

9. The Case of Lithuania

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9.1. Introduction

Lithuanian media landscape

The Lithuanian press is remarkable for the quantity of its titles. In 2004, 341 newspapers were being published, 11 of them dailies, i.e., published at least four times a week (Bibliografijos žinios, 2005). However, people in Lithuania are not the most devoted press readers in the world. The newspapers reach only 53.8 percent of the population (World Association of Newspapers, 2005), and this affects the print media culture: Lithuanian newspapers follow the so-called middle trend, fusing popular and quality journalism in one edition. Moreover, all newspapers are published in a compact format: they have bright covers, eye-catching headings and subheadings, and many photos. All newspapers are morning papers; there is no evening or Sunday press. The only newspaper distributed for free, *15 minučių* (15 minutes), has been published in the capital Vilnius since 2005.

The news market is dominated by two daily newspapers, *Lietuvos rytas* and *Respublika*, a tabloid (*Vakaro žinios*), three TV stations¹, and several online news portals such as Delfi, Omni Laikas, and Bernardinai. There are also two regional dailies among the five most read dailies, *Kauno diena* and *Šiaulių kraštas*.²

In Lithuania, there are two equally competitive news agencies: the Lithuanian News Agency ELTA, owned by the *Respublika* publishing consortium, and the pan-Baltic news service BNS, owned by Alma Media from Finland. The online portal VŽ Online, maintained by the business daily *Verslo žinios* (owned by the Swedish media corporation Bonnier), operates a news agency, too, but it mainly covers financial and business news. BNS and ELTA are the most important news sources for many media organisations. About two thirds of the news in Lithuanian newspapers is based on their material.

In spite of press variety and the popularity of online news portals, the main agenda-setter in Lithuania is television. Television is free and available to practically everyone,³ and it generates the highest advertisement revenues of the various news media types.⁴ On the one hand, this has spawned a large variety of national, re-

gional and local TV stations. On the other hand, it creates a competitive atmosphere between commercial TV networks (LNK and TV3) and the public service broadcaster, Lithuanian Radio and Television LRT, which is financed both by advertisements and the state.

Each media type's agenda-setting role is based on a particular logic that shapes how it functions. To put it simply, the print media outlets (with few exceptions, e.g., *Kauno diena*, a regional daily owned by Norwegian investors) are active players in the political and economic arenas. Although the print media market reached a stable state around 2000, it remains vulnerable as old and new publishers with different editorial approaches and business models fight for survival. Various political and business actors are pursuing their ambitions by buying newspapers. By comparison, the TV sector is strongly commercialised and orients itself toward entertainment because of fairly intensive competition. The Internet media, motivated by a different logic we have called "imitation-innovation"⁵, aim to offer their audience an alternative channel of information, communication, and participation.

The report

The goal of this report is twofold. First, it seeks to assess how media professionals discuss the EU news-making process, taking into account their professional roles as well as the type of media they represent (print, broadcast, news agency, or online). Second, it aims at identifying major factors shaping EU reporting in Lithuanian mass media and discusses these factors with regard to the national setting (e.g., journalism culture, characteristics of the news environment, etc.).

The report moves on two levels of analysis. The first level - and the main part of the report - consists in the interpretation of interviews we held with journalists and editors. On the second level, we summarise the findings of the news agenda analysis (NAA) to add quantitative data to the qualitative interview data. The NAA was performed on European news items that appeared during a three-week period from 7th - 27th March 2005, in the same media outlets that we chose our interview partners from. The EU news items were identified and counted and then analysed according to a list of content categories.

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to gain insight into internal factors (e.g., newsroom organisation and types of EU sources) and external factors (e.g., communication with audiences and political actors, pressures from the media market) that affect decision-making in the EU news selection process. For the sake of completeness, four types of media were included in the research sample: daily newspapers (national, regional, and tabloid), TV and radio stations (public service broadcaster and commercial television), news agencies, and online news portals.

