting, noted in the 2010s, was explicitly connected to the autonomous journalistic culture and large television reach, among other factors. Hence, the increased media visibility of leaders’ private lives seems to be associated with the changes in the degree of media freedom and technological development of media, which are changes that can be understood as forming part of the modernization process¹⁹. Another reason for ascribing this trend in the post-communist context to modernization rather than Americanization is that there may be different reasons for publishing details of leaders’ private persona. Western journalists justify their intrusion into politicians’ private lives by claiming that they are “providing information that allows the public to make judgments about politicians’ authenticity, trustworthiness and competence to govern” (Stanyer & Wring, 2004: 6; see also Stanyer, 2013; Thompson, 2000). At the same time, post-communist journalists are said to publish kompromat, i.e. compromising materials about politicians that may or may not be true, as instructed or paid for by competing political elites (Ledeneva, 2006; Örnebring, 2012). Hence, the motivation for disclosing leaders’ private information seems different in the West from that in post-communist countries, so the origins of the same trend might be different as well.

In addition, given that there was hardly any mediated information about the communist leader’s private life, and the amount of the mediated information grew

¹⁹ Other such changes, like the deregulation of media market, tabloidization of news and relaxing of libel laws, were also tested by fsQCA, but the analysis did not find them explicitly connected with higher media exposure of leaders’ private personae.

significantly in the post-communist period, the hypothesis about the continuation of communist style of reporting is not plausible. Also, the “democratization” thesis (which was suggested as a possible explanation for the decrease in the person-centred reporting) likewise does not seem to have any explanatory power with regard to the mediation of leaders’ private personae. Hence, according to the available evidence, the modernization theory and/or the “shopping model” seem as the most appropriate theories that may explain the development of the private persona-centred reporting in the examined post-communist context.

However, at this point it is important to note that the differences between the most plausible theories that may explain different personalisation trends also point to the fact that it is indeed necessary to look at personalisation as a multi-dimensional phenomenon since different dimensions can lead to quite different developments. While the move from person-centred to party-centred media reporting might have been seen as a positive development, at least for advocates of party democracy, and this kind of reporting a role-model for Western media that pursue person-centred reporting, the same can not be said of the rise in the mediation of post-communist leaders’ private personae. It can be argued here that the Croatian media cannot be seen as role-models since they are increasingly focusing on leaders’ private matters, which is usually seen as trivializing political communication and decreasing the quality of public discourse (Franklin, 2004; Langer, 2011; Meyer, 2002). Furthermore, developments in this post-communist context can be seen as even more harmful for the quality of information in public discourse since the number of articles mentioning leaders is decreasing, while the number of articles which focus on their private personae is increasing. On the other hand, in Western societies private information about leaders can be seen as supplementing, rather than replacing, political information, since the amount of mediated information about leaders is in general on the increase (Langer, 2011). Only those who consider all types of information about leaders important for public debates and voting could consider the developments in my case study as contributing to the quality of political communication. However, if a significant amount of the mediated information about post-communist leaders’ private lives is manufactured, as the literature on kompromat suggests, than there is no positive side to the increase in the media visibility of post-communist leaders’ private personae.

8.2.1. Croatia and the UK compared: Similarity with differences

Although it seems that the examined post-communist country experiences similar trends in the mediation of leaders' private lives as some established democracies, caution is needed when comparing data due to differences in the ways in which scholars conceptualize leaders' private life or private persona and methodological approaches to the analysis of this topic (Van Aelst et al., 2011). Hence, although all studies mentioned in the previous section focused on the mediation of politicians' private lives, and they all applied content analysis to daily newspapers, their sampling methods differ and there are also important variations in the ways in which they define and conceptualize what constitutes the leaders' private life. Furthermore, in some of the studies there was no explanation as to what was coded as a reference to a leader's private life, or as some call it personal life, or qualities (e.g. in Rahat & Sheaffer, 2007; den Harder, 2013).

In order to test whether the observed similarity in the trend of mediated leaders' private lives between the post-communist country and some Western democracies is real and not a methodological artifact, the data from this project will again be compared to the data from Langer's (2011) study of the personalisation in the UK. However, unlike the comparison of data related to the person-centred media reporting, the comparison of the mediated visibility of leaders' private lives is more complicated due to differences in the conceptualization of a leader's private life. Whereas Langer coded for references to family life, appearance, lifestyle, upbringing and religion (ibid., 84), in my project seven more life areas were added for analysis – love life, finance, health, relationships, education, feelings and work. However, given that each of these life areas was coded separately in the analysis of Yugoslav and Croatian newspapers it is possible to construct a private life index that would include only life areas that Langer's index also contains. Hence, for one of the Yugoslav/Croatian newspapers both indexes that capture all areas coded for in this project and that which contains only areas included in Langer's analysis will be presented. However, in spite of some similarities in the conceptualization of private life, it is possible that some media references were not coded in the same way. For example, Langer might have coded references to education as a reference to upbringing, or a mention of leaders' love life might have been in Langer's study coded as a reference to family life. Hence, the two indexes might give a hint, rather than proof, of how well an index designed to capture Western references to private lives captures references to leaders' private lives in a communist and a post-communist context. Furthermore, this might reveal some cultural differences in what might be from media reporting considered as one's private life. In other words, there might be some private life areas that post-communist media mentions and Western

ones do not. Finally, while Langer coded only for references to private life, in this project the distinction was made between private information which was only “publicized”, and that which was also “politicized”. For example, if the reference to a leader contains information that he/she went to church, this was coded as a reference to one’s private life. However, if the private information was in any way connected to a leader’s political persona, such as in the reference that he/she went to church as public official although he/she is personally not religious, then this was coded as a reference to a leader’s political/private persona. Given that both private and political/private references contain information of leaders’ private lives, and in order to make the data from this thesis comparable to that from Langer’s study, a joint index was made which captures both articles in which a leader’s private and political/private life are mentioned. As in Langer’s study, if an article contains references to more than one private life area, it was counted only once (ibid., 84). Given all the differences between the research designs and the modifications of data presentation, in order for the two studies to be as comparable as possible, this comparison should be primarily looked at as an illustration of the similarities and differences in the mediation of leaders’ private lives’ trends between a communist, post-communist and Western context. It should not be seen as a proper empirical cross-national comparison given that it might lack academic rigor due to possible inconsistencies in conceptualizations and coding. However, the comparison of Yugoslav/Croatian and British data does point to some interesting conclusions, even when the limitations of this comparison are taken into account.

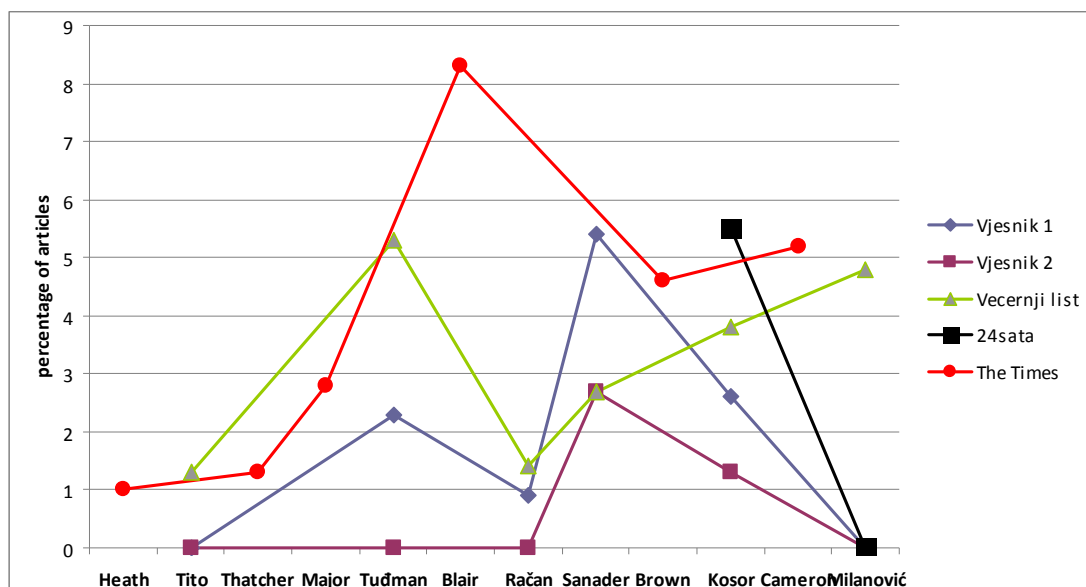


Figure 21. Percentage of articles that mention the head of the executive that refer to his/her private life

Firstly, as it appears based on the data presented in Figure 21, in the 1970s the extent to which communist media reported leader's private information was quite similar to the attention that British leaders' private lives got in *The Times*. Specifically, the communist quality paper *Vjesnik* did not mention Tito's private life at all, while the half-tabloid *Večernji list* reported his private life to a similar extent as *The Times* reported Heath's and Thatcher's. Hence, it might be suggested that both the Western media and communist media, which later transformed into post-communist media, started from the same or a similar starting point. Furthermore, although it may be expected that the low media visibility of the leaders' private lives in a communist and a Western country in the 1970s should stem from different reasons, the evidence suggest otherwise. According to the literature on communist media and communist leadership cults, due to strong political influence of communist political elite over the media (Lauk, 2008; Plamper, 2004), it could be expected that communist leader's private life was off limits to media due to political censorship. However, according to the analysis in the previous chapter, deferential media were not explicitly connected to low media exposure of Tito's private personae. On the contrary, the factors that were associated with the mediation of his private life were quite similar to those in Western countries, such as a weak tabloid and commercial media sector, strong libel laws, and a leader being a long standing political figure before taking office. Stanyer's (2013: 61-71) fsQCA revealed that Thatcher's private life was not particularly media visible because she was an ideologically extreme Prime Minister in a parliamentary system, who was born in the pre-boomer generation and did not need to bond personally with voters because she was known to them due to her political activities long before she took office (ibid). Therefore, some conditions associated with low media prominence of Tito's and Thatcher's private lives are actually similar, which points to the fact that Western and communist media reporting were not significantly different with regard to either the extent to which leaders' private lives were reported, or to the factors that were associated with this; or at least this is what can be concluded based on fuzzy set qualitative comparative analyses in this and Stanyer's project.

Secondly, UK newspaper has been publishing more information about British leaders' private lives than the Croatian media. This seems particularly important if we consider the fact that the UK analysis was conducted with the case of *The Times*, a quality paper, which is believed to be less prone to publishing this kind of information than the UK tabloids (den Harder, 2013; Langer, 2011). The Croatian quality paper, *Vjesnik*, has in all periods published fewer articles mentioning the

leaders' private lives than The Times, which is also true in most cases for the Croatian half-tabloid, Večernji list. The case of the Croatian tabloid is most complex. As might be expected due to its format and the fact that the data shows that since the 2000s the mediation of leaders' private personae was on the rise in Croatia, 24sata was at the beginning of the 2010s publishing the most private information about political leaders, even more than The Times did about Cameron. However, this is also the only paper which shows a linear negative trend, meaning that 24sata did not publish any private information about the latest Croatian Prime Minister Milanović. In addition, fsQCA reported in previous chapter did not find the tabloidization of news to be connected with higher degrees of mediated leaders' private personae in a post-communist system. Hence, it can be suggested that the tabloidisation of news media may not be as significant a factor in determining the media visibility of leaders' private lives in all contexts as it is in the Western countries. Specifically, Stanyer (2013) argues that the fact that Tony Blair's and Gordon Brown's private lives were quite media prominent is associated with a strong tabloid sector in Britain, alongside the low levels of party membership, and some personal characteristics of these leaders.

