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Since antiquity, justice has been a central moral criterion of life in society (cf. Aristotle, St. Augustine). Traditionally, philosophy has tended to search for universal principles of justice; however, in the last decades of the last century, with the rise of discourse ethics (e.g. Habermas [1983, 1991] or Apel [1988]), increasing emphasis has been placed on the creation of norms of the communication process (and thus also of what is considered just in a society) [Nohejl 2007: 107]. In the present time, the creation, consolidation, and evolution of such discourse are transmitted by the mass media, which in innumerable ways create, influence, and transform both individual and collective experience [Gentz & Kramer 2006]. An analysis of media content is therefore, together with public opinion polls (in the Czech Republic e.g. [Matějů & Řeháková 1992; Matějů & Vlachová 1995; Matějů, Vlachová et al. 2000]), an important method in the study of justice – strictly speaking, it should precede them.

It should be noted that the empirical study of justice in the mass media is not approached here as an effort to discover or state universal principles of justice, nor reasons and conditions of injustice. It is approached as a study of semantics as applied to justice and injustice in everyday social practices [Frey et al 1996]. The authors believe that the mass media, just as any other form of discourse, are guided by certain heterogeneous and diffuse images of society, evaluative standards of both the institutional structure and the division of rights and duties, as well as the personal conduct of individuals. If the concept of justice is a constructive element in human community and a universal criterion of conduct in a society [Aristotle 1996], a study of discourses involves researching the perception of various institutions and how their “architecture” is reflected through the prism of justice. It is obvious that the discourse of justice competes with other discourses which reflect other aspects of these institutions, e.g. their effectiveness.

The behaviour of institutions in society is explained, legitimised, and rationalised through principles and semantics of justice [Schmidt 1995]. The same rhetoric is employed to demand justice from institutions, while it is not (or only rarely is) the case of demanding some abstract principle of justice (perhaps with the exception of the principle of equality), rather it is the case of creating and applying specific distributive criteria, inherent to these institutions. Hence a research question arises, whether and how the media’s justice discourse creates individual discursive spheres pertaining to justice and how these spheres are defined.

For an intuitive division into spheres, Walzer’s spheres of justice might present themselves as a possibility [Walzer 1984]. In his widely known book, Michael Walzer argues for the existence of “spheres of distributive justice”, which can be differentiated by their inner principles. Walzer attempts to unite the philosophical demand of the “well-structured society” with the sociological characteristics of a society. Also, his solution is not an abstract rule, but the moral intuition of contemporary developed societies. Because he gives up on one universal rule, he is forced to relate his concept to the social meaning of justice in a particular society at a particular time [Muller 1995: 151]. Coupling principles of justice with the recognition of the fact that modern societies are socially differentiated, creates, unlike the deductive theories of Rawls [1971] or Nozick [1974], a scope for a more empirical and sociologically accessible theory. According to Walzer, we must forgo the notion that there is only one universal principle of justice, which is applied in the distribution of goods in a society. On the contrary, in a differentiated society there
are several such principles, as there are a number of areas, relatively independent of each other, each one with its own distributive principle and also of rights. Justice is guided by different principles within a family, in economics or education; education, for instance, should be provided especially to the gifted ones, social support to the socially needy ones.


Hypotheses

The mass media, too, assume some intuitive notion of justice, with which they work and a modification of which they reproduce. Because Walzer’s concept is principally close to their perception of reality via various spheres (in the media context sections and topics), it is likely that the spheres of justice will be reflected in their discourse. The drawback of Walzer’s theory in the context of our research, despite its indisputable sociological relevance, lies in its normative character; it describes a desirable (ideal) state of affairs, not the real situation, and the vocabulary used by the author is abstract and inadequate for the field of media discourse.

Nevertheless, we can cautiously formulate a hypothesis that different principles of justice will be manifested in the discourse practice, in that they will create more or less defined areas of discourse, characterised by different participants, different processes of obtaining and claiming justice and the principles of distribution. Complaining of injustice and demanding justice do not have to be applied to the same degree everywhere, therefore there may be areas in space and time, which are more prone to the former than to the latter (judicial system, school system, social policy). Analysis of joint occurrences of the most frequent words that we have undertaken could help draw attention to this spatial distribution. Changes in time, however, will not be the subject of this study.