Nineteen people were interviewed from April to August 2005. The respondents held middle management positions, e.g., duty/deputy editors, directors of political or economic news departments, and reporters. Decision-making was assessed in both conventional (print, broadcast) and online media. We included more media types in our sample than the other research teams of the AIM-project. This decision was informed by the characteristics of the national news environment (different media are agenda-setters in different countries, different types of media operate under different types of logic, etc.) and by our belief that it is particularly important to include Internet media. The following media outlets and journalists were included:

Newspapers

- National: *Lietuvos rytas* (two reporters)
- Regional: *Kauno diena* (one editor of the political news section and a reporter); *Šiaulių kraštas* – (one reporter)
- Tabloid: *Vakaro žinios* – (one editor of the political and economic news section)
- Business: *Verslo žinios* – (one editor of the online version)

TV and radio broadcasters

- Public TV: LTV (one director and a duty editor of LTV’s news department)
- Public radio: LR – (one director of LR’s news department)
- Commercial TV: LNK – (one director of LNK’s news department).

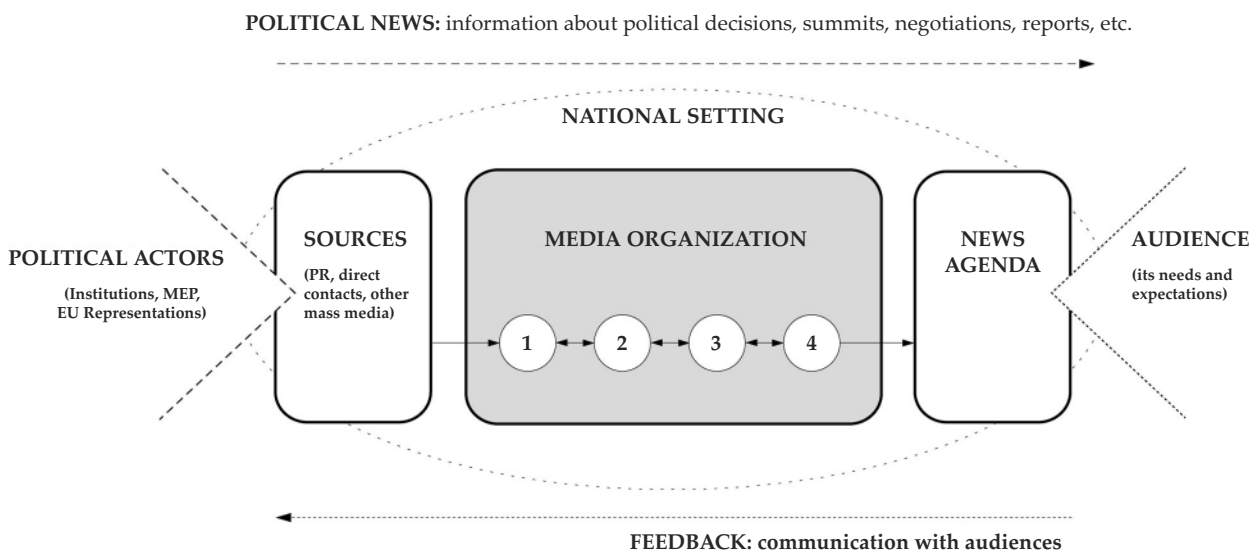
News agencies

- ELTA – (editor-in-chief)
- BNS – (one editor of the political news section and one editor of the economic news section)

Online news

- Delfi – (editor-in-chief)
- Omni Laikas – (editor-in-chief)
- Bernardinai – (editor-in-chief)

Figure 1: EU news production



Journalistic news making process:

- 1 information gathering
- 2 selection
- 3 editing
- 4 news production & presentation

Understanding EU news production is impossible without considering the social, economic and technological environment in which it operates (Balčytienė 2005). As one can see from Figure 1, in addition to the national setting in which EU reporting takes place, it is crucial to understand the entire decision-making process within a particular media organisation (steps 1 to 4), i.e., gathering of information and use of information sources such as PR, direct contacts with political actors, news agency material, interviews with MEP, etc., selection and editing of news (resources that journalists invest, also communication channels which they use to understand audience demand), and news production and presentation characteristics.

9.2. Newsroom Organisation

Organisation chart

The journalists reported that print media have the most clearly defined newsroom structures, consisting of departments and sections (political, local or sports news) and each department is headed by an editor. For instance, *Lietuvos rytas* is a large cross-media company with a big newsroom and about 150 people working there. Each person has a specific function. However, the clear newsroom structure does not imply that news from the economy section cannot go into the world news section or the current affairs section. It became clear during the interviews that the journalists are free to propose topics. According to the reporters from the political and economic news sections, the editor-in-chief and the desk editors are responsible for content, but the editor-in-chief takes the final decision.

