GENDER ASPECTS OF MEDIA TABLOIDIZATION PROCESS IN ESTONIA

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ABSTRACT: This article tackles the gender aspects of media tabloidization process, by empirical research on Estonian press and TV of the transition period 1990s-2000s. It shows, how media tabloidization/commercialization is gendered and how ambivalent is media’s position in representing and reproducing gender order. Media, by tabloidization, legitimizes the shift of the gendered public-private borders in the society and from the other side, media acts as a maintaining factor of gender order as reproducing, producing and legitimizing patriarchal gender patterns. Discursive order, reproduced in media, clearly sets areas of expected expertize for both genders: everyday life, home, human relations for women; public issues, technology for men. Women are typically depicted in the context of or speak on TV on themes which Bourdieu called extensions of private sphere in the public. Media legitimizes gender order by representing this as a default division and it tackles separately exceptions from this division: by textual and visual means media constructs women in male-dominated areas as disturbance of gender order. Commercial pressures, fostering stereotypical images of women, accord with patriarchal frameworks of representing women. In Estonia as a postsoviet transition society, commercialization process is amplified by deep societal changes and value crisis, seen as a broader context for narrow and prejudiced representations of women. Increase in the number of women in media content that typically bring private issues into media, is influencing media intimization and personalization processes, and is seen as a result and also means of tabloidization. Democratizing potential of those representations is questioned.

KEYWORDS: media, gender, women, representations, tabloidization, transition society
INTRODUCTION

This article will tackle the gender aspects of the media tabloidization process by analyzing media representation of, primarily, women in the transition period 1990s-2000s in Estonia. The tabloidization and commercialization process of media is global and has been under study in several critical works in the last few years (Sparks and Tulloch, 2000; Zelizer, 2009). In post-soviet transition society, the processes in the media are even more complicated as they have been amplified by deep changes in the whole society, by a general value crisis (Lauk, 2007) and challenges to gender order. Concerning Estonia, leading media-research has shown that since at least the middle of the 1990s, journalism has been following market logics and has become deeply commercialized (Vihalem, Lauk and Lauristin, 1997). Influential Estonian media critic Hennoste (2010) has concluded that since the 1990s, Estonian journalism has been “turning yellow” and readers have become more and more a commodity to be sold to the advertisers.

We can speak about two different types of journalism in Estonia, quality press and yellow press. Tabloidization (“turning yellow”), has mainly been the object of condemnation by leading journalism research in Estonia as it supposedly narrows the public sphere and fills it with irrelevant content. The journalist community itself makes distinctions between quality or serious or white journalism and condemns commercial pressures and signs of “turning yellow”. Lately, in discussions among professional journalist circles at the Tartu University journalism alumni conference in June 2012, a question was raised as to whether today’s journalism has forgotten the ordinary person. The warning counter-argument claimed instead that it is the yellow press focusing on the ordinary person. The analysis did not go any deeper there but it seems that academic discussions about the different sides of tabloidization in Estonian journalism are only ahead. Also Lauristin and Vihalem (2002) mention, in their critical view of media developments in Estonia in the 1990s, that commercialization has paradoxically supported the watchdog position of the media, since personalized media scandals can have an influence on the political process and even ministers have been brought down. Until now, no major attempts had been made to analyze the tabloidization process from different sides in Estonia, including its more profound influences on the societal and political processes.

The focus of this article, tackling the tabloidization processes, is on gender and especially on women’s media representation. It is assumed that gender is a significant aspect in media tabloidization and in the discussions over the
transformations of the media as a public sphere. Representation of women in media content has been taken as a measure of these processes in this article. From one side, tabloidization of the media legitimizes the shift of the gendered public-private borders in the society, and from the other side, media acts as a maintaining factor of gender order.

Gender order (Connell, 2002), or male domination (Bourdieu, 1998), universally presupposes that gendered borders of the private/public (intimate) spheres are strictly guarded as this is a power issue. In different societies, the private sphere has been associated with women and public sphere with men and the division is hierarchical. Despite discussions and evidence of the merging borders between private and public in the so-called risk-society of the late modern (Beck, 1986), mainstream media still reproduces, produces and legitimizes the old gender patterns. Research in many countries has shown that women are typically depicted in the press or speaking on TV on themes such as everyday life, social issues, health, education, culture or entertainment, which Bourdieu calls extensions of the private sphere in the public. Discursive order (Foucault, 1971/2005) clearly sets areas of expected expertise for both genders: everyday life, home, human relations for women; public issues, technology for men. Media legitimizes gender order by representing this as a default division and tackles, separately, exceptions from this division: e.g., by textual and visual means, media constructs women in male-dominated areas as a disturbance of gender order.