An alternative (or rather superior) hypothesis to Walzer’s spheres of justice is the hypothesis of functional divisions of spheres. Even if there were no quantitative differences in claiming a right to justice or complaining of injustice between different areas, it is still useful to differentiate the areas within media discourse. This is based on the well known fact formulated by the theory of social systems, which states that the analytical progress in the 20th century has been achieved by the disintegration of the subject [Luhmann 1977]. According to Luhmann, a person (human being) is merely identification in a specific interactive context and does not create any modus operandi of his / her own [Luhmann 1991: 169]. All its synonyms are only constructs within a particular system, so for example the term “person” is a legal term and therefore part of the legal system. Man, person, individual etc. are in that sense not just random synonyms, but primarily terms (formulations) determined by the context in which they are employed [ibid: 170]. They are also above all specific constructed objects of media discourse that is a group of utterances belonging to the same discourse body [Foucault 2002: 180]. That is also how they acquire their “objectivity”.

If that is the case, and we find no reason to think otherwise, it can be assumed that in the media discourse, there will be used such synonyms of the term “subject” which correspond to the character of the given area. Apart from differentiating the individual spheres on the basis of our common knowledge, it is a non-intuitive process, which is based on the decomposition of “subject”. If this differentiation of spheres of (in)justice is reflected in the mass media, it must manifest itself not only in the spatial distribution of specific words but also in the usage of such synonyms of the term person, which correspond to a particular sphere and are to be found within

1 In turns, Walzer looks at “membership”, “social security”, “finances and goods”, “office”, “work”, “free time”, “education”, “relationship and love”, “mercy”, “recognition”, and “political power”. Walzer’s criticism of the laissez-faire economy as a form of market imperialism relates to our topic only indirectly [Walzer 1984: 120].
If this differentiation is proved by the analysis, it would show the link between the media discourse of justice and the structure of society. The importance of the problem of justice would be confirmed and areas where the dimension of justice is relevant would be highlighted.

**Data and method**

The applied method of quantitative content analysis focusing on co-occurrences of frequent words in specifically assembled corpuses has been described in detail in previous publications [Hájek et al 2006, Hájek and Bayer 2007], hence we can be brief on the subject. The starting point for the analysis was to assemble textual corpuses representing journalistic output from a given period. We selected the nation-wide newspapers Blesk, Haló noviny, Hospodářské noviny, Lidové noviny, Mladá fronta Dnes, Právo, and Sport in the period 1996-2005. Access to their online versions was provided by the MediaSearch service of NewtonIT Company. We selected those articles from the database which featured words with the root *spravedliv* (*just*) and *nespravedliv* (*injust*) regardless of how many times it occurred in the text. The texts were then divided into two corpuses: *spravedliv* and *nespravedliv*. Following that, frequency lists based on the corpuses were created and the 100 most frequently occurring words were selected and the related words and forms were unified under their root form. For example, the words *úřad*, *úřadu*, *úřadem*, *úředník*, *úředníci* (office, clerk) were replaced by the forms *úřad*, *úředn* (the asterisk denotes any possible letter or letters which might follow); all the words beginning with the letter chains *úřad* or *úřed* were then grouped together. There were a few cases where this method could not be employed, since some semantically different words share the same root in Czech (such as *lidé* (people) a *lidský* (human), or *politik* (politician) and *politický* (political). In other cases, frequently occurring synonyms and word of similar meaning were grouped together, e.g. *jednání* – *vyjednávání* (bargain, negotiation), *firma* – *(obchodní) společnost* – *podnik* (firm, company, enterprise). Words with multiple meanings were manually separated before the co-occurrence analysis; e.g. *strana tisková* (page) from *strana politická* (political party), or *strana sporu* (litigant). To prevent any misrepresentation, all the above mentioned modifications were checked against the frequency lists of the original as well as the modified corpuses and also the actual context of the words.

For the analysis, the corpus was checked for a list of sixty words, which were represented in the highest number of texts (which do not have to be the most frequently occurring words as such; the reasoning was to avoid the results being distorted by over-representation of words frequently appearing in only a small number of texts, e.g. *evrop*/*europe*).

The relative distance between the sixty words most frequently occurring in a given corpus was determined by the frequency of their co-occurrence in a given text; the more they occurred together, the closer they were. The resulting matrix of word co-occurrence was normalized (using the Jaccard coefficient) and visualized into in the form of plots by using multidimensional scaling technique. While interpreting these figures, it is important to bear in mind that individual dimensions do not *a priori* carry meaning and the graphs can therefore be rotated at will. The configuration of words (points) in a graph resulted from the attempt at the optimal complex representation of all the relations, so the best approach is to interpret the structure as a whole rather than particular words or partial word clusters, which may originate randomly as a result of the search for the optimal configuration of all the points. The most frequent words, which appear throughout most of the text are placed near the centre of the graph and their relative positions are very stable, while less frequent ones, which are not bound to other words are placed near the
edges of the graph and their position can change with a change of the parameter [Hájek et al. 2006 or Cox & Cox 2001].