Similar organisation charts can be found at *Kauno diena*, *Šiaulių kraštas*, and *Verslo žinios*: the newsrooms are divided into sections, each with its own editor. In the case of *Lietuvos rytas* and *Šiaulių kraštas* one more thing has to be taken into account: the editors-in-chief of both dailies are also the largest shareholders of the company, thus they play two roles at once – they are owners and editors. The journalists of those newspapers confirmed that the editor-in-chief has the final word on what is published. The editor-in-chief of the tabloid deals mainly with management tasks rather than news content decisions.

News agencies have a structure similar to that of print media outlets. The newsrooms of both news agencies,

ELTA and BNS, are divided into news desks. Each desk has its own editor. At ELTA, the editor-in-chief is responsible for news planning and management, but he also said that he “does not read news from early morning until late evening,” which means that journalists are free to make their own decisions and work on their own initiative. The editor follows the journalistic process more carefully only when important events are going on. Well-developed relationships with news sources demonstrate the professionalism and competence of the journalist.

Broadcast media outlets have less defined organisation charts. There are no special sections in TV newsrooms. There is a formal hierarchy as the news directors at LRT and LNK are responsible for news planning and management, but in practice all decisions on which news to report are made in agreement between reporters and editors.

The newsroom organisation of Internet media differs significantly from print and broadcast media and news agencies. Online media outlets have relatively short life-spans (between two and six years), few personnel, and flexible working conditions. In fact, they operate under a different logic that is shaped by their ownership structures, the size of the company, the scope of technologies, and the audience. Their audience is small but growing and well-educated. Very often, it consists of decision-makers who are difficult to reach through traditional media. Moreover, online journalists seem to have more autonomy, they have more freedom to make necessary changes on how and where news is going to be presented. To work for online media, competence in both journalism and online media is required. Journalistic experience enables them to autonomously select the most important information, while awareness of technological possibilities is an important online news presentation asset.

The size of the newsroom is also very different in online media. Usually, online news projects are produced by a small staff consisting of around a dozen people, sometimes even less. These newsrooms do not have hierarchical decision-making structures. Other criteria determine news organisation and management, e.g., time pressure and the need to produce a continuous flow of information. Since these factors have not been sufficiently studied yet, there is a need to assess the relationship between online news production, commonly described as operating under the

logic of “imitation-innovation” (see footnote 5), and news output quality.

Brussels correspondents

Lithuanian National Radio and Television is currently the only news corporation with a correspondent in Brussels. According to its news director, the correspondent is free to decide what to cover because he is in the centre of events that occur at the EU level. The other media organisations only occasionally send journalists to Brussels, especially when important events take place. However, BNS is planning to set up one office in Brussels for each of its three divisions in the three Baltic States. There is a need in some media organisations, in particular regional newspapers, to have their own correspondents, but lack of financial and also human resources makes this impossible.

The business daily *Verslo žinios* and ELTA thought that there was no need to have a correspondent in Brussels. They felt it would be too expensive and other news sources and communication technologies such as international news agencies, email, the Internet, and telephones could substitute. Surprisingly, the NAA data confirm that having a Brussels correspondent does not significantly affect EU news output. During the research period only four out of 38 EU news stories on LTV were prepared by the Brussels correspondent (Vinciūnienė 2005).

Some journalists, however, acknowledged that there is a special role for Brussels correspondents. Despite a general agreement among journalists that there has been a slight increase in EU news reporting, many of them are not happy with the outcome. They complained that there was little information tailored to specialised audience needs, e.g., how a particular business sector is regulated and what rules apply there. Certainly, this type of information could be produced by special correspondents who know both the subject matter and the structures of the EU. To sum up, the journalists did not agree whether a foreign correspondent is necessary to provide quality EU reporting. Perhaps an information policy was equally important, some felt.

All interviewees unanimously reported that there are no Lithuanian journalists who only specialise in Europe. For example, every journalist of the national daily *Lietuvos rytas* occasionally writes about the EU. The news-

paper has a correspondent in Paris, who writes about events in Brussels, but this does not mean that she is the only one who covers news from EU institutions.