Due to the commercial pressures and changes of journalist culture in the tabloidization process, the borders of the public/private (intimate) spheres are challenged in the media content and as a result, more and more issues, previously regarded as strictly private, are present within the media content. Several authors, analyzing popular media (Butch, 2009; Van Zoonen, 2000; Hermes, 2006) are arguing for the redefinition of “public” or calling for recognition of the multiplicity of public spheres.

The main aim of this paper, then, is to show, by empirical research on Estonian press and TV and included within a doctoral dissertation (Pilvre, 2011), how media tabloidization/commercialization is gendered and discuss what it means in the context of the discussion of equal rights. This paper will also show how media, representing and reproducing the dynamics in gender order, relates to the public-private division of society. The point of departure of this article is that tabloidization shows a major transformation of journalism and it should not simply be condemned or neglected but researched upon from different sides without prejudice. It will be discussed, whether tabloidization of the media in Estonia is a democratic process,
offering space for multiple voices and working for diversity, in contrast to the elitist, institution-centered, quality press or is tabloidization just a dumbing-down, offering an over-simplified, commercialized picture of the world, while neglecting its social responsibilities and narrowing public space.

GLOBAL TABLOID TURN

As mentioned already in the introduction, the tabloid turn in journalism is universal and has brought along many changes in journalist cultures, according to research theory from the end of the last decade. Journalism critics, media executives and practitioners in the USA already claimed, in the 1990s, the crisis of journalism and associated it with the "rise of the tabloid" (Sparks, 2000: 1). Sparks, one of the most well-known British critics of the tabloid turn, had earlier described the "depolitization" of understanding, as a result of media tabloidization, as individual actions and experiences detached from social processes and appear purely random, driven by chance or luck (Curran & Sparks, 1991). Bourdieu, in his essay on television, (Bourdieu, 1996/1999) criticizes news commodification as putting media focus on things that arouse curiosity but require no analysis. As a result, the audience or readers cease to be addressed as citizens and are perceived instead as consumers, eager to be diverted by gossip or scandal. In 1998, the international journalism forum Euricom Colloquium on tabloidization concluded that the proportion of popular-, tabloid and trash journalism has been rising in most countries, even if the overall picture is highly complex (Gripsrud, 2000: 294).

How is tabloid media is defined, how can we make distinctions between the quality press and tabloid media on today’s diverse media scene? Recently, there have been several attempts to define tabloidization and tabloid media. Esser (1999, in Watson and Hill, 2000: 307) refers to the original meaning of the word "tabloid", a pharmaceutical trademark for the concentrated form of medicines as pill or tablet, causing narcotic effect. Earlier defined mostly by the size of a newspaper page, tabloid is now understood as referring to the nature of news content and style. According to Esser (ibid.), tabloidization includes the revision of traditional newspapers, driven by reader preferences and commercial requirements and, at a macro level, it can be seen as a social phenomenon, instigating and symbolizing major changes to the constitution of society.

Paletz (1998, in Gripsrud, 2000: 292–293) presents four parameters to make distinctions within the different forms and contents of journalism: the inclusion or exclusion of certain types of stories such as crime, accidents, human interest,
stories about celebrities versus international news and stories about politics, social movements or the economy; proportions and priorities of various kinds of content, forms of presentation such as the length of the stories, the use of visual elements such as photos, graphics and colors; journalistic techniques and ethics: the use of single or multiple sources, investigative techniques, and respect for privacy.

During the recent developments in journalism, everyday personalization practice has become one of the most important conventions of news production. As the "Dictionary of Media and Communication Studies" in 2000 concludes: "Where a potential news item can be personalized, it has a greater chance of being included than if it is difficult to translate into personality terms. The preference is for elite personalities." (Watson and Hill, 2000: 230). Instead of describing processes and presenting problems, the media is more and more engaged with telling stories, offering emotional identification. Macdonald, rethinking personalization and infotainment debate (Macdonald, 2003: 57-78), has described personalization as a central process of media transformation to infotainment.

Some major theoreticians of cultural studies have seen democratic potential (Gripsrud, 2000), and even resistance, in tabloid media (Fiske, 1989). Gripsrud (2000: 298) proposes that the populism of popular journalism often includes disrespect for authorities which can produce challenges to those in powerful positions. Additionally, some feminist media researchers have seen tabloid media and popular formats as an arena for women's voices (Hermes, 2006; Van Zoonen, 2000).