**Spheres of (in)justice**

“Spatial” distribution of the most frequent words comprising the journalistic context of the words *spravedliv* and *nespravedliv* in the period under study is represented in the figures 1 and 2 respectively.

**Figure 1** Projection of relative distances between most frequently occurring words in texts featuring the word base *just* in selected Czech newspapers (1996-2005).

Figure legend: The synonyms of the word člověk are marked in red in the graph, blue denotes the boundaries between different spheres. Size of the corpus: 16597 texts. Projection technique: non-metric multidimensional scaling, 1000 random starts, Proxcal, SPSS 10, graph MSExcel.
First of all, let us look at the representation of the words in general. It is apparent at a glance that frequent words are concentrated closer to the centre of the graph. This is a natural tendency, as the higher the number of texts in which a word appears, the higher the probability of its occurring together with other (frequent) words and thus being closer to these (having a higher number of co-occurrences). The existence of only one centre, however, means that the discursive space is not distinctly structured (it lacks a range of “cores”). The interpretation must therefore be based on the less frequent words and their distribution. Lines are used to denote word areas referring to the same social context; these can be interpreted as discursive spheres.

This division can nevertheless be viewed categorically; it merely suggests groups of words, which at a first sight have more in common with each other than the neighbouring words. We could identify five or six discursive spheres for the corpus of spravedliv* and four for the corpus of nespravedliv*. The representation of individual words in these spheres is shown in tables 1 and 2.
Table 1 Discursive spheres of justice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public administration</th>
<th>Everyday life</th>
<th>&quot;German question&quot;</th>
<th>Social policy</th>
<th>Politics</th>
<th>Sport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>state, opinion, right, possibility, of-the-state, law, person, firm, money, office, decision, court/trial, case, Mr.</td>
<td>people, problem, work, life, word, human, truth, task, man, child, family, city</td>
<td>world, German, war</td>
<td>society, interest, situation, social, system, change, activity, difference, conditions, inhabitant</td>
<td>country, politician, political, europ, party, government, citizen, member, elections, president, parliament, chair, minister, negotiation</td>
<td>home-team, chance, team, match, lead in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Discursive spheres of injustice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public administration</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Human values</th>
<th>Politics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>problem, situation, people, work, state, possibility, person, of-the-state, system, change, law, office, money, help, city, firm, case, inhabitant, court/trial, ministry, decision, police</td>
<td>school, family, child, house/home, man(male), woman</td>
<td>society, life, man, world, word, truth, human, price, difference, German, Mr., war, television</td>
<td>country, right, social, government, political, europ, interest, politician, party, opinion, citizen, minister, member, president, negotiation, chair, elections, result, leader/chief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The division into individual spheres has certain justification in the data – that is to say in the word distribution structure in the graph, based on transformation of their relative distances – their interpretation (designating the spheres), however, is made on the basis of our common knowledge deducted from subjective views of public life.

At first sight, the bigger diversity of the spravedliv* corpus is surprising. The reason behind this might lie in the form of discourse, rather than its content or the social reality which the words reflect. On comparison, the utterances from the justice corpus seem better organized (in terms of coherence and being more systematic) than the utterances from the injustice corpus. The negative form of the utterances referring to injustice creates only a loosely structured discursive space with four spheres in it. In other words, newspapers refer in a relative separate manner about injustice in public administration, family, politics, and referring to basic values of humanity. The utterances referring to justice, on the other hand, are clearly organized into distinctive topics.

As opposed to a randomly selected corpus where there are no key words, the sphere of economics is strongly underrepresented here; also with the view of its importance in the matters of justice. It can be accounted for by the fact that there is no place for the discourse of justice in a
differentiated economical system and that it is morally neutralized and therefore largely closed to moral judgements. The departure of economics from moral motives happens as a transformation of normatively laid down interactions into pragmatic rational interactions aimed at success [Habermas 1981b: 265]. This does not mean that there are no economic topics featured in the media discourse of justice or that the sphere of economics is not viewed through the prism of justice (there are numerous texts on that topic to be found in the corpus); it simply means that they are to a lesser degree seen as an economical problem, which greatly reduces employment of economics vocabulary.