Thirdly, it really does appear as though the Croatian media are following the same trends in the mediation of leaders' private lives as those Western ones that increased their focus on leaders' private matters in the past few decades. However, trends in all Croatian newspapers are less strong than that observed in The Times. While the positive trend since the 1970s for The Times is quite strong ($r=0,71$), meaning that there was almost a constant increase in the amount of attention to leaders' private lives, the differences between Croatian leaders in media visibility of their private lives are greater. The half-tabloid Večernji list shows the strongest positive trend over time ($r=0,48$), but it is still not as strong as in the UK. The quality paper's trend is quite weak ($r=0,36$), while the tabloid somewhat unexpectedly had a linear negative trend ($r=-1$). Hence, while the UK, alongside the US, France and Netherlands, might be an example of a country in which there was a significant increase in the mediated visibility of leaders' private lives over the past few decades, this comparison showed that a new democracy might follow or develop the same trend, but perhaps not to the same extent as in the above mentioned established democracies. Even the Croatian half-tabloid that had an almost linear positive trend in the mediated visibility of leaders' private lives in the post-2000 period did not reach the level of exposure of leaders' private lives in The Times, although it did come close. Hence, while the trend in a country such as the UK seems stable and enduring, the example of the young European post-communist democracy shows

that this country too can experience the same trend, but that it is more volatile and unstable.

According to Stanyer's (2013) analysis, similar developments can also be found in Spain and Italy. In these countries the media reporting of leaders' private lives has also increased over time, but not significantly, and there are many differences between leaders in the extent to which their private matters were media visible. Furthermore, conditions identified as having an explicit connection to lower degrees of private persona-centred media reporting in this project are somewhat similar to Stanyer's explanations of why Prime Ministers in Spain and Italy experience the same trends. Specifically, some conditions that were connected with low media prominence of Spanish and Italian Prime Minister's private lives were a weak tabloid sector and leaders who were not new to high politics, which was also found important in this study, alongside other factors. Hence, it seems that there are important similarities in the factors associated with private persona-centred media reporting in Croatia, Spain and Italy. This seems to be another piece of evidence showing that Croatia's media system shares many characteristics with the Mediterranean model, as defined by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Analysis of the Croatian media system, according to Hallin and Mancini's media system dimensions, has shown that it is, and historically has been, part of the Mediterranean model, especially due to its high degree of clientelism and political parallelism (Zrinjka Peruško, 2013). Similarly, a comparative analysis of post-communist media systems has shown that many of them, such as Lithuanian, Hungarian, Romanian and Bulgarian, are quite similar to the Mediterranean model (Peruško et al., 2013). Hence, it might be possible that a slow increase in the mediated visibility of political leaders' private lives is another characteristic of the Mediterranean media system model, but a further comparative research is needed to shed more light on this speculation.

And fourthly, it seems that there are cultural differences in the parts of the leaders' private lives that are reported in different contexts. Taking the example of Vjesnik, the private life index designed to capture private life areas from the UK study (Figure 21, Vjesnik 2) differs from the private life index which captures all references to Yugoslav/Croatian leaders' private lives in the same newspaper (Figure 21, Vjesnik 1). Specifically, if the values for Vjesnik 1 and Vjesnik 2 in Figure 21 are compared it becomes evident that if Langer's index was applied in the analysis of Yugoslav/Croatian media, some of the references to leaders' private lives would be missed. One of the possible explanations for this is that Langer's index is flawed and should be supplemented with other life areas in order to be able

to better capture media references to leaders' private lives. However, the pilot study of David Cameron's media portrayal in *The Times*, in which both Langer's private life index and that used in this project were applied, showed that Langer's private life index is well suited for the analysis of the mediated visibility of British leaders' private lives. Specifically, almost all references to Cameron's private life in *The Times* were able to be coded as one of the life areas from Langer's study. Hence, Langer's private life index seems appropriate for analysis of mediated leaders' private lives in the UK, but it fails to capture all references to leaders' private lives in the examined post-communist setting. A more plausible explanation is that there are important cultural differences in the parts of leaders' private lives that the media in different contexts report.

This also has an important implication for methodological approaches to cross-national studies of the mediated visibility of political leaders' private lives. For example, Stanyer (2013) in his cross-national study of the mediated visibility of leaders' private lives looked for references to leaders' birthdays, spouses and holidays in national press. However, what he found should perhaps be better interpreted as the cross-national media's emphasis on these three leaders' life areas than on their private lives, since there may be significant differences in what the media reports about their leaders' private lives. Van Aelst et al. (2011) argue that a simple private life index, consisting of only several life areas as that in Stanyer's study (2013), is better suited for comparative analyses because it is more practical and easier to ensure reliability in coding in the case of multiple coders. This might be true, but researchers should keep in mind that by including only several life areas in their indexes, they run the risk of missing the cultural variations in what is from media reporting seen as one's private life and also coming to flawed conclusions about the degree to which media in a certain country reports on a leader's private life.

8.3. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to compare the trends related to the personalisation of media reporting found in the analysis of Yugoslav and Croatian newspapers with those detected in other national contexts. Hence, the question was how similar or different are the developments in leaders' mediated visibility in the observed communist and post-communist context and those in other countries where similar research has been carried out? And also, what are the most plausible

theories that might explain the trends in the personalisation of media reporting found in this case study? Several conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, once again it was showed that it is important to distinguish between different dimensions of personalisation. In other words, the cross-national comparisons of person-centred media reporting and the degree of the mediated visibility of leaders' private lives resulted in different findings which have distinct implications. If the distinction was not made between the personalisation as a focus on an individual as opposed to a collective political actor, and personalisation as a focus on a leaders' persona, i.e. his private or political life and qualities, the specific contribution of the trends observed in Yugoslavia and Croatia for the personalisation and political communication scholarship would not be as clear. Specifically, while the comparative analyses showed that Croatian media experience similar trends to those observed in some established democracies when it comes to the mediation of leaders' private lives, the comparative approach to person-centred media reporting revealed the distinctiveness of the Yugoslav/Croatian case.

Secondly, the comparison of the data related to the person-centred media reporting from Yugoslavia and Croatia with that from Western countries, and with the UK in particular, showed that the trends observed in the post-communist context are counter to the existing personalisation scholarship and that they run in the opposite direction from trends found in Western countries. While in countries such as the UK, the US, and France, the media have over the past few decades increased their focus on individual political actors at the expense of collectives, in the post-communist context a strong de-personalisation trend was observed, meaning that the visibility of parties grew relative to that of their leaders. Hence, it was suggested that the de-personalisation of media reporting manifested in the greater focus on collective political actors, as compared to individual ones, might represent a new trend in political communication, with post-communist countries perhaps being among the first ones to experience this trend. This might be an especially plausible hypothesis if the development of the de-personalisation trend in the post-communist context can be best explained by "democratization" theory. Since the theories of Americanization and modernization do not seem to be able to explain the de-personalisation trend in the post-communist context, it was suggested that the explanation for this trend should be looked for in the process of democratization, the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic system and all the changes that come with it, the de-centralisation of power, liberalization of media markets, development of the civil society etc. However, further comparative

research in other European post-communist countries would be needed to confirm this hypothesis.

Thirdly, the comparison of the trends related to the mediated visibility of leaders' private lives detected in the Yugoslav/Croatian case and those from Western countries, again especially the UK, revealed that the young democracy's media experienced the same trends as those Western countries in which there was an increase in the mediated visibility of leaders' private lives. However, the trend observed in this project was not as strong, and the visibility of leaders' private lives is not as pronounced, as in the countries which can be seen as leading this trend, namely the US, the UK, France and Netherlands. Rather, the trend found in Croatia seems to resemble more the trends detected in countries such as Italy and Spain (Stanyer, 2013), where the mediated visibility of leaders' private lives has grown in the past few decades, but the trend is weak and there are significant differences between leaders in the amount of attention given to their private lives in the media. Hence, it could be speculated that countries that share characteristics of a Mediterranean media system might experience similar trends in the mediatization of leaders' private lives. However, more comparative research is needed to confirm this speculation and shed more light on the hypothesis that a slow increase in the mediated visibility of politicians' private lives is another characteristic of a Mediterranean media system.

9. Conclusions

This thesis has examined the ways in which the personalisation of mediated political communication developed in a communist and post-communist context and established the similarities and differences between the development of this phenomenon in a communist non-democratic system, post-communist new democracy and an established Western democracy. I hypothesized that the personalisation of political communication has different causes, trends and effects in a communist and post-communist system, than in Western democracies with which most of personalisation scholarship deals. Establishing whether this hypothesis is valid was considered important for two main reasons. Firstly, because the existing literature seemed to suggest that personalized political communication may have graver consequences for democratic and societal processes in communist and post-communist societies, than in established Western ones. Hence, it was important to examine the extent to which mediated political communication in these societies is personalized in order to determine whether there are any grounds to fear that personalized political communication may actually lead to any of the negative consequences associated with it. Secondly, if the hypothesis was confirmed it would mean that existing personalisation scholarship is limited and needs to be expanded with theories that would account for the ways in which personalized political communication develops in non-Western systems.

In order to be able to determine the extent to which political leaders were visible in mediated political communication, and the ways in which their mediated images were constructed, the personalisation of political communication was conceptualized as having two main dimensions: person- and persona-centred. Person-centred political communication is manifested in the emphasis that political communication actors put on individual political actors at the expense of political collectives, such as parties and governments. In other words, by examining this dimension of personalisation it is possible to establish the degree to which political leaders were given primacy over collective political actors, the factors that led to this communication of power balance, and the effects that the promotion of individuals instead of collectives can have on democratic and societal processes. Persona-centred political communication is manifested in the emphasis that political communication actors put on politicians personae, i.e. their lives and qualities, both political and private. I argued that by conceptualizing this second dimension in such a wide way, by encompassing all information communicated about a politician's life

and qualities, we can gain a more accurate and nuanced understanding of how leaders' mediated images are being constructed. In addition, this dimension is seen as consisting of two sub-dimensions, political persona-centred and private persona-centred political communication. The political persona-centred dimension is concerned with the emphasis that is put on a politician's life areas and qualities primarily related to his/her role in politics. The private persona-centred dimension is manifested in the focus that is put on a politician's life areas and qualities that are primarily connected to those roles usually considered to form part of one's private sphere, i.e. father/mother, husband/wife, football fan, music enthusiast, religious person etc. Hence, by examining persona-centred political communication it is possible to establish the elements on which leaders' media images were created, the role that the communication of private information played in the construction of their images, the factors that contributed to the extent to which their lives and qualities, and specific parts of their personae, were media visible, and the effects that communicating information about politicians' lives and qualities has for the quality of public discourse and political communication actors' behaviour.