Tabloidization also refers to some major changes in what we know as the division of the society between private and public. Beck, in his theorization about the risk society (Beck 1986), was among the first major sociologists to show that in today's world, private-public borders are in diffusion, due to the changing concepts of work, more fragmented identities and the changing position of women. Most of the criticism on tabloidization of media however has stemmed from the classical Habermasian view on publics, presented in "Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit" (Habermas, 1962). Habermas presented the ideal bourgeois public sphere as a place where citizens come together to engage in rational discussion on issues of common concern -- questioning state authority. Media has been seen as a public space, offering opportunities to participate in critical discussions, although Habermas himself has pessimistically seen the media of his time, operating according to commercial rather than civil values and intertwined with input from public relations offices, produce the "refeudalization" of the public sphere as media have replaced critical publicity.
with manipulative publicity (Habermas, 1962/2001: 250-257). Exclusiveness of the Habermasian public sphere has been criticized by different authors, often referring to different minorities. Fraser (1992), among others, has been critical of the Habermasian concept of a singular public sphere, which is based on a number of exclusions, including women.

There has been much critical discussion of the role of media in the public-private division and the possible reconstitution of the borders and transformation of the public sphere itself (see Macdonald, 2003: 80-81; Butch, 2009: 1-14). In the following, only some arguments are reviewed to frame the presentation of the main topic of the article. Butsch (ibid.) argues that given the growth of media variety today, the media have become the primary focus and force for today's public sphere and we can find ourselves in a time of intense debate: which media provide what kind of public spheres. He concludes that debates have produced no consensus of what a public sphere is and what the role of media is there? Couldry, Livingstone and Markham (2009) suggest that the public sphere should be extended into a seemingly un-political discourse of the everyday. Hermes (2006) proposes that the vital, popular cultural practice should be paid attention to as part of a public sphere in which democracy is at work and where we can talk about cultural citizenship. Hermes (ibid.) also calls to critically review our elitist ideal of a public sphere as more and more people take cynical distance from politics, which has been seen as central to a Habermasian liberal public sphere. Talking about including the emotions, drama, excitement, hopes and expectations we find in popular culture in the public sphere, Hermes refers to Nussbaum (2001) who has also argued for recognizing the value and importance of emotions. Macdonald (2003) however, is cautious about seeing the redefinition of public sphere in the media. She writes that despite the inclusion of ordinary people on TV programmes and the exposure of intimate details about politicians and celebrities, “the hierarchical supremacy and power of the public world remains remarkably untouched” (Macdonald, 2003: 101). She critically adds that media incorporations of private emotion or ordinary life have not remarkably changed the constructions of the everyday and what concerns the politics or televisual performances of the private, neutralize its political effect and absorb it into the growing culture of celebrity (ibid.).

**GENDER ASPECT OF MEDIA TABLOIDIZATION**

In gender studies, there is a shared understanding that media is one of the main institutions, besides education, justice, religion, science and medicine, where the discursive definition, cultural production and reproduction of gender take
place. In order to analyze these processes, this research uses the Foucauldian understanding of sexuality as a discursive result of knowledge and power systems (Foucault, 1976/2005).

Cultural representation, including media representation of women, departs from the contradiction of increasing activity of women in the public sphere and the common understanding of "woman" belonging to the private sphere. Women's media representations, including those discursive contradictions between a woman's activity in the public sphere and her "belonging by essence" to the private sphere, are constructed in the media according to different choices: agenda setting, choice of depicted actors, visual material, and descriptions. There certainly exists a connection between women's emancipation, presence among the political and economic elites of the society and representation in the media content, but the connections are not mechanical. From mainstream media research (McQuail, 2000/2003: 290), it is known that news journalism has a typical bias towards representing mainly areas of male-domination such as politics, business, defense, jurisdiction, crime, and male sports. Quality journalism also tends to use sources representing official institutions of those areas, most of whom are male. Hence, media representations evidently reproduce male dominance in those areas: for example, if a minister in some newsworthy event is a man, he will be also represented in the news-coverage. Gill (2007: 115), reviewing research on news and gender, concludes, however, news does not reflect reality, but instead gives a consistently more male-dominated view of society than exists in reality. Croteau and Hoynes (1992) write that the male presence in the news industry is immense and far-reaching with males dominant as both sources and subjects. They describe objectivity as a value, according to the positivist tradition in news gathering, of the qualitative effect of men's presence in the news media (ibid. 163). Halonen (1995: 55-56), researching news in Finland, has also concluded that news discourse is objectivist and masculine.