**Individual spheres**

It is immediately apparent that the discursive space only roughly corresponds to Walzer’s spheres of justice. Some of them are not represented at all, or rather they merge with several other spheres at the same time (e.g. “finances and goods” and “love and relations”), others group into loose clusters, such as “membership”, “office”, and “political power” into the area of politics. The theoretical concept is better reflected in the discourse of justice, rather than injustice. This can mean only one thing: the discourse of justice (unlike that of injustice) is in a more explicit manner bound to particular spheres, that is to certain principles with which these groups are bound. On the whole, it can be said that the media discourse does not correspond (or even that it cannot correspond) to a complex vision of social justice as it is presented in a thorough theoretical concept that strives for universal validity.

If we test the individual spheres against the synonyms of the word “subject” (figure 1 and 2), we will arrive at the same, if slightly modified, conclusion. Depending on the context of occurrence of the individual synonyms, it is fairly easy to determine what is the area in question. As a starting point, we use the division generated by the synonyms of the word člověk (man). The following table shows the words which are the most closely connected to these key words. To represent this, we used the Jaccard’s coefficient (of co-occurring words). This analysis was made on the discourse of injustice but, as it transpired, the same results would have been arrived at for the justice discourse.
Figure 3 Closeness of frequent words to the synonyms of “man”

It is clear from the figure that there exist several rather well-defined areas. The term *man* is most frequently linked with the words life, world, people, and work and there also occur, in close association, words taken from the private world: *family* and *child*. The absence of political terms is striking.

The term *people* (the plural form of *man*, in fact) is linked with similarly connoted words; however there also occur in close association words with a more generalised meaning, e.g. *country*) and political terms. The co-occurrence of individual words is quite frequent, so we shall not differentiate here the individual spheres and instead use for both spheres equally the term everyday world. The everyday world (or the life-world, in Habermas’ usage) is restricted by these relations: the relation to the objective world, social world and subjective world. [Habermas
The term *man* is a synonym of self-representation (it occurs more frequently in direct speech, i.e. in citations and the presentation of others, usually in conjunction with some characteristic, such as *good*, *ordinary*, *poor* etc. In connection to injustice, it is used as a general term for “any other” unspecified subject. “*People*” is a group presentation of all “ordinary” subjects (honest, sensible) or a certain segment (young, old).

The everyday world is not understood here in the sense of Schutz’ general entities (cf. Nohejl 2001: 94), but rather as a “leftover” category, as what is left after the separation (Entkopplung) of functional systems, such as the political and economical system [Habermas 1981b: 230n]. Because the everyday world is imbued with structurally organized patterns of interpretation [ibid: 189], it is at the same time interpreted in a normative way and no less open to media discourse of justice than social systems.

The words *member* and *citizen* create the discursive space of the political system (the area of politics and state power) of which the first suggests more the procedural side of politics (in political theory termed *politics*) and the second the formal side of politics (in political theory termed *polity*). Member superficially defines belonging to something, mainly a political party but in the context of media discourse is an active subject within politics and bound up with its activities (says, demands, etc.), whereas in the same sphere občan (citizen) is an object of politics (common, average citizen).

Person *qua* person (note that we have included under *person* the term “personal” – personal responsibility, personal opinion, personal car – in the sense of passenger car) belongs to the legal system. The interlinking of the political and legal spheres in media discourse is noticeable and is attested to by co-occurrence of a whole range of words. Their closeness to the everyday world can be argued for the same reason. Content relating to the economic system is more problematic; the word *inhabitant/resident*, which emerges as the closest of the synonyms, is too marginal, its relative distance is far greater than the others. In some years, and in the overall picture its appearance in the area of economics tends to be coincidental. This can be interpreted as meaning that economics has no ‘subjective’ synonym; companies are the subject of economics, not people. The connection of resident to (in)justice in the economic field is noticeable in cases of claims to distributive justice on behalf of a specified group of residents. That however does not mean we cannot consider *inhabitant/resident* as belonging to the economic field, rather that it relates to a political – administrative agenda; this mainly consists of *numbers*, *groups and majority* of inhabitants. A link is also made with specific places –hence a inhabitants of countries, states, Europe, cities, homes. *Inhabitant* is linked with the economic field only through these configurations. As the term “inhabitant”, as a synonym of “subject”, is, just like media reports on economics (economic statistics), connected to enumerations (definite or indefinite), it is a term occurring relatively close to economic terms.