Although the effects of personalized political communication were beyond the scope of this thesis, they were discussed in theoretical terms in order to establish the cross-cultural similarities and differences in the possible consequences of person- and persona-centred political communication. It was argued that the assumed effects of personalisation in the context of established Western democracies are often discussed, but rarely proven, while there is little or no scholarly discussion, as well as empirical evidence, related to personalisation effects in the context of communist and post-communist societies. Consequently, in order to establish possible consequences of personalized political communication in these contexts the thesis drew on literature related to communist leadership cults and transitional studies. Close examination of the effects that different dimensions of personalisation are speculated to have in contexts of Western, communist and post-communist societies revealed that there are some similarities in the possible consequences, but also important differences that have not previously been acknowledged. For example, person-centred political communication in Western democracies might weaken political parties, while in post-communist countries it is more likely that it might inhibit the development of strong parties. In communist system the focus on individual instead of collective political actors could have prevented institutions from gaining power and legitimacy and in that way generated low respect for rules set by these institutions and increased the emphasis on personal loyalties. Furthermore, a possible consequence of a persona-centred

political communication in the Western context might be the revelation of a politician's hypocrisy, while in a post-communist context it is more likely that the emphasis on leaders' personae might inhibit the development of a programmatic party system. In a communist system the communication of information about leaders' personae might have been used to deceive and manipulate the public, since it is argued that a leader's persona, as it was presented to the public, was to a large extent manufactured. Hence, as suggested in Chapter 2, the two dimensions of personalisation of political communication can be seen as having different effects, with important cross-cultural variations.

While the assumed effects of personalisation were only theoretically addressed, the causes and development of trends related to two dimensions of personalisation were also empirically investigated. In Chapters 3 and 4 the factors that might have contributed to the development of this phenomenon in the three contexts were discussed, with an aim of establishing whether, if at all, these contexts are favourable for development of personalized political communication. Also, these discussions aimed to identify possible causes of personalisation in established Western, communist and post-communist systems. Given that there was, again, little or no literature that would reveal how and why this phenomenon developed in communist and post-communist societies, the literature concerning communist leadership cults and transitional studies was used to draw inferences about the potential causes and development of personalized political communication in these contexts. Based on this literature it was hypothesized that mediated political communication in communism was personalized to a high extent, with significant emphasis being put on the leader and his persona. It was argued that the focus on the leader was due to the practices of communist leadership cult building. Specifically, it was expected that the communist leader was the most visible and important political actor in mediated political communication. Also, that his life and qualities were communicated to a large extent, almost exclusively in a political context, since the leader was to embody country's history, beliefs and values. According to the literature concerned with democratic transitions, which promotes the idea that post-communist politics revolves around political leaders rather than weak parties, it was hypothesized that this person- and persona-centred mediated political communication continued in the post-communist period.

9.1. The empirical evidence

According to the content analyses of Yugoslav newspapers and Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito's statements that were reported in them, the theories promoted by the leadership cult literature can be seen as partly confirmed. Specifically, both the analysis of media reporting and Tito's mediated statements showed that Tito was, as an individual, the most prominent political actor in communist mediated political communication. This means that the hypothesis that the political leader was at the centre of mediated political communication and considered to be the most important political actor in a communist system is valid. Also, the analyses showed that both the media and Tito communicated almost exclusively political information about his persona, which is in line with theories suggesting that communist leaders were presented to the public as political beings whose lives are completely centred on their political roles. However, although it was hypothesized that communist leader's persona will also feature very prominently in mediated political communication, this proved not to be entirely true. Specifically, while Tito was reported as communicating information about himself more than all post-communist head executives, his persona was referred to in the fewest number of articles in which he was mentioned, compared to other head executives. Hence, the theory that building a leader's cult was based on reporting plenty of information about his life and qualities has not been proven by this study, but rather this analysis revealed that mentioning a leader, but not his persona, was one of the cult building practices in communist Yugoslavia. Specifically, it appears as though the cult of Tito as an omnipresent, all knowing and loved leader was created by reporting people's messages to him and associating his name with things/places/events.

Furthermore, the suggestion that communist personalized mediated political communication would continue in the post-communist period was also only partly proven. The person-centred media reporting in the early post-communist period shows remarkable similarity to that in communism, but this is where most similarities end. In other words, the head executive under communism was visible in media reporting and portrayed in a similar way compared to political collectives, as was the head executive in the early post-communist period. However, there are no significant similarities in the extent to which communist and post-communist leaders were reported as communicating information about themselves and their parties. Also, the study revealed that there are other significant differences in the ways in which political communication actors personalized their communication during the democratic transition from a communist to a post-communist system, as well as in

the ways in which the distinctive dimensions of personalisation were manifested over time in the media reporting and leaders' mediated communication. Specifically, while the focus on individual political actors decreased in the media reporting over time, the media visibility of leaders' personae, especially private personae, has increased, although not drastically. On the other hand, no significant trends were observed with regard to the ways in which political leaders were reported as personalizing their communication over time. Hence, it seems that the personalisation in leaders' mediated communication was largely leader-specific.

After establishing how the personalisation of mediated political communication developed in the transition from a communist to a post-communist system, this project aimed to establish what caused these trends. Although fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis is presented as a method able to reveal causal connections between variables (Ragin & Rihoux, 2004a; Stanyer, 2013), closer examination of this method pointed to the fact that the methodological tools are not yet perfected. It was argued that fsQCA brings researchers closer to identifying the combinations of factors that are associated with lower and higher degree of personalisation, but is not able to determine relationships of cause and effect. Hence, the question of what caused personalized mediated political communication in a communist and post-communist system remained unanswered. However, the fsQCA did reveal the combinations of conditions that were in examined contexts associated with lower and higher degree of personalisation. It was established that there is no single factor which can be seen as associated with personalisation in either media reporting or leaders' mediated communication. Rather, the analysis of conditions that are explicitly connected with person-, persona- and private persona-centred reporting and leaders' mediated communication revealed a very complex picture since there were usually several combinations of conditions connected to the same degree of personalisation. In addition, this analysis showed that all dimensions and degrees of personalisation are associated with both politically- and media-related factors, which is in line with similar studies which also found that personalisation is a complex phenomenon connected with a range of political and media factors (e.g. Downey & Stanyer, 2010; Stanyer, 2013).

In sum, no single conclusion can be reached about the personalisation of mediated political communication causes and trends over time during the period of democratic transition from a communist to a post-communist system. Rather, the picture that all these analyses reveal is a very complex one – different political communication actors can be seen as personalizing their communication in different ways, the two dimensions show different trends over time, and the combinations of

factors associated with a specific dimension of personalisation and political communication actors vary significantly.

However, if we narrow the focus to personalisation in the way media report, the findings are more revealing. Specifically, the comparison of the personalisation in media reporting in Yugoslavia and Croatia with that in other Western countries, especially the UK, revealed two important points.

Firstly, that there are significant differences between the developments of the person-centred media reporting in the (post)communist system and Western countries. Specifically, while the evidence from established Western democracies suggests that leaders have over time become more media visible than their parties, an opposite trend was observed in a country that went from a communist to a post-communist system. The theory of continuation of personalisation practices from a communist to a post-communist system, which was suggested as a possible alternative theory to those usually reproduced with regard to the ways in which political communication trends develop across the world (i.e. Americanization, modernization), seems plausible only for the explanation of person-centred media reporting in the early post-communist period. However, given the strong de-personalisation trend found during the transition period, it was suggested that a “democratization” theory might be better suited for explaining the decreasing media visibility of leaders and greater media prominence of political parties. The “democratization” theory seems particularly plausible with regard to the de-personalisation trend since the fsQCA revealed that the low degree of person-centred media reporting in the post-2000 period is associated with the growth in journalistic autonomy and the introduction of a parliamentary system by which the power in the country was de-centralized. Both of these factors can be seen as related to the overall process of democratization.

And secondly, that there are some similarities in the ways in which leaders’ private lives are mediated between the (post)communist country and established Western democracies. The degree to which post-communist leaders’ private lives were media visible is not as high as in the UK and the US, countries seen as leading this trend. There was still, though, an increase over time noted in the media visibility of post-communist leaders’ private lives. The ways in which the media report about post-communist leaders’ private lives is more similar to that observed in Italy and Spain. There are also some similarities in the conditions that were found to be explicitly connected with this trend in Croatia, Italy and Spain. The analyses of the Croatian media system point to the fact that it belongs to the Mediterranean media system model, just as Italy and Spain. Hence, it was speculated that the slow

increase in the mediated visibility of leaders' private lives might be another characteristic of this media system model. In short, although there are some similarities in the ways in which this personalisation trend manifests in a new post-communist democracy and Western ones, Croatia should be seen as experiencing this trend, albeit to a limited extent, in a similar manner to those countries who have adopted the Mediterranean media system model.

An obvious limitation of this study is that it is a case study and its findings can not be easily generalized, not even across communist and post-communist systems. Although the analysis of reporting about Yugoslav leader Tito and his reported statements seemed ideal for investigating theories advocated in the leadership cult theory, Yugoslavia may not be seen as an ideal representative of a European communist country. Unlike many other European communist countries Yugoslavia was not a Soviet satellite, importing Western media products, such as movies, television shows and music were common to its media system, its media outlets were mostly funded from subscriptions, licence fees and advertising from as early as 1950s, the entertainment content was earlier than in most other European communist countries introduced in media output (Mihelj, 2011; Robinson, 1977; Tworzecki, 2012) etc. It is unclear how important these differences are with regard to the ways in which personalisation trends developed in Yugoslavia and other European communist countries, but they should be kept in mind. Similarly, although European post-communist countries share many characteristics, especially with regard to its media and political systems, there are also plenty of differences among them, particularly with regard to the speed with which they democratized and developed (Gross & Jakubowicz, 2013). For example, while in the early post-communist period it was argued that these countries share a post-communist media system model, in recent years some countries' media system models are considered to be representative of the Mediterranean model, while others became more similar to Central European ones (Peruško et al., 2013). Again, it is only possible to speculate how, if at all, these differences might impact on the development of personalized political communication in these countries, but they should be considered before generalizing data from one of the post-communist countries.

Another limitation of this study is that it focused on reporting in the print media. Daily newspapers were chosen because they were the only readily available primary source for this analysis. Given the differences in developments of print and broadcast media in both communist and post-communist systems, it is possible that the analysis of broadcast media might have produced somewhat different results.

Finally, since this study focused on the analysis of media texts, it was not possible to determine what media and political actors wanted to achieve with their communication, if there was any strategy on their part at all. Also, it was not possible to establish how the audiences received the mediated information.

9.2. Implications of the study

In spite of these limitations, this thesis served its purpose as an exploratory study that aimed to examine whether there are any similarities and differences in the ways in which personalisation of mediated political communication develops in Western and non-Western contexts. Consequently, there are several theoretical implications of this study for the field of political communication, but also for transitional studies.

Firstly, this thesis showed that there may be distinctive effects, not previously discussed, that the personalisation of political communication might have in communist and post-communist contexts. How, if at all, personalized political communication affects societal and democratic processes, and the behaviour of political communication actors, is largely unknown, not only in communist and post-communist societies, but also in Western ones. Once research on the effects of personalized political communication is on the agenda, knowing the cross-dimensional and cross-cultural effects that personalisation might produce will make it easier for researchers to know what to focus on and how to design their studies. The detailed discussion of what kind of impact distinctive dimensions of personalisation of political communication might have in different cultural contexts, as reported in Chapter 2, might contribute to this research development, and also further our understanding of the role of personalized political communication in various societies.