Since 1995, a global media monitoring project has been regularly conducted (GMMP, 1995-2010) revealing that women are still a universal minority as news subjects, even though the percentage has risen from 17% to 24% in the years under research. It also showed that women were the least likely to appear in news about politics and government issues, business and economy and instead feature most likely in the domains of health, social issues and arts. TV monitoring project Screening Gender (2000), conducted a survey of six European public broadcast television companies, showed that women make up 32% of the speakers on the screen on average, not only in prime time, but considering all genres and formats.
In quality news media, focusing on institutions, the dominance of men's representation is obvious. It is also undoubted that various issues of popular media, women's, home and family magazines content includes more representations of women than news content in dailies (Gill, 2007). As news is mostly about men belonging to social elites, Halonen (1995) has shown that women appear as socially elite in society magazines. In mainstream media, women mainly appear as wives or girlfriends of top male politicians, businessmen, sportsmen or representatives of the entertainment business (actresses, singers, TV directors or programme leaders), confirming the gender order with their appearance. Studies on women's representation in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK showed that women in news are most often represented as victims, to amplify the tragedy of catastrophes (Images of Women in the Media, 1999).

The more entertaining parts of the dailies, such as weekend supplements, give more space to women, according to their agenda of female topics such as family, food, health, fashion, house-keeping, care, or children as women are regarded as "experts of life" (Bjarnason, Edström, Pilvre and Siivonen, 2005). Typical ways of portraying women in portrait interviews, include focusing on private matters in the framing questions of the journalists, presenting women as group members, testing from the point of view of normative femininity, and describing looks and family relations (ibid.)

The representation becomes more problematic if a woman is a politician or successful in business or any other male-dominated area. Adcock (2010) analyzed the newspaper representation of British politicians in the 1997 general elections, when a record number of 120 women were elected to the parliament. She concluded that women were "habitually marked out as women and marginalized as serious political speakers" and the choice of language reproduced "traditional, pejorative or mythical conceptions of womanhood". Women's public personae were often framed via non-political storylines and trivializing analogies and the representation replicated a gendered hierarchical public/private distinction within the political sphere (ibid. 150).

Tuchman (1979), studying news, coined the terms "symbolic annihilation", which refers to the absence of women in news and their "trivialization", describing the ways women are depicted in the media. Gill (2007: 115) claims that it's not just the small number of women in news but the ways women are portrayed when they do become newsworthy.

According to Fairclough (1995/1997), in news production several journalistic choices are made during the production of media text. Both institutional practices
and social-cultural contexts have to be considered during the analysis of media texts, as institutional practices only partly help to explain media representations. Journalist choices are also influenced by the cultural context at large. If we consider areas the daily news media consider newsworthy in the first place, we see male dominance, which can hardly be questioned in the context of current news production conventions. The presence or absence of representations of women and men in the media content refers to the choices of the producers of the texts, some of which come from professional practices; other conscious and subconscious choices arise from the broader cultural and ideological context, in other words the discursive order of society (Foucault, 1971/2005).

The growing number of representations of women in the media content in general shows a decrease of media’s attention on the political and economic elite and a growth of media’s interest in human interest-type stories. It can refer a great deal more to journalistic choices at different levels in media organizations than to changes in the society.

There are some remarks in feminist media-critical literature that associate tabloidization with the increase in the number of women’s representation in the media. Macdonald, analyzing personalization and infotainment (2003: 61-62), writes that the hierarchical division of hard and soft news is strongly gendered as women still dominate in soft news production and it is usual in newsrooms to use female sources if the issue concerns private matters. She is critical about the naturalness of such choices and refers to the deeply engrained ideologies of masculinity and femininity in them. Van Zoonen (1991/1993; 1994: 59-60), referring also to similar notions of Holland (1987), claims that women are appearing in news as anchors as a result of an editorial policy to bring more emotion to news, fosters media intimization processes that are part of tabloidization.

Concerning the democratic potential of the more emotional, personalized and entertaining images, Adcock (2010: 151) critically claims that reductive representations have wider implications for what the reading public thinks about themselves and others. Although more entertaining, emotional, personalized and provocative modes of reporting can engage the reading public, we must question their democratic value, if the language and imagery set up a narrow, prejudiced, and cynical perceptual framework.