Naturally, the terms “*man*” (person) and “*people*” are in a certain sense used as general entities in the mass media; entities which point more the social and world rather than to the subjective world. They link the everyday world to the social systems (to put it in Habermas’ terms). Picture 4 is a proof of this, as it clearly shows that they are closer to the terms “*person*”, “*member*”, etc. rather than e.g. to terms denoting roles within family (“*man*” (male), “*woman*”, “*child*”). It points to the fact that everyday knowledge fractures if it is divided into topics. It only functions as everyday knowledge as long as no tension between its factual and general validity appears. Division into topics (e.g. in the media) makes it disintegrate, as the validity of its background disintegrates [Habermas 1992: 39]; it becomes a general entity, part of a system. The media discourse is part of colonisation of the life world [Habermas 1981b].

**Figure 4** Mutual relations of the synonyms of notion “man” in the injustice corpus (1996-2005)
Evident differences in the word distribution in various newspapers notwithstanding, these do not manifest themselves in any significant way in the division into spheres (data not shown). That implies that the dimension of justice – if measured quantitatively – is independent both of the political orientation and the journalistic quality of the newspaper. This observation leads us to conclude that the separation into individual spheres is determined by the topics which are being reported on, topics derived from social reality (the reality is “doubled” in Luhman’s sense) and which are viewed (positively or negatively) as separate issues.

The findings also suggest that the discourse of justice does not create any semantic discursive fields of its own, it is, rather, to a various degree, bound and determined by them. This does not mean that it is a unilateral relationship, on the contrary, we believe that the affinity of the concept of (in)justice to the found discursive spheres is mutual. Although after a first assessment of the graphs it might seem that it is not discursive spheres of justice we are dealing with, but rather social spheres or media frameworks of reference on certain topics – politics, public administration, law, everyday life etc. That would imply that their discursive relationship towards (in)justice is merely derivative, that is to say the concept of justice is applied to them but they are not shaped by it. To put it simply, the objection would be that our graphs describe a general distribution of frequently occurring words in the daily press, which does not suggest anything about the discursive contexts of (in)justice. This, however, is not the correct interpretation. To verify that the distribution of co-occurrences is specific to (in)justice discourse, several analyses were carried out on partial, smaller corpuses, compiled by searching out some other words, specifically normal (in headlines only) and people.

In both cases, the results of the analyses showed differences to the (in)justice corpuses (data not shown). The difference was more considerable in the people corpus, as the sectors of politics and public administration were entirely absent; the distribution of word co-occurrences in the normal corpus was closer to the (in)justice distribution, which is natural, as it is also a normative term with a wide range of usage [Hájek 2002:32, 2004].

We can therefore assert that the (in)justice words do not occur randomly in any context but that their occurrence is characteristic for substantial areas of social life referred to by the media. We
can only speculate that these areas are noteworthy to the media, as they present an intense and conflictive encounter of interests and the concept of (in)justice is therefore widely employed. We know that the mass media reflect society in their choice of topics, that these are not of their creation. What they do create is the “trajectory” of the topic, that is to say how it is handled. The success of the media lies in that they draw their topics from social reality and that is how individual issues (positive or negative) are perceived [Luhmann 2000]. In the texts concerned with (in)justice, conflict is implicitly presented. There is an inherent normative moral subtext to them, either in forming specifically what is expected of the institutions or in confirming certain standards of justice. There is also an important underlying conviction that there are rules by which conflicts of interests can be solved, injustice rectified, and justice restored [Koller 1995]. This assumption has nothing to do with Lerner’s theory stipulating that the central belief in humans is they live in a just world [Lerner 1980: 193]; on the contrary, at its core lies the belief in the right to live in a just world.

In particular the occurrence of the political and administrative segments in the (in)justice corpuses is important. It is an indisputable fact that the state and its functional formation are a primary forum where the principle of justice plays a crucial role, in various forms since ancient Greek times [Aubenque 1995]. Regardless of how the concept of justice has changed throughout history and regardless of the principles of justice being construed differently in different societies, the actions of a state are always strongly regarded from the viewpoint of justice. The relevance of the discourse of justice to the political and administrative spheres lies in the conflict between the distribution of opportunity and the particular demands created by different concepts of justice.

**Conclusion**

The questions of (in)justice form a major part of life in a society and they are raised in all the mass media’s choice of topics. Within communication regarding (in)justice, there occurs the phenomenon of subject decomposition, which is widely known from the general theory, where the world is split into the everyday world and social systems. That means justice is – and not only for the media – a crucial dimension of the social environment and also shows a similar structure. Justice involves making moral demands for the solution and settling of conflict of interests in social life. The division into discursive spheres proves that the circumstances as well as actions are structured according to the area in question. In that sense, Walzer’s theory is generally valid, although the division into spheres within the media discourse is guided by different principles than this theory supposes.
Literature