Secondly, several possible politically- and media-related factors that might influence the personalisation of political communication, in established Western, communist and post-communist contexts, were identified in the theoretical overview. The value of this discussion lay in identifying not only context-specific factors that might cause personalized political communication, but also in establishing which factors have the greatest potential to contribute to a specific dimension of personalisation, i.e. person-, persona- and private persona-centred political communication. Until recently there was little differentiation between factors that can cause different dimensions of personalisation. Hence, the theoretical discussion of the conditions that might contribute to different dimensions of personalisation in a

cross-cultural context (Chapters 3 and 4) is a step forward towards a more nuanced and accurate contextualisation of personalisation trends in different contexts.

Some of the factors which were identified as potentially relevant for the development of personalisation in communist and post-communist context were confirmed as being connected to personalized political communication in Yugoslavia and Croatia. Hence, factors such as a deferential journalistic culture, the degree of authoritarianism in the society and the positions that political leaders hold in the systems they head, may be considered as new, not previously acknowledged, conditions that are associated with personalized mediated political communication. These can also be tested in future research that aims to explore the ways in which personalisation trends developed in communist and post-communist contexts, and perhaps also those similar to them, such as other authoritarian and post-authoritarian systems.

Thirdly, a strong de-personalisation trend related to person-centred media reporting found in this study points to the fact that scholarship concerned with mediation of political leadership has limitations. Hence, it should be expanded by theories which would explain how and why the trend manifested in the decreasing focus on political leaders and increasing emphasis on political parties develops. Two theories that might help explain trends in the personalisation in media reporting in a (post)communist context, suggested in this thesis, are the theory of continuation and democratization. Specifically, the theory of continuation might help explain why transitional societies in their early periods continue with some communication practices from the old system, in spite of all the changes that the society undergoes. The theory of democratization puts the emphasis on the relevance of transformations that transitional societies go through. It suggests that the changes in areas such as institutional designs, media systems, party systems and society, which are usually associated with the process of democratization, may also be connected to the changes in communication practices of political communication actors.

Finally, the conceptual model which distinguishes between the person- and persona-centred political communication was very useful in pinpointing specific effects, causes and trends of political communication. It allowed for a nuanced approach to studying and understanding this topic and could be applied in future research. Given that in recent years there is a growing interest in the mediation of leaders' private matters, I believe that the persona-centred dimension of personalisation, as conceptualized in this project, might be particularly helpful in establishing how and why private information about leaders is mediated, and also

how important might be the increase in the amount of mediated private information. By comparing the degree to which leaders' political and private persona is media visible this thesis provided more informed conclusions about the relevance of private information in mediated discourse. Hence, by conceptualizing persona-centred dimension as consisting of all references to a leader's political and private life and qualities, it is possible to better understand how important the mediation of a leader's private persona is in relation to his/her political persona.

9.3. Future research

Given that it was confirmed that there indeed are some distinctive elements of personalisation in a communist and post-communist context, this study establishes the ground for future research in this field.

Specifically, a comparative study examining the personalisation of political communication in European post-communist countries might reveal whether the trends observed in this study are a more general characteristic of post-communist political communication. It would be particularly interesting to investigate whether the decrease in the person-centred media reporting can also be observed in other post-communist countries, since it was suggested that the process of democratization might be connected with this de-personalisation trend.

Furthermore, given that some similarities were observed between the ways in which the mediation of leaders' private personae developed over time in Croatia, Italy and Spain, and also that there are certain similarities in the conditions connected to this trend in these countries, it might be interesting to examine whether the slow, but consistent, increase in the media visibility of politicians' private personae might be considered as a dimension of a Mediterranean media system model.

In addition, given the trends observed in Croatia, it appears this context might be a good testing ground for the analysis of personalisation effects. Since it is usually assumed that person-centred political communication is detrimental to political processes, the investigation of the consequences, if there are any, of the de-personalisation trend found in Croatia, might show whether the de-personalisation of political communication can have some positive effects. These might be the increase in the trust in institutions, political parties or politicians, higher respect for rules etc.

Finally, a reception study which would examine how audiences received mediated information might be an interesting spin-off of this project. It would be

particularly revealing to investigate how the audiences in communism de-coded the mediated information about the leader, since it is often assumed that communist audiences were quite passive, although there is some research suggesting they have actively de-coded information from the media. Answers to questions such as: What the communist public thought of their leader? How would they have described him? What they knew about his private life? And, what role the media played in how they perceived him?, would reveal how effective were communist cult building practices, and how important it was how the leader was portrayed in the media. The answers to similar questions in the post-communist context would also be quite revealing. They could shed light on the role that the media plays in the lives of post-communist audiences and how, if at all, their perceptions of leaders and other political actors, are shaped by the mediated information.

In sum, this thesis has helped re-design the existing personalisation theory by pointing to the fact that the personalized mediated discourse is not only a recent development of established Western democracies. It showed that an authoritarian society, specifically a communist country, can be seen as experiencing an even more extreme form of personalisation than can be found in some Western countries. It also demonstrated that the trend towards greater emphasis on political leaders in political communication, on which the personalisation theory from a Western perspective is based on, is not the only way in which the personalized political communication can develop. Specifically, the biggest contribution of this thesis is in discovering a de-personalisation trend which points to the fact that personalisation theory needs to acknowledge the complexity of ways in which the personalisation phenomenon can develop in different contexts.

Appendix 1. Coding sheet (Chapter 5: Personalisation in media reporting)

NB: The unit of analysis is the article

1. Article ID

2. Newspapers:

1. Večernji list
2. Vjesnik
3. 24 sata

3. Year

4. Week number (from 1 to 3)

5. Leader: Does the article mention the leader?

0. No
1. Josip Broz Tito
2. Franjo Tuđman
3. Nikica Valentić
4. Zlatko Mateša
5. Ivo Račan
6. Stjepan Mesić
7. Ivo Sanader
8. Jadranka Kosor
9. Ivo Josipović
10. Zoran Milanović

6. Party: Does the article mention the leader's party and/or some other party official?

N.B. Code only for week 1 articles.

0. No
1. Yes, only the party
2. Yes, the party and some other party official

7. Main topic:

1. Political news (National/International/Local political news, economy etc.)
2. Non-political news (Arts, Fashion, Celebrity, Sports etc.)
99. Others/Mixed (no topic is predominant)

From here onwards only for articles that DO mention the leader
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8. Context: What is the pre-dominant context in which leader's persona is presented?

N.B. Any reference to leader's life or qualities as they are defined below counts as a reference to the leader's persona.

0. **No reference:** there is no mention of the leader's political or private life, nor personal qualities (skills and traits)
1. **Political context:** leader's life and qualities are mentioned with relation to the leader as a person who is performing political roles (candidate, party leader, prime minister etc.)
2. **Private:** leader's life and qualities are mentioned with relation to the leader as a person who is performing private roles (parent, spouse, sports partner, art lover, religious person etc.)
3. **Political/Private:** his/her private persona is explicitly connected to his/her role as politician (e.g. he is a devoted father that likes reading to his children before going to bed, so he leaves government office every day by 9pm)

9. Comment: How does the article comment on leader's persona?

0. **No reference**
1. **Positively:** the article praises leader's persona
2. **Yes, negatively:** the article criticizes leader's persona
3. **Yes, neutrally:** the article does not make a judgment or it contains both praise and criticism.

10. Salience: How salient is/are the reference(s) to the leader's persona in relation to the entire article?

0. **No reference to the leader's persona**
1. **Main Story:** the article is essentially focused on the leader's persona (as defined by the variables below)
2. **Medium:** the leader's persona is not the main story, nor the centre of the narrative, but is still a relatively significant element within it
3. **Minor:** the leader's persona is mentioned only in passing (i.e. not more than a couple of sentences) and does NOT play an important role in the article as a whole

Leader's political and private life

11. Work: Does the article mention leader's work?

N.B. code negative (0) if it refers to what he/she should do or should have done, and not what he/she is actually doing (e.g. Tuđman should meet with economic advisors); if the

reference to work also connected with some other life area (finance, religion, family etc.) code positively (1) for that other variable, and negatively (0) here

0. **No:** the leader is just mentioned and/or there is no reference to his/her activities while performing a job (e.g. Tito's deputy, Kosor's minister; Tuđman's party, Milanović's popularity);
1. **Yes, in a political context:** it refers to the leader activities in the government, public office, party etc. (e.g. holding meetings, negotiating with unions, proposing policies, commenting political issues etc.)
2. **Yes, in a private context:** it refers to the leader's professional life outside politics, past working experiences outside politics (e.g. he/she was importing pornographic magazines)
3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** it refers to the leader's work in both political and private context, and/or his/her private job is explicitly connected to his/her role as politician (e.g. leader's past professional experience outside politics qualified him/her for a political position, s/he was importing pornographic magazines so s/he is not fit to be a political leader); if the article makes the connection between leader's political job and some other area of private persona (see below), code positively (3) for that other variable.

12. Youth: Does the article mention leader's childhood or upbringing?

0. **No**
1. **Yes, in a political context:** it refers to political experiences during his/her childhood and youth (e.g. went to party meetings in his youth)
2. **Yes, in a private context:** it refers to experiences during his/her childhood and youth (e.g. grew in a small village/large city)
3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** the article refers to the leader's childhood and upbringing in both political and private context, or there is a clear connection made between his/her childhood and upbringing in private context and his/her political role (e.g. grew in a large city, so can not understand the problems of rural areas)

13. Education: Does the article mention leader's education?

0. **No**
1. **Yes, in a political context:** it refers to political experiences during his/her education (e.g. became a party member in college)
2. **Yes, in a private context:** it refers to private experiences during his/her education (e.g. studied at University of Vienna)
3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** the article refers to the leader's education in both political and private context, or there is a clear connection made between his/her education in private context and his/her political role (e.g. he lied about going to college, so can not be trusted in politics)

14. Family: Does the article mention member/s of the leader's family or his/her family life?

0. No

- 1. Yes, in a political context:** the article refers to leader's family in the context of protocol activities (foreign dignitaries, charity, etc) or their professional activities without references to his/her private life
- 2. Yes, in a private context:** it refers to his/her family life, including his/her role as father/mother, partner, son/daughter, etc. (e.g. references to family activities, their emotional support, how they met their partners, wedding anniversaries etc.)
- 3. Yes, in a political/private context:** the article refers to the leader's family in both political and private context, or there is a clear connection made between his/her family in private context and his/her political role (e.g. he is a caring father, so he will care about his constituents too)

15. Love life: Does the article mention leader's love life?

N.B The article refers to a leader's personal relationship (emotional, sexual) with his/her spouse or some other partner. If the article refers to a leader and the partner in a context of family, code for variable "family".