However, the associations between representations of women and media tabloidization have not been articulated very clearly in feminist media-critical literature. If the context of the appearance of women will be critically observed, the

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result would probably be in contradiction with the feminist political agenda, which sometimes includes just striving for more women in media content and does not always critically consider the way women are represented (see also Pilvre, 2008).

**GENDER REPRESENTATION IN ESTONIAN WEEKLY EESTI EKSPRESS AND ESTONIAN PUBLIC TELEVISION ETV**

Tackled in the following two empirical media research projects on gender aspects in the framework of media transformation processes towards tabloidization are the research upon construction of gender in the Persoon column of the Estonian major weekly Eesti Ekspress (1992-2008, 798 texts) and the research upon who is speaking on Estonian public television ETV prime-time programmes (2002, 2008, ca 40 hours). The research projects, conducted from 2000-2011, have been a basis for a Ph.D thesis (Pilvre, 2011; see also Pilvre, 2009; Pilvre, 2010). The results will now be interpreted in a broader understanding of the media transformation process of recent years in Estonia.

The position of the researcher has to be mentioned here: I have been an editor for culture in the same paper, Eesti Ekspress, have taken part in the editorial meetings and therefore have an insider’s view on the selection processes of the Persoon hero. Parallel to my journalist work, I started writing my master’s thesis on Persoon in 1995 (Pilvre, 2000). The Eesti Ekspress Persoon column presents the hero of the week, most usually in connection with some newsworthy event, scandal or some achievement or big failure. The column has been published weekly in each issue since 1992 and is therefore rich material for analyzing changes in the paper, as well as journalism and media culture in general. Content analysis was used to analyze the material, and each story was coded using 10 categories (age, body, clothing, important others, private life, archetypes/stereotypes/symbols, eccentricity, agency, success, failure). The research showed that women comprised 22% of the portrayed people during 1992-2008 and 25% in the 2000s. This result follows universal patterns found globally (GMMP, 1995-2010), showing a slight, but steady growth. The highest was the percentage in 2002, 38%. As a tendency, the growth of the percentage during 1992-2008, especially since 1995, refers to the major changes in editorial policy and coincides with changes in news concepts towards a "softening" in the paper (Hennoste, 1997). The rise in the number of portrayed women can also be interpreted as an indicator of changes in Estonian journalist culture, in accordance with developments towards sensationalism and commercialism (Lauristin and Vihalemm, 2002: 48-49). In
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harsh competition with dailies and society magazines, portrayals of women was regarded to attract more readers, especially women (Pilvre, 2009: 49-50). In the first half of the 1990s, women’s representation in Persoon was almost non-existent (under 10%), probably due to the editorial policies of Eesti Ekspress that excluded culture from news coverage. The lack of women before 1995 can also be the influence of the societal developments in a transition society and the masculinization of culture in post-communist countries (Feischmidt, Magyari-Vincze and Zentai, 1997; Watson, 1993).

The largest represented groups of women in Eesti Ekspress Persoon, almost equal in size (over 30%), were the experts/specialists whose involvement with the news was in connection with a scandal or event, and women who belonged to the economic and political elite, which are male dominated spheres of society. The presence of the latter women in the news is described as a “disturbance” in the news discourse (Halonen, 1999). The percentage of experts and specialists can, if looking just at numbers, be taken optimistically as evidence of a democratic gender equality policy, but if you look at the reasons for the portrayal of the women, they are very often related to some scandal or law case with female juridical experts engaged. In the 2000s, the percentage of portrayals of female specialists increased, raising the percentage of women portrayed to as high as 36-38% in some years. Probably the main reason for this is the change in attitude towards cultural figures within editorial policy; besides looking for scandals in culture, several portraits were presenting successful women in their professional field.

Other groups of women represented in Eesti Ekspress Persoon portraits were sportswomen and women in the entertainment business (together ca 20%), relatives and co-habitants of prominent men (7%), and women in the margins of society (faith-healers, activists and other “trouble-makers”, 8%). What concerns those groups of women, from the point of view of editorial policy, is seemingly their task has been to bring soft themes to the issue and by their presence, balance the very hard content (investigative stories on corruption, crime, economy). We can claim that, by particularly portraying female sports figures, women in the entertainment business, wives and girlfriends of important men and women in the margins, the tabloid features are reinforced in the paper Eesti Ekspress.