0. No

- 1. Yes, in a political context:** the article refers to leader's love life in the political context (e.g. the sex scandal is hurting his political career)
- 2. Yes, in a private context:** it refers to his/her love life activities as a private person (e.g. he was always good with women, she never had a long-term relationship)
- 3. Yes, in a political/private context:** the article refers to the leader's love life in both political and private context, or there is a clear connection made between his/her love life in private context and his/her political role (e.g. he cheated on his wife, so he can not be expected to be reliable politician)

16. Appearance: Does the article mention leader's appearance?

0. No

- 1. Yes, in a political context:** it refers to his/her style of dress, attractiveness, fitness, youthfulness, etc in relation to his political position (e.g. has a presidential posture, too young to rule)
- 2. Yes, in a private context:** it refers to his/her style of dress, attractiveness, fitness, youthfulness, etc. in relation to him/her as a private person (e.g. s/he is physically attractive for opposite sex, fashionable)
- 3. Yes, in a political/private context:** the article refers to the leader's appearance in both political and private context, or there is a clear connection made between

his/her appearance in private context and his/her political role (e.g. he/she looks good in blue, but wears it mostly because it is the party's color)

17. Life-style: Does the article mention leader's life-style?

0. No

- 1. Yes, in a political context:** it refers to his/her likes and dislikes, social activities etc. in the role of a politician (e.g. sleeps only a few hours because of office duties; likes to have fresh flowers in the office; prefers to fly with official state jet; attended football game as official; official celebrations of birthdays etc.)
- 2. Yes, in a private context:** it refers to his/her likes and dislikes, hobbies, recreational or social activities in free time (e.g. food, sports, readings, music, etc).
- 4. Yes, in a political/private context:** the article refers to the leader's life-style in both political and private context, or there is a clear connection made between his/her life-style in private context and his/her political role (e.g. holidays in Spain, so undermines the development of national tourism)

18. Religion: Does the article mention leader's religion?

0. No

- 1. Yes, in a political context:** it refers to his/her official visits to religious/groups place, meeting religious dignitaries as a political official etc.
- 2. Yes, in a private context:** it refers to his/her religious affiliation, beliefs, or religious activities (e.g. church going)
- 3. Yes, in a political/private context:** the article refers to the leader's relation to religion in both political and private context, or there is a clear connection made between religion in private context and his/her political role (e.g. although personally does not believe in God, went to church as a official)

19. Feelings: Does the article mention leader's feelings?

0. No

- 1. Yes, in a political context:** it refers to how the leader feels or to his/her mood about his political life or politics in general (e.g. outraged by public sector strike)
- 2. Yes, in a private context:** it refers to how the leader feels or to his/her mood about his/her private life (e.g. happy for his son's birth)
- 3. Yes, in a political/private context:** the article refers to the leader's feelings in both political and private context, or there is a clear connection made between his/her private feelings and his/her political role (e.g. sad because his father died, but could not take time off because had to get back to work)

20. Personal relationships: Does the article mention leader's personal relationships outside family and love life?

- 0. **No**
- 1. **Yes, in a political context:** it refers to the leader's political relationship with other officials (e.g. good friend with some other Head of State, in conflict with coalition partner)
- 2. **Yes, in a private context:** it refers to the leader's private relationships (e.g. has dinner with friends from University)
- 3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** the article refers to the leader's relationship in both political and private context, or there is a clear connection made between his/her private relationship and his/her political role (e.g. he/she left friend in need, so not reliable in politics; he had a private dinner with colleagues from the party)

21. Health: Does the article mention leader's health?

N.B. if the articles comments on how he/she maintains his/her good health by exercising, meditating, not smoking etc. code for life-style; if it mentions how he/she looks like in good shape, code for appearance

- 0. **No**
- 1. **Yes, in a political context:** it refers to the official statements about his/her health conditions (e.g. had annual health check; cancelled official trip because ill)
- 2. **Yes, in a private context:** it refers to leader's health issues not related to his/her ability to perform political duties (e.g. was home sick all weekend; had vaccine against flu)
- 3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** the article refers to the leader's health in both political and private context, or there is a clear connection made between his/her health and his/her political role (e.g. went for a treatment in the US, so does not trust national health service; had vaccine against flu and advises citizens to do the same)

22. Finance: Does the article mention leader's finance?

- 0. **No**
- 1. **Yes, in a political context:** it refers to his/her financial dealings in the role of a politician (e.g. ordered too expensive new official car)
- 2. **Yes, in a private context:** it refers to his/her private financial dealings (e.g. has three bank loans)
- 3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** the article refers to the leader's finances in both political and private context, or there is a clear connection made between his/her finances and his/her political role (e.g. has three bank loans, so how can s/he be trusted to manage state finances when s/he can't his/her own)

Leader's qualities (traits and skills)

23. Context: What is the dominant context in which leader's qualities are presented?

N.B. Leader's qualities include openness, intellect, conscientiousness, extroversion, assertiveness, niceness, emotional stability and temper, people skills, data analysis skills and skills in using things and tools (definitions below).

0. No reference

1. **Political:** leader's qualities are mentioned with relation to the leader as a person who is performing political roles (candidate, party leader, prime minister etc.)
2. **Private:** leader's qualities are mentioned with relation to the leader as a person who is performing private roles (parent, spouse, sports partner, art lover, religious person etc.)
3. **Political/Private:** his/her private qualities are explicitly connected to his/her role as politician (e.g. he is a devoted father so he will be a devoted leader)

Specific traits and skills

24. Openness: Does the article refer to leader's openness (e.g. original, inventive, open minded, tolerant, progressive, modern, reformer, rebellious) or its opposite?

NB: it can refer explicitly to these adjectives OR manifestly convey the meaning with other words.

0. No

1. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. ready to listen opinions of opposing party)
2. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. daughter can choose whichever college)
3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** his/her private quality of openness is explicitly connected to his/her role as politician (e.g. he was raised as a tolerant person, so it may influence his policies towards national minorities)

25. Intellect: Does the article refer to leader's intellect (e.g. intelligent, sharp, wise, rational, logical, intellectual, well read, well-informed) or its opposite?

NB: it can refer explicitly to these adjectives OR manifestly convey the meaning with other words.

0. No

1. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. does not have the capacity to understand policy)
2. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. does not know the author of Sherlock Holmes)
3. **Yes, in a political/private context** his/her private quality of intellect is explicitly connected to his/her role as politician (e.g. he was very sharp from early age, so he will be sharp in politics too)

26. Conscientiousness: Does the article refer to leader's conscientiousness (e.g. disciplined, organized, efficient, competent, reliable, hard-working, persistent) or its opposite?

NB: it can refer explicitly to these adjectives OR manifestly convey the meaning with other words.

0. No

1. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. keeps his/her office very organized)
2. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. s/he is disciplined in diet)
3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** his/her private quality of conscientiousness is explicitly connected to his/her role as politician (e.g. he is a poor father, so how can he be a competent political leader)

27. Extroversion: Does the article refer to leader's extroversion (e.g. adventurous, uninhibited, spontaneous, lively, full of energy, not restrained, optimistic, talkative, eloquent, sociable, warm) or its opposite?

NB: it can refer explicitly to these adjectives OR manifestly convey the meaning with other words.

0. No

1. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. enthusiastic to reform a policy)
2. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. has a lot of friends)
3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** his/her private quality of extroversion is explicitly connected to his/her role as politician (e.g. she spontaneously bought 3 pairs of shoes, so let's hope she won't spontaneously sell 3 public companies)

28. Assertiveness: Does the article refer to leader's assertiveness (e.g. confident, bold, courageous, dominant, tough, independent, bossy, authoritative) or its opposite?

NB: it can refer explicitly to these adjectives OR manifestly convey the meaning with other words.

0. No

1. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. has everything under control in the party)
2. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. his wife makes all the house-related decisions)
3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** his/her private quality of assertiveness is explicitly connected to his/her role as politician (e.g. he can't even make decisions at home, so how can he make them in the name of the public)

29. Niceness: Does the article refer to leader's agreeableness/niceness (e.g. helpful, not selfish, considerate, kind, good manners, emphatic, sympathetic, peaceful, forgiving, modest, trusting, straightforward) or its opposite?

NB: it can refer explicitly to these adjectives OR manifestly convey the meaning with other words.

0. No

1. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. fulfills promises from campaign)
2. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. modest about sports achievements)

3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** his/her private quality of niceness is explicitly connected to his/her role as politician (e.g. he lied to his wife, so how can we trust him not to lie to us)

30. Emotional stability: Does the article refer to leader's emotional stability or temper (e.g. calm, relaxed, handles stress well, emotionally stable, mature, even tempered, patient, cool blooded, serene) or its opposite?

NB: it can refer explicitly to these adjectives OR manifestly convey the meaning with other words.

0. **No**
1. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. good reactions to stressful events)
2. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. often tense so has to go to a massage)
3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** his/her private quality of emotional stability or temper is explicitly connected to his/her role as politician (e.g. she gets crazy if loses a tennis match, so how will she handle the need to compromise in politics)

31. People skills: Does the article refer to leader's PEOPLE skills (e.g. communication, public speaking, conflict management, debating, explaining, motivating, negotiating etc.) or the lack of thereof?

NB: code yes if the article refers explicitly to leader having these skills OR when there is an evaluation of how s/he has done these actions (e.g. if it states that leader is skilled in negotiating or that he has successfully finished negotiations, code yes; if it states that he is negotiating with a union, code no)

0. **No**
1. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. good speaker, motivates and inspires people)
2. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. known to make good jokes)
3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** his/her private quality of people skills is explicitly connected to his/her role as politician (e.g. he can't explain to his children why they need to go to sleep, so he also can't explain the cuts to the unions)

32. Data analysis skills: Does the article refer to leader's INFORMATION gathering and processing skills (e.g. problem solving, getting things right, forecasting, estimating, developing plans, setting objectives, analyzing) or the lack of thereof?

NB: code yes if the article refers explicitly to leader having these skills OR when there is an evaluation of how s/he has done these actions (e.g. if it states that leader is not skilled in problem solving or that he has successfully solved a problem code yes; if it states that he is trying to solve a problem, code no)

0. **No**
1. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. his forecasts are always right)
2. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. bad in forecasting sports results)

3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** his/her private quality of data analysis is explicitly connected to his/her role as politician (e.g. she met all the objectives she set for herself, so she will do the same in politics)

33. Things and tools skills: Does the article refer to leader's skills in the use of THINGS AND TOOLS (e.g. using technology, driving, playing music, speaking foreign languages etc.) or the lack of thereof?

NB: code yes if the article refers explicitly to leader having these skills OR when there is an evaluation of how s/he has done these actions (e.g. if it states that leader is not skilled in playing musical instruments or that s/he plays guitar well, code yes; if it states that he played guitar, code no)

0. **No**
1. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. he is good in using social media to communicate politics)
2. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. she plays guitar very well)
3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** his/her private quality of using things and tools is explicitly connected to his/her role as politician (e.g. he is bad in driving, so the government needs to hire him a personal chauffer)

Appendix 2. Inter-coder reliability (ICR) scores for Chapter 5 (Personalisation in media reporting)

Variable number	Variable name	n (cases double coded)	Agree (M)	ICR (2M/N1+N2)
1	Article ID	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Newspapers	300	300	1
3	Year	300	300	1
4	Week number	300	300	1
5	Leader	300	300	1
6	Party	300	300	1
7	Main topic	300	284	0.95
8	Context	300	256	0.85
9	Comment	300	278	0.93
10	Saliency	300	290	0.97
11	Work	300	265	0.88
12	Youth	300	297	0.99
13	Education	300	298	0.99
14	Family	300	291	0.97
15	Love life	300	298	0.99
16	Appearance	300	288	0.96
17	Life-style	300	248	0.82
18	Religion	300	289	0.96
19	Feelings	300	285	0.95
20	Relationships	300	272	0.90
21	Health	300	299	0.99
22	Finance	300	297	0.99
23	Context qualities	300	283	0.94
24	Openness	300	288	0.96
25	Intellect	300	295	0.98
26	Conscientiousness	300	288	0.96
27	Extroversion	300	299	0.99
28	Assertiveness	300	285	0.95
29	Niceness	300	281	0.93
30	Emotional stability	300	297	0.99
31	People skills	300	272	0.90
32	Data analysis skills	300	298	0.99
33	Things and tools skills	300	299	0.99

Appendix 3. Coding sheet (Chapter 6: Personalisation in leaders' mediated communication)

NB: The unit of analysis is the leader's statement

1. Statement ID

2. Newspapers:

4. Večernji list
5. Vjesnik
6. 24 sata

3. Year

4. Week number (from 1 to 3)

5. Leader: Who is the author of the statement?

1. Josip Broz Tito
2. Franjo Tuđman
3. Nikica Valentić
4. Zlatko Mateša
5. Ivica Račan
6. Stjepan Mesić
7. Ivo Sanader
8. Jadranka Kosor
9. Ivo Josipović
10. Zoran Milanović

6. Main topic: What is in the focus of the statement?

1. National political issues (including parliamentary and presidential elections)
2. International political issues (including relationships with former Yugoslav republics and European Union)
3. Local political issues
4. Party issues
5. Economy
6. Arts and culture
7. Celebrity and entertainment
8. Sports
99. Other

7. Party: Does the leader mention his/her party?

NB: Code only for statements made in week 1

0. No
1. Yes

8. Persona: Does the leader refer to his/her persona?

N.B. Any reference to life and/or qualities as they are defined below counts as a reference to persona.

0. **No reference**
1. **Yes, his/her own:** the leader is referring to his/her own political or private life, or personal qualities

9. Context: What is the dominant context in which the leader refers to his/her persona?

N.B. Any reference to leader's life or qualities as they are defined below counts as a reference to the persona.

4. **No reference:** there is no mention of leader's political or private life, nor personal qualities (skills and traits)
5. **Political context:** the leader mentions his life and qualities with relation to him/her as a person performing a political role (candidate, party leader, prime minister etc.)
6. **Private:** the leader mentions his life and qualities with relation to him/her as a person performing a private role (parent, spouse, sports partner, art lover, religious person etc.)
7. **Political/Private:** the leader's private persona is explicitly connected to his/her role as a politician (e.g. he is a devoted father that likes reading to his children before going to bed, so he leaves government office every day by 9pm)

10. Salience: How salient is/are the reference(s) to the persona in relation to the entire statement?

4. **No reference to the persona**
5. **Main focus:** the statement is essentially focused on the leader's persona (as defined by the variables below)
6. **Medium:** the persona is not the main focus, nor the centre of the narrative, but is still a relatively significant element within it
7. **Minor:** the leader's persona is mentioned only in passing and does NOT play an important role in the article as a whole

Professional and private life

11. Work: Does the leader refer to his/her work?

N.B. if the reference to work is also connected with some other life area (finance, religion, family etc.) code positively (1) for that other variable, and negatively (0) here

3. **No:** there is no reference to the leader's activities while performing a job
4. **Yes, in a political context:** the leader refers to his/her activities in the government, public office, party etc. (e.g. holding meetings, negotiating with unions, proposing policies, commenting political issues etc.)
5. **Yes, in a private context:** the leader refers to his/her professional life outside politics, past working experiences outside politics (e.g. I am a University professor)
3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** the leader refers to his/her work in both political and private context, or he/she explicitly connects a private job to his/her role as politician (e.g. I have run an oil company, so I'll be able to run a government as well). If the connection between the political job and some other area of private persona (see below) is made in the statement, code positively (3) for that other variable.

12. Youth: Does the leader refer to his/her childhood or upbringing?

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context:** he/she refers to political experiences during childhood and youth (e.g. I went to party meetings when I was young)
6. **Yes, in a private context:** he/she refers to private experiences during childhood and youth (e.g. I grew in a small village/large city)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** the leader refers to his/her youth in both political and private context, or he/she makes a clear connection between youth in private context and his/her political role (e.g. I grew up in a village, so I can understand the problems of rural areas)

13. Education: Does the leader refer to his/her education?

0. **No**
1. **Yes, in a political context:** he/she refers to political experiences during formal education (e.g. I became a party member while still in college)
2. **Yes, in a private context:** he/she refers to private experiences during formal education (e.g. I went to public school because I could not afford a private one)
3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** the leader refers to his/her formal education in both political and private context, or he/she makes a clear connection between education in private context and his/her political role (e.g. I went to public school, so I know how to change them for the better)

14. Family: Does the leader refer to his/her family or family life?

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context:** he/she refers to family in the context of protocol activities (foreign dignitaries, charity, etc)

6. **Yes, in a private context:** the leader refers to his/her family life in a role of father/mother, partner, son/daughter, etc. (e.g. I was very attached to my father)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to family in both political and private context, or he/she makes a clear connection between family life in private context and his/her political role (e.g. my father was a worker, so I also fight for workers' rights)

15. Love Life: Does the leader refer to his/her love life?

0. **No**
1. **Yes, in a political context:** he/she refers to love life in the political context
2. **Yes, in a private context:** he/she refers to love life activities as a private person (e.g. I never had luck with women)
3. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to love life in both political and private context, or he/she makes a clear connection between love life in private context and his/her political role (e.g. I never cheated on my wife, so I'll never cheat the voters)

16. Appearance: Does the leader refer to his/her appearance?

5. **No**
6. **Yes, in a political context:** the leader refers to style of dress, attractiveness, fitness, youthfulness, etc. in relation to his/her political position (e.g. I am young enough to last in politics)
7. **Yes, in a private context:** the leader refers to style of dress, attractiveness, fitness, youthfulness, etc. in relation to him/her as a private person (e.g. I am fashionable)
8. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to appearance in both political and private context, or he/she makes a clear connection between appearance in private context and his/her political role (e.g. I don't look good in blue, but I wear it because it is my party's color)

17. Lifestyle: Does the leader refer to his/her lifestyle?

0. **No**
1. **Yes, in a political context:** the leader refers to his/her likes and dislikes, social activities etc. in the role of a politician (e.g. I sleep only a few hours because of office duties)
2. **Yes, in a private context:** the leader refers to his/her likes and dislikes, hobbies, recreational or social activities in free time (e.g. I love watching football in free time)
9. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to life-style in both political and private context, or he/she makes a clear connection between life-style in private context and his/her political role (e.g. I holiday in my country because I want to help my country's tourism development)

18. Religion: Does the leader refer to his/her religion?

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context:** he/she refers to official visits to religious/groups place, meeting religious dignitaries as a political official etc. (e.g. I met with the pope in Vatican)
6. **Yes, in a private context:** the leader refers to his/her religious affiliation, beliefs, or religious activities (e.g. I go to church every Sunday)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** the leader refers to religion in both political and private context, or he/she makes a clear connection between religion in private context and political role (e.g. I am a Christian, so I won't have trouble saying "so help me God" in the presidential oath)

19. Feelings: Does the leader refer to his/her feelings?

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context:** the leader expresses how he/she feels or to his/her mood about political life or politics in general (e.g. I am outraged by public sector strike)
6. **Yes, in a private context:** the leader expresses how he/she feels or to his/her mood about private life (e.g. I am happy for my son's birth)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to feelings in both political and private context, or he/she makes a clear connection between private feelings and his/her political role (e.g. I am sad because my father died, but I will not take time off because state business can not wait)

20. Personal relationships: Does the leader refer to his/her personal relationships?

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context:** he/she refers to political relationship with other officials (e.g. I am a good friend with the German chancellor)
6. **Yes, in a private context:** he/she refers to private relationships (e.g. I had dinner with friends from University)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to relationship in both political and private context, or he/she makes a clear connection between private relationship and his/her political role (e.g. my friends do not have an impact on my political decisions)

21. Health: Does the leader refer to his/her health?

N.B. if he/she comments on how he/she maintains his/her good health by exercising, meditating, not smoking etc. code for lifestyle; if he/she mentions how he/she looks healthy, code for appearance

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context:** he/she refers to the official statements about health conditions (e.g. I had my annual health check)
6. **Yes, in a private context:** the leader refers to health issues not related to his/her ability to perform political duties (e.g. I was home sick all weekend; I had the vaccine against flu)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to health in both political and private context, or he/she makes a clear connection between health and his/her political role (e.g. I had vaccine against flu and I advise citizens to do the same)

22. Finance: Does the leader refer to his/her finance?

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context:** he/she refers to financial dealings in the role of a politician (e.g. the new official car I've ordered is not too expensive)
6. **Yes, in a private context:** he/she refers to private financial dealings (e.g. I have a mortgage on my house)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to finances in both political and private context, or he/she makes a clear connection between finances and his/her political role (e.g. I am successfully paying of three bank loans, so I will be able to re-program country's debt)

Personal qualities (traits and skills)

23. Context: What is the pre-dominant context in which the leader refers to his/her personal qualities?

N.B. Leader's qualities include openness, intellect, conscientiousness, extroversion, assertiveness, niceness, emotional stability and temper, people skills, data analysis skills and skills in using things and tools (definitions below).

4. **No reference**
5. **Political:** the leader pre-dominantly refers to qualities with relation to his/her political roles (candidate, party leader, prime minister etc.)
6. **Private:** the leader pre-dominantly refers to qualities with relation to his/her private roles (parent, spouse, sports partner, art lover, religious person etc.)
7. **Political/Private:** he/she refers equally to political and private qualities, or he/she explicitly connects private qualities to his/her role as politician (e.g. I am a devoted father so I will also be a devoted leader)

Specific traits and skills

24. Openness: Does the leader refer to his/her openness (e.g. original, inventive, open minded, tolerant, progressive, modern, reformer, rebellious) or its opposite?

NB: he/she can refer explicitly to these adjectives OR manifestly convey the meaning with other words.

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. I always listen to everyone's opinion)
6. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. I've always let my children choose their own path)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to openness in both political and private context, or he/she explicitly connects private quality of openness to his/her role as politician (e.g. I was raised as a tolerant person, so I respect all minorities)

25. Intellect: Does the leader refer to his/her or someone else's intellect (e.g. intelligent, sharp, wise, rational, logical, intellectual, well read, well-informed) or its opposite?

NB: he/she can refer explicitly to these adjectives OR manifestly convey the meaning with other words.

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. I have the capacity to understand policies)
6. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. I was never good in games based on logic)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context** he/she refers to intellect in both political and private context, or he/she explicitly connects private quality of intellect to his/her role as politician (e.g. I was sharp from early age, so I will be sharp in politics too)

26. Conscientiousness: Does the leader refer to his/her conscientiousness (e.g. disciplined, organized, efficient, competent, reliable, hard-working, persistent) or its opposite?

NB: he/she can refer explicitly to these adjectives OR manifestly convey the meaning with other words.