It is noticeable that the main discursive patterns which characterize women entering the Persoon column have remained basically the same during the researched period: as a rule, there are gendered descriptions of appearance, clothing and private life. It is worth mentioning that portraits of women are
often written in a style, which is used in women’s and society magazines, so they could easily, without editing, be moved to a popular journal. Portraits of women also include descriptions of their attempts to cope with contradictive aspects of their private and public spheres, such as having an attractive appearance and a demanding job, and the reconciliation of family-life and work. Representations of men often include just the presentation of the news subject, which was the initiating factor for writing the story (news value) and mostly exclude personality aspects of the individual. Those stories are very often written in the genre of political analysis or just news stories. That finding, concerning genre and gender, can be claimed most interesting: the choice of genre in the same column is clearly conditioned by the gender of the main character of the story. Stories about female characters were mainly portraits in a soft, entertainment genre, whereas stories about men could be hard political analysis.

According to Fairclough (1995/1997), genre is a framing factor in discourse and generic strategies, which depend upon the purpose of the concrete journalistic practices. Stories, be they a political analysis, an article on a particular theme or just a personal portrait, are written in a variety of genres according to the aim of the story. The journalistic choice of genre made by journalists when they write a story about a woman confirms that personalization tendency (Macdonald, 2003) is connected with the presence and growing number of women’s representations in media content. That can be named also a major proof to the claim that by representing women, the tabloidization process is perpetuated through editorial choices. It can be asked whether there is a major change in the position of women in Estonian society since the 1990s, causing the change in the number of represented women in the study of Eesti Ekspress?

According to research of women within Estonian economy and politics and gender equality (Soolise võrdõiguslikkuse monitooring, 2009; Masso, 2010; Allik, 2010), women’s role in Estonia has remained quite stable and proportionally low in the top positions of the economy and politics during the most recent decades. Regarding those facts, the study of Eesti Ekspress does not enable the claim that the increase of women’s representation is the result of the growing importance of the role of women in the economic or political life in Estonia since 1995. It does add more confirmation to the claim that the increase of women’s portraits in the most recent decades, especially since 1995, can be explained mainly by the processes within media institutions, such as commercialization, tabloidization and personalization, which bring more “soft” human interest themes and female characters into media content.
The other research was conducted on the Estonian public television ETV prime time programmes (19.00-23.00) in 2002 and 2008, analyzing ca 40 hours of programming, using the methodology of Screening Gender (2000), including a standard content analysis (Sugu telepildis, 2004; Rebane, 2009; Pilvre, 2010). The idea of the monitoring is to count and code only persons who speak on television. As occurred on ETV prime time programmes, the average percentage of women speaking on Estonian TV during the first decade of the century (2002-2008) was 33% (in 2002 it was 34% and in 2008 32%), which is comparable to the average percentage of women (32%) in six European countries participating in Screening Gender (2000). It should be mentioned that in 2002, advertisements disappeared from ETV, which was followed by major changes in editorial policy towards programmes of higher quality. The change in the number of speaking women in general is not significant, however, since 2002, but clearly the percentage of speaking women differs regarding genres and in connection with themes that are spoken on. As status quo, women comprise a minority in all genres: news, entertainment and drama, and there are fewer women speaking in the news than in entertainment programmes and, especially, drama. Study on ETV also confirms the gender aspect of the usage of genre: women appear on the screen most often in the fictional drama genre, which is entertainment about life and relationships in the private sphere, and less in the factual news genre, which deals with public sphere activities.

Women have a fairly high representation in the role of main actors in the drama, but still less than that of men and considerably less in the role of televised politicians. In the context of themes, the majority of presenters and citizens speaking about health and social issues are women. In the context of age, women appearing on television are young and inexperienced; the older the speaker is on the TV screen, the more likely the speaker is a man. Therefore, aspects of women’s talking on TV – genre, themes, age of the women speaking – confirm the claim that women’s representation is connected with the most popular content and also entertaining programmes. Thus women’s connectedness with tabloidization of public television programme content is obvious.

Concerning the gender order, represented on TV, women are in a minority in all the main functions of TV programmes: news anchors, programme leaders, debate moderators, game leaders and interviewees. Staff numbers in Estonian TV demonstrate that women make up almost half of the creative personnel in ETV (Šein, 2002; Rebane, 2009), so we can conclude that women do much of the background work in television as editors, producers, assistants etc., managing the invisible, behind-the-scenes “private sphere” element of TV organization, whereas men appear in the “public sphere” element, the television screen.
CHANGING REPRESENTATION OF MEN IN ESTONIAN NEWS MEDIA IN THE CONTEXT OF TABLOIDIZATION

In this article, predominantly women’s media representation was analyzed. There is some evidence of the study on Eesti Ekspress and also in earlier research (Malmberg, 2005/2006) that men’s media representation shows signs of change, that men’s visual images are changing and descriptions of men’s body and private issues can be found more often.

According to scholars working in the masculinity studies tradition, men’s cultural representations should be analyzed, in order to understand the gender order of the society. In the tradition of seeing gender as a social construct (Kimmel, 1987; Connell, 1995), men and masculinity should be seen as constructed and hence problematized. Craig (1992) shows that gender-focused research upon media has mainly concentrated on women and, until men’s studies began in the late 1980s, men have been treated as the norm and unproblematic in most media studies. Fejes (1992), concluding previous research on media content, gives an assessment that media represents a heavily stereotypical view of masculinity. Hearn and Pringle (2006: 96-97) claim that in the last decade, studies on masculinity and men in media representation have been interested in mainly popular media, film and men’s magazines; mainstream media research has had no interest in the problematization of representation of men in the news. According to Hearn and Pringle (ibid.), it could be important to examine in which kinds of journalistic and other media contexts men are given meaning as a gender. Those contexts could, according to those authors, change the typical man-woman segregation and apparent gender-neutrality of what is prevalent and taken-for granted in mainstream journalism (dailies).

In Estonian media research, some attempts have lately been conducted to analyze men represented in the news. Pootsmann (2012), comparing the representation of men in the largest Estonian daily, Postimees, in 2001 and 2011, shows that representation of men has changed, as has what concerns roles of men depicted in the news media. The number of stories with a politician as the main male character, has decreased and other depictions of men as sportsmen, criminals, and other (ordinary people) have increased. The changes in the seemingly obvious men’s representation in daily papers or prime-time news is a new, challenging focus for analysis of media content from a gender aspect. It can be assumed that changing patterns will show the connectedness of changing male representation and the further tabloidization process of the media as well as the further diffusion of public-private borders.
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This article analyzed the gender aspects of media tabloidization process in the transition period 1990s-2000s in Estonia, based on empirical data from the studies of the daily Eesti Ekspress Persoon column (1992-2008) and on ETV programmes (2002-2008), included in doctoral dissertation (Pilvre, 2011). By combining content analysis and qualitative analysis, the representation of women was the primary focus in the studies, but as side-product, the studies also produced some findings on the representation of men.

It can be concluded that the growing number of women's portrayals in Eesti Ekspress is evidence for the process of tabloidization, as the discursive patterns reinforce women's representation as soft material in news discourse. It has to be pointed out that despite the growing number of women depicted, gender discourse in the mainstream media has remained basically the same during recent decades. That puts the deliberative potential of the increase of the number of women's representation under question. If the representation is reductive and the framework of portrayal is narrow, prejudiced and stereotypical, we can hardly speak about women's empowerment with such imagery, in the context of an equal rights discussion. From another side, if emotional, personalized descriptions of women attract readers and can lead them, through seemingly easy storytelling, to some socially relevant issue, the tabloid tendency, perpetuated by women's images, should not be just put down. The balance here is really to decide whether the colorful representation of the portrayed woman will promote some important issue or will remain just a piece of entertainment between other, more serious issues, in stories with more neutrally presented male subjects.

Women typically appearing in entertaining functions, as actors in a drama genre on TV, also reinforce the association of women's presence on TV and developments towards tabloidization in Estonian public broadcasting. Regarding ETV, a more thorough qualitative analysis would be necessary to describe the context of women appearing in the news and other, more seriously taken, genres. It would, for example, be informative to look at what events female journalists report about, or what news female anchors present. It needs further analysis, before it is possible to say whether there is a tendency, according to the tabloidization claim, that women more often present soft news or comment on issues which demand showing emotions.

The themes and roles, in which women's competence is trusted in media, are connected with the private sphere and extensions of it in the public sphere (Bourdieu, 1998): everyday life, social issues and health. Women act in TV
dramas, which refers to the entertaining role of women in the media content and reinforces the accepted position of women as entertainers, inspiring gendered fantasies in the patriarchal society. Women can, however, speak on a range of themes on TV (including justice, technology and science), which shows that, in principle, they are not excluded from commenting on any area of society. Nevertheless, substantially more men appear in the same genres as women. In news that accurately represents the public sphere and is a “reflection of reality”, the female representation is noticeably lower than that of men, which also shows the typical bias of news towards certain themes (McQuail, 2000/2003). The preference of men as sources, and the exclusion of women from the pool of sources in certain themes, can also show the conscious and subconscious choices or professional practices of journalists.