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. I keep my office very organized)
6. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. I am disciplined in diet)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to conscientiousness in both political and private context, or he/she explicitly connects private quality of conscientiousness to his/her role as politician (e.g. I don't have trouble disciplining my children, so I won't have problem disciplining the government)

27. Extroversion: Does the leader refer to his/her extroversion (e.g. adventurous, uninhibited, spontaneous, lively, full of energy, not restrained, optimistic, talkative, eloquent, sociable, warm) or its opposite?

NB: he/she can refer explicitly to these adjectives OR manifestly convey the meaning with other words.

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. I am always enthusiastic to reform policies)
6. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. I have a lot of friends)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to extroversion in both political and private context, or he/she explicitly connects private quality of extroversion to his/her role as politician (e.g. I never spontaneously bought shoes, so I won't spontaneously sell public companies)

28. Assertiveness: Does the leader refer to his/her assertiveness (e.g. confident, bold, courageous, dominant, tough, independent, bossy, authoritative) or its opposite?

NB: he/she can refer explicitly to these adjectives OR manifestly convey the meaning with other words.

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. I am not running my party as a dictator)
6. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. my wife makes all the house-related decisions)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to assertiveness in both political and private context, or he/she explicitly connects private quality of assertiveness to his/her role as politician (e.g. my wife and my party taught me how to compromise)

29. Niceness: Does the leader refer to his/her agreeableness/niceness (e.g. helpful, not selfish, considerate, kind, good manners, emphatic, sympathetic, peaceful, forgiving, modest, trusting, straightforward) or its opposite?

NB: he/she can refer explicitly to these adjectives OR manifestly convey the meaning with other words.

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. I always fulfill campaign promises)
6. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. I don't want to brag about my sports achievements)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to niceness in both political and private context, or he/she explicitly connects private quality of niceness to his/her role as politician (e.g. I don't lie to my children and I won't lie to voters either)

30. Emotional stability: Does the leader refer to his/her emotional stability or temper (e.g. calm, relaxed, handles stress well, emotionally stable, mature, even tempered, patient, cool blooded, serene) or its opposite?

NB: he/she can refer explicitly to these adjectives OR manifestly convey the meaning with other words.

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. I am cool-headed when I need to make tough decisions)
6. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. I don't like waiting for my wife to get ready)

7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to emotional stability or temper in both political and private context, or he/she explicitly connects private quality of emotional stability or temper to his/her role as politician (e.g. If I can patiently listen to my mother in law, I can patiently listen to Unions too)

31. People skills: Does the leader refer to his/her PEOPLE skills (e.g. communication, public speaking, conflict management, debating, explaining, motivating, negotiating etc.) or the lack of thereof?

NB: code yes if he/she refers explicitly to having these skills OR when he/she makes an evaluation of how he/she has done these actions (e.g. if the leader says that he/she is skilled in negotiating or that he has successfully finished negotiations, code yes; if he says that he/she is negotiating with a union, code no)

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. I've always know how to motivate people to do their job better)
6. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. I am know for making good jokes)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to people skills in both political and private context, or he/she explicitly connects private people skill to his/her role as politician (e.g. if I can explain to my kids why they need to go to sleep, I will be able to explain the cuts to the unions)

32. Data analysis skills: Does the leader refer to his/her INFORMATION gathering and processing skills (e.g. problem solving, getting things right, forecasting, estimating, developing plans, setting objectives, analyzing) or the lack of thereof?

NB: code yes if he/she refers explicitly to someone having these skills OR when he/she makes an evaluation of how someone has done these actions (e.g. if the leader says that he/she is skilled in problem solving or that she has successfully solved a problem code yes; if he/she states that is trying to solve a problem, code no)

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. my forecasts in economy are always correct)
6. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. I am bad in forecasting sports results)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to data analysis skills in both political and private context, or he/she explicitly connects private data analysis skills to his/her role as politician (e.g. I can't forecast a football game, but I can the economy growth)

33. Things and tools skills: Does the leader refer to his/her skills in the use of THINGS AND TOOLS (e.g. using technology, driving, playing music, speaking foreign languages etc.) or the lack of thereof?

NB: code yes if he/she refers explicitly to someone having these skills OR when he/she makes an evaluation of how someone has done these actions (e.g. if the leader says that he/she is skilled in playing musical instruments or that he/she plays guitar well, code yes; if it says that he/she played guitar, code no)

4. **No**
5. **Yes, in a political context** (e.g. I am skilled in using social media to communicate politics)
6. **Yes, in a private context** (e.g. I play guitar very well)
7. **Yes, in a political/private context:** he/she refers to skills in using things and tools in both political and private context, or he/she explicitly connects someone's private skills in using things and tools to his/her role as politician (e.g. I am bad in driving, so the government needs to hire me a personal chauffer)

Appendix 4. Inter-coder reliability (ICR) Scores for Chapter 6 (Personalisation in leaders' mediated communication)

Variable number	Variable name	n (cases double coded)	Agree (M)	ICR (2M/N1+N2)
1	Statement ID	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Newspapers	70	300	1
3	Year	70	300	1
4	Week number	70	300	1
5	Leader	70	300	1
6	Main Topic	70	64	0.91
7	Party	70	70	1
8	Persona	70	68	0.97
9	Context	70	58	0.83
10	Saliency	70	63	0.90
11	Work	70	62	0.89
12	Youth	70	70	1
13	Education	70	70	1
14	Family	70	65	0.93
15	Love life	70	70	1
16	Appearance	70	68	0.97
17	Lifestyle	70	60	0.86
18	Religion	70	67	0.96
19	Feelings	70	65	0.93
20	Relationships	70	67	0.96
21	Health	70	70	1
22	Finance	70	68	0.97
23	Context qualities	70	68	0.97
24	Openness	70	69	0.98
25	Intellect	70	70	1
26	Conscientiousness	70	65	0.93
27	Extroversion	70	70	1
28	Assertiveness	70	67	0.96
29	Niceness	70	66	0.94
30	Emotional stability	70	70	1
31	People skills	70	69	0.98
32	Data analysis skills	70	70	1
33	Things and tools skills	70	69	0.98

Appendix 5. Details of outcome and causal conditions' calibrations for Chapter 7 (Explaining personalisation(s))

All outcomes were calibrated using a six-value fuzzy set in which each leader was allocated one of the following values: 0 = full non-member; 0,2 = mostly but not fully out; 0,4 = more or less out; 0,6= more or less in; 0,8 = mostly but not fully in; and 1 = full member of the set. The benchmarks for calibration of these outcomes were decided by taking into account the extent to which both the media and political actors personalized their communication.

Specifically, to explain the degree of person-centred media reporting and leaders' communication, a six-value fuzzy set is used with each leader being allocated a membership score according to the degree they were visible in the media and the degree to which they put the focus on themselves instead of on their parties. The membership of the *set of politicians who were reported in a person-centred way* was calibrated using the ratio of leader to party mentions gathered by content analysis of newspaper articles, while the membership of the *set of politicians who pursued person-centred communication* was calibrated using the ratios of leader to party mentions gathered by content analysis of leaders' statements. Given that ratios greater than 1 indicate that the communication was person-centred, ratio of 1 was set as a cross-over point. The score for full membership was set at 2; scores for mostly but not fully in were 1,5 to 2; for more or less in, 1 to 1,4; for more or less out, 0,7 to 0,9; for mostly but not fully out 0,5 to 0,6; while the threshold for full non-membership was set at 0,5.

A six-value fuzzy set is also used to calibrate the membership of the *set of politicians who were reported in a persona-centred way* and the membership of the *set of politicians who pursued persona-centred communication*. The scores for the first set were based on the percentage of articles mentioning leader that refer to his/her persona, and the scores for the second set were based on the percentage of leader's statements in which he/she mentioned his/her persona, as was reported in previous chapters. The persona-centred media reporting varied only between 70,6 and 84,1%, but the persona-centred leaders' communication varied significantly more, between 23,1 and 72,4%. Consequently, it was important to make distinctions between relevant and irrelevant variation, what Ragin (2008a) argues is one of the main aims of calibration. Hence, it was decided that if a leader's persona was mentioned in approximately half of the sample, the communication is considered persona-centred, but only if it was mentioned in a large majority of statements is it highly persona-centred (full member of the set). Specifically, the threshold for full membership was set at 75%; scores for mostly but not fully in were 65 to 74%; for more or less in, 52 to 64%; for more or less out, 39 to 51%; for mostly but not fully out, 26 to 38%; while the threshold for full non-membership was set at 25%.

Membership of the *set of politicians whose private personae were highly media visible* was based on the percentage of articles mentioning the leader in which the main

emphasis was on his/her private and/or political/private personae. Similarly, the membership of the *set of politicians who pursued a private persona-centred communication* was based on the percentage of leaders' statements in which he/she put most focus on his/her private and political/private personae. The scores for private persona-centred media reporting ranged from 0,6 to 17,6%, while for private persona-centred leaders' communication from 0 to 13,8%. Again, it was important to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant variation. It was decided that the cross-over point will be set at 9% given that Prime Minister Kosor emphasized her private life in 9% of her mediated statements and it was important that she was considered more or less in the set membership since she was reported as a second most willing leader and the most willing head executive to talk about her private matters. Consequently, scores between 12 and 14 were considered mostly but not fully in; the threshold for full membership was set at 15, and for full non-membership at 2. Leaders scoring between 6 to 8 were considered more or less out of the set membership, while those scoring between 3 and 5 as mostly but not fully out.

The membership of the *set of politicians working in a presidential political system* was calibrated based on the information from Easter (1997) and Ilišin (2001) and leaders who worked in a presidential system or dictatorship were considered full members, those in a semi-presidential system were allocated a cross-over point of 0.5, while those working in a parliamentary system were considered non-members.

The membership of the *set of politicians who were elected by majoritarian systems* was calibrated based on data from Šiber (2007) and Kasapović (2001). Since two of the examined leaders have been appointed, not elected, the issue of appointments also needed to be taken into account. Given that it can be observed from the cases examined that the media reported appointed leaders in a more person-centred way and that these leaders also focused more on themselves than on their parties, appointed leaders were considered full members of the set. Those elected by majoritarian system were considered mostly but not fully in; the cross-over point was set for those elected by a combined system; those elected by proportional system with open lists were considered mostly but not fully out; while those elected by proportional system with closed list were considered full non-members.

The calibration of set „low party identification“ was mostly based on information gathered in the longitudinal field survey of the Faculty of Political Sciences in Zagreb, conducted before every General Elections in Croatia since 1990. Benchmarks for calibration were the same as in Stanyer's (2013) analysis. Specifically, leaders were considered full members if less than 2% of all voters identified with their party before elections in which they came to power or during their time in office. Those whose party's identification stood between 3 and 5% were considered mostly but not fully in; if the party identification was between 6 and 8% they were considered more or less in; for scores between 9 and 13 more or less out; for scores between 14 and 19 mostly but not fully out; while the threshold for full non-membership was set at 20%. Since the same type of information was not found for the communist leader Tito, the decision to consider him a full non-member of the set was based

on the knowledge that during his rule Yugoslav people expressed “a highly stable 60 to 65 percent of apparent support for the regime” (Welsh, 1980: 122).