The low TV representation of women appearing as politicians and experts, programme presenters and interviewees and the high degree of representation of women in drama suggests that media reproduces the discursive order, in which women are, by default, less acceptable as representatives on themes society regards as important.

Media practitioners are departing from “reality” in creating media content, but they make their choices concerning their sources and the functions of actors and guests in programmes and in this way construct (Van Djik, 1998) and perpetuate the identities and practices which reinforce male domination. The findings of the studies on Eesti Ekspress and ETV allow the conclusion that the dominant gender order and patriarchal ideology behind it is not negotiated in newsrooms. Studies on Eesti Ekspress and ETV show also that conventions of representing women in certain ways are defined by the editorial culture of the newsroom as women journalists follow the conventions developed in a masculine journalism culture.

As a wider gendered societal context in Estonia, during the period under research, the hegemonic masculinity, with a focus on nation and state building, was generally accepted as the dominant ideology, and journalistic choices were made in this context. Besides, hegemonic masculinity in post-colonial, post-socialist Estonia is strongly influenced by corporate masculinity (Connell, 2005/2007). As a result, a hybrid form of national and state centered patriarchy and corporate masculinity has been accepted as the dominant ideology in Estonian society. This ideology is continuously favoring certain representations of women in the media content, presenting female bodies as decoration, women as entertainment and excluding other forms of representation (old, ordinary...
women etc.). The studies on Eesti Ekspress and ETV confirm that women’s media representation in itself endangers, in certain ways, the position of hegemonic masculinity and it thereby paradoxically reinforces the patriarchal supremacy in Estonian society. This process is occurring through discursive order, which excludes women from certain parts of the discourse and favors their participation in other parts of the discourse. The reinforcement of the discursive order is being carried out in the textual descriptions of the women appearing in the male dominated fields of the public sphere and by emphasizing the extraordinariness of those women. The reinforcement of the discursive order manifests itself in media content in different journalistic choices: agenda setting, framing questions, and the practices of control and sanction, which, according to the ideology of male domination, accentuate the quintessential belonging of women to the private sphere. Borders of the intimate are reinforced in this ideology, as this helps to maintain the power of patriarchy.

The on-going tabloidization process in the media is challenging the borders of the public and private spheres, but it is in the interest of patriarchal power to maintain the existing borders of the intimate. Mainstream media helps to preserve the status quo, but there is a discursive struggle over the meaning of women’s position in society and how it is reproduced in media content. Commercial pressures coincide with the choices, which in this context sustain patriarchal ideology.

It can be concluded that despite different historical background, the patterns and conventions of representing women in Estonia are very similar to findings in international research according to literature on the subject. Bourdieu’s concept of male domination can probably explain this: the structure of societies has always been gendered, old inequalities have been perpetuated by different social practices and ancient gender structures can be present in very modern societies.

This article aims to show that one has to be critical about the simplified liberal-feminist political claim that the increasing number of women in the media content is a sign of democracy signaling a more accurate picture of the world and should be strived for as, for example, some major media-critical projects, such as Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP, 1995-2010), have taken for their platform. It is argued that the growing representation of women in media content can not be taken only as an argument for democracy but that it is crucial to analyze as well in what discursive context women do appear, and is this changing or has it remained the same. Even globally, more than the political changes and women’s emancipation in different societies, women’s
media representation gives evidence of changes in the media itself and should mainly be understood in the context of universal media commercialization.

Similar to the other countries of Eastern and Central Europe, in Estonia the transition context of the totally changing society, including the media system and the corresponding value crisis in the 1990s, forced the process and has probably amplified the perception of commercialization since the market economy was generally unknown.

Concerning gender, the universal orientation towards market demand is legitimizing the widely spread, narrow and stereotypical media representations of women in Estonia as well as in other parts of the world. Without intervening in journalism autonomy, news production practices and professionalized masculine dimensions of reporting culture, it is hardly possible to make changes in women's symbolic and cultural representation, including representation in the media content. Moreover, market demand, as far as now, clearly coincides with the dominant patriarchal ideology behind widely spread women's representations, in the form of common sense.
REFERENCES


**Gender aspects of media tabloidization process in Estonia**