The „centrist political leaders“ variable was, as in Stanyer (2013) calibrated based on the data from the Comparative Manifestos Project Data²⁰ in which for every election political parties are placed on a left-right continuum, with -100 value representing extreme right and +100 value extreme left. The same standards as in Stanyer (ibid.) were used. Accordingly, the threshold for full membership was set at +5 to -5, and for full non-membership at +51 and -51. Those leaders’ whose parties scored between +6 to +12 and -6 to -12 were considered mostly but not fully in; those scoring +13 to +20 and -13 to -20 were more or less in; for scores +21 to +35 and -21 to -35 more or less out; and those scoring +36 to 50 and -36 to -50 mostly but not fully out. The communist leader Tito was considered a full non-member of the set given that communist parties are regarded as being on the extreme left side of the political spectrum (Vassalla & Wilcox, 2006).

The causal condition “*short time spent in politics before election/appointment*” was based on the examination of how long a leader held high political office (member of the government or party leader) before the year in which his prominence was analyzed in this project. The variable was calibrated using the same thresholds as in Stanyer (2013). Specifically, the threshold for full membership was set at 2 years and for full non-membership at 20 years. For mostly but not fully in scores were 3 to 5 years; for more or less in, 6 to 8 years; for more or less out, 9 to 13 years; and for mostly but not fully out, 14 to 19 years.

The final causal condition calibrated according to Stanyer’s (ibid.) standards is “*weak statutory protection of private lives*”. Leaders were considered full members if they had no statutory protection of privacy or recourse to law, and full non members if they had these rights. In addition, if there was no statutory protection of privacy and/or more limited recourse to the law they were considered mostly but not fully in; if there was no statutory protection but it was possible to use other legal means they were more or less in; those with no statutory protection and limited recourse to other legal means were more or less out; while those with no statutory protection and more limited recourse to other legal means were considered mostly but not fully out.

The variable “*weak statutory protection against libel*” was calibrated using the data reported by Badrov (2007), with those leaders protected against libel only by civil law being considered full members of the set, the cross-over point was set at libel being a criminal offense but not punishable by imprisonment, while if the libel was a criminal offense punishable by imprisonment, these leaders were considered full nonmembers.

The causal condition “*high level of authoritarianism in the society*” was calibrated calibrated mostly using data from the longitudinal field survey carried before elections since 1990 by the Faculty of Political Sciences in Zagreb. Leaders were considered full members of the set if more than half of voters declared themselves as preferring a strong leader over

²⁰ <https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/>

democratic governance (more than 50%)²¹, and full non-members if less than 10% of voters were authoritarian. For mostly but not fully in the scores were between 40 and 49%; for more or less in, 30 to 39%; for more or less out, 20 to 29%; and for mostly but not fully out, 10 to 19%. The communist leader Tito was considered a full member of the set since research into the authoritarianism of the Yugoslav society found that the level of authoritarianism was “extremely high” (Šiber, 1989: 139).

The “*nondeferential media*” was calibrated based on the average percentage of articles mentioning leaders that portrayed them in a positive light that was gathered by the content analysis of newspapers articles done for this thesis. Given that across the three examined papers the amount of positive coverage ranged from 4 to 56%, it was decided that full non-members of the set will be positively portrayed in more than every other article, i.e. in more than 50% of all articles. Those who were positively portrayed in 40 to 49% of articles were considered mostly but not fully out; for more or less out scores were between 30 and 39%; for more or less in, 20 to 29%; for mostly but not fully in, 10 to 19%.

The “*high media independence from political influences*” variable was calibrated based on the political affiliation of the Croatian Radiotelevision’s Director General. The leader during whose rule this public service broadcaster’s Director General was a party member was considered a full non-member, those leaders during whose rule the DG was a known party supporter or party affiliated but not party member were at the cross-over point, while leaders during whose rule the DG was not affiliated to any party were considered full members of the set.

The causal condition “*high degree of private media ownership*” was calibrated based on the ratio of state and/or public national television stations to privately owned national television channels. Specifically, if leaders worked in a media system in which only state and/or public service broadcasters operated, they were considered full non-members. If there were more state and/or PSB channels than privately owned ones, the leader was considered more out than in the set; the cross-over point was set when there was equal number of both types of television channels; if there were more privately owned than state and/or PSBs, the leader was considered more in than out of the set; and if all national television channels were privately owned the leader was considered a full member of the set.

The variable “*high degree of advertising in the media*” was based on the data collected during the content analyses for this project. Specifically, in each analyzed year, the number of commercial ads in the Monday edition of each newspaper was noted and the average number of ads published daily across newspapers during leader’s first three years in office was calculated. In sum, the average number of ads published daily across analyzed newspapers ranges from 9 to 40, but the real number of ads per paper ranged from 0 to 86, with the tabloid being almost exclusively the one who had more than 50 ads per edition.

²¹ The specific question in surveys was: Sometimes it is challenging for a democracy to function. Some think that we need strong leaders that will take care of things; others feel that democracy is the best solution even when things are not functioning well. What is your opinion? 1. Strong leaders are needed; 2. Democracy is always the best solution; 3. I don't know, I'm not sure.

Hence, the score for full membership was set at 50; for mostly but not fully in, 40 to 49; for more or less in; 30 to 39; for more or less out, 20 to 29; for mostly but not fully out, 10 to 19; while leaders during whose rule the newspapers on average published less than 10 ads per day were considered full non-members of the set.

Two measures were used for determining the membership in the set “*strong tabloid sector*”, the average daily percentage of non-political content across newspapers and average daily number of celebrity pages in the newspapers. This data was gathered in a similar way to that for the degree of advertising in the media. Specifically, for each analyzed year the percentage of newspaper that was not politically-related (i.e. lifestyle, celebrity pages, guides, entertainment etc.) in a Monday edition of each newspaper was noted. The average percentage of non-political content across newspapers was calculated for each leader and it ranged from 45 to 60%. Each leader was awarded a score between 1 and 3 according to the average daily percentage of non-political content published during their first three years in office (40-49%=1; 50-59%=2; more than 60%=3). In addition, the number of celebrity-related pages per newspaper, defined as those pages that pre-dominantly contained articles focused on famous people, in the Monday editions was also noted. The average daily number of these pages across all examined newspapers ranged from 0 to 5 per leader. This average number of celebrity-pages was added to the non-political content score to form an overall score, which ranged from 2 to 8, with a mean of 4 which was set as a cross-over point. In addition, leaders scoring between 5 and 6 were considered more in than out of the set; those scoring above 7, full members of the set; for more out than in the scores were 3 to 4; while the threshold for full non-membership was set at 2.

The “*large television reach*” variable” was calibrated based on the data from Robinson (1977) and the Croatian Bureau of Statistics²². The percentage of households that owned a television was based on the information from the year when the leader came to power, or if that information was not available, from any other year in which the leader was in power in the decade that was analyzed. Leaders during whose rule less than third of the society had access to television were considered full non-members of the set, while those during whose rule the television was owned by 89 to 100% of households were considered full members. For mostly but not fully in the scores were set between 76 to 88% of households; for more or less in; 63 to 75; for more or less out, 50 to 62; and for mostly but not fully out, 35 to 49%.

²² Data for 1994: Crkvenčić-Bojić (1996); data for 1998: <http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/publication/2002/13-2-1h2002.htm>; data for 2000: <http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/publication/2003/13-2-1h2003.htm>; data for 2003: http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/Publication/2005/13-2-1_1h2005.htm; data for 2009: http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2010/14-01-01_01_2010.htm; data for 2010: http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2011/14-01-01_01_2011.htm; data for 2011: http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2012/SI-1484.pdf (all accessed 12 April 2014)

Calibration of politically-related conditions/outcomes:

leader	Presidential system	President	Party leader	HOE	Majoritarian system	Centrist	Low party ID	High authorit.	LEADERS person-centred comm.	LEADERS persona-centred comm.	LEADERS private-persona centred comm.	Boomer	Fewest year in politics	Weak privacy protection	Weak libel laws
Tito	1	1	1	1	0,75	0	0	1	1	0,6	0	0	0,8	0,4	0
Tudman	0,5	1	1	1	0,75	0,4	0	0,2	0,4	0,4	0,4	0	1	0	0
Valentic	0,5	0	0	0	1	0,4	0	0,2	1	0	0,2	1	1	0	0
Matesa	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	0,2	0	0,4	0	0,2	0	1	1	0	0
Racan	0	0	1	1	0	0,8	0,4	0,4	0,4	0,6	0	0	0,4	0	0
Mesic	0	1	0	0	0,75	1	1	0,4	1	0,8	0,2	0	0,4	0	0
Sanader	0	0	1	1	0	0,8	0,6	0,6	0,4	0,4	0	1	0,4	0	0
Kosor	0	0	1	1	1	0,8	0,4	0,6	1	0,6	0,6	1	0,6	0	0,5
Josipovic	0	1	0	0	0,75	0,6	0,2	0,6	1	0,8	0,8	1	1	0	0,5
Milanovic	0	0	1	1	0	0,6	0,2	0,6	1	0,2	0	1	0,8	0	0,5

Calibration of media-related conditions/outcomes:

leader	Non-deferent media ¹	Media independence ¹	Autonomous journalistic culture ²	Private media ownership ¹	High degree of advertising ¹	Commercial media system ²	Strong tabloid sector	High TV reach	TV debate	MEDIA person-centred comm.	MEDIA persona-centred comm.	MEDIA private persona-centred comm.
Tito	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,4	0	0,6	0,8	0
Tudman	0,6	0	0,6	0	0,4	0,4	0	0,8	0	0,4	0,8	0,2
Valentic	0,8	0	0,8	0	0,4	0,4	0	0,8	0	0,4	0,8	0,8
Matesa	0,8	0	0,8	0	0,2	0,2	0	0,8	0	0	1	0
Racan	0,8	1	1	0,25	0,2	0,25	0	1	0	0,2	0,8	0
Mesic	0,8	1	1	0,25	0,2	0,25	0,3	1	0	1	1	0,2
Sanader	1	1	1	0,5	0,4	0,5	0,3	1	0	0,2	1	0,2
Kosor	0,8	1	1	0,5	0,6	0,6	1	1	0	0,4	1	0,4
Josipovic	0,8	0,5	0,8	0,75	0,6	0,75	1	1	1	0,8	1	1
Milanovic	1	0,5	1	0,75	0,8	0,8	0,7	1	0	0,2	1	0,2

List of conditions tested for each outcome:

Outcome	Person-centred media reporting	Persona-centred media reporting	Private persona-centred media reporting	Person-centred leaders' communication	Persona-centred leaders' communication	Private persona-centred leaders' communication
Conditions	Person-centred leaders' communication	Persona-centred leaders' communication	Private persona-centred leaders' communication	Person-centred media reporting	Persona-centred media reporting	Private persona-centred media reporting
	Autonomous journalistic culture	Autonomous journalistic culture	Autonomous journalistic culture	Autonomous journalistic culture	TV reach	Commercialized media system
	Commercialized media system	Commercialized media system	Commercialized media system	Party leader	President	TV reach
	Party leader	TV reach	TV reach	Centrist	Years in politics	Tabloid sector
	President	TV debate	Tabloid sector	Party ID	Centrist	President
	HOE	President	President	Political system	Boomer	Years in politics
	Political system	HOE	Years in politics	Electoral system	Party ID	Centrist
	Electoral system		Libel law	Authoritarianism	Electoral system	Boomer
			Privacy law			Party ID

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