Foreign vs. national

According to the journalists, whether EU news is treated as national or foreign depends on the news type. For instance, the editor-in-chief of ELTA said that EU news can be everything: it includes EU policy-making, all events and meetings, national and international conflicts and disagreements, scandals, the EU constitution, news from Iraq, etc. In addition, EU news can come in all forms of reports and statements. However, political EU news stories go into the hard news section and thus are mainly treated as foreign news. Moreover, there is also “Lithuanian European news.” This type of news can be about the financial support that Lithuania receives from the EU. It also includes news about official visits of Lithuanian politicians to other EU countries and the EU’s relationship with Russia. In other words, EU news is “Lithuanianised” when political action (as opposed to abstract decisions) involving Lithuania takes place at the European level. This type of news does not occur often.

The political news editor of BNS explained that the notion of EU news has changed in the course of EU integration. In the early stages, Lithuanians saw Brussels as a partner in the integration process. Nowadays, Brussels stands for political institutions in which it is necessary to work and to represent Lithuania. Therefore, EU news has become national news to some degree. In addition, EU matters have lost their purely political character since accession has been completed. For Lithuanians, the EU now functions according to an economic rather than a political logic, and it is mainly economic and financial matters that EU information conveys.

The political news editor of BNS believed that working in Europe has become a routine for many Lithuanians, i.e., a “mechanical” process. The EU structures represent a kind of “Ministry of Economy” where the budget of the member states is decided. This, according to the editor, creates a feeling of belonging to the EU, making EU news more national than foreign. Other respondents, too, shared the feeling that EU information belongs to national news. In short, the shift in the treatment of EU news, going from foreign to national news, corroborates the assumption that

journalism and the perceptions of journalists change along with reality.

9.3. Agenda-Setting and News Management

Audience demand

Audience demand is an important factor shaping the media's news agenda. Each media outlet targets different audiences, but the most important criterion in news selection is the same for all: relevance to the everyday lives of media consumers. An editor of BNS said, "The media in Lithuania is provincial: news is presented according to the Lithuanian view and the public is interested only in the issues that concern them in particular." In television, a common answer to the question about news selection criteria is the emphasis on relevance to the region. Therefore, national events are reported before foreign news. Other criteria are conflict, proximity, and weight, i.e., the amount of people affected by the news. Print and Internet media apply similar news value criteria: most important are proximity and relevance of news to Lithuanian readers.

At the same time, each media outlet targets different audiences. *Lietuvos rytas* seeks to reach the entire audience that is interested in Lithuanian politics and world events, while the newspaper's supplements target distinct audience groups: youths, seniors, women, etc. Their demands are carefully followed and assessed through audience research studies as well as letters to the editor.

LRT is a cross-media company and likewise caters to different audiences through each of its media forms (TV, radio, and the Internet). Advanced-age audiences prefer television news, thus their distinct expectations/demands shape how news is presented at the TV station LTV and the radio station LR. Their newscasts include more explanations and more educational angles. This type of presentation follows the journalistic discussion model when, e.g., social issues such as prices, taxes, and social policies are covered. The newscasts look at those issues extensively and from a variety of perspectives, often presented as interviews with experts. According to LR's news director, the decision-makers (30-39 year olds) are the most difficult to reach through traditional media, thus the radio broadcaster LR also publishes news on its website with additional information.

ELTA's audience consists of different groups with different demands: mass media, state institutions, and private companies. All these groups request universal, simple, and cheap news. Asked about advantages over other news agencies, the editor-in-chief pointed to uncommon news products such as commentaries, interviews, and music reviews. He also underlined that ELTA offers its own photographs, which the other Lithuanian news agency, BNS, does not. Today, news agencies, according to the editor-in-chief of ELTA, must compete with other media. Therefore, it is necessary to invest in diverse commercial services and to renew and modernise the management. To change is the only possibility to survive in the news market today, he said.

Online media, which in a sense serve as "open to the public" news agencies, have also implemented online news presentation strategies. Though they have resources at their disposal that would allow them to report similar large amounts of news as news agencies, they must conform to the technological possibilities of online news presentation. This means that online news have to be updated during the day, news articles have to be written in a light and understandable way, and headlines must be "dressed up" to catch reader attention and also to inform, according to the editors. In addition, it is important to link EU and local news, i.e., to contextualise them if one expects them to be read.

Sources

Conventional mass media use all kinds of sources for EU news: ELTA, BNS, the EU representation in Vilnius, national politicians, members of the European Parliament, web pages, etc. News agencies subscribe to a wide variety of international news agencies, and broadcast media do this too, while newspapers rely on the news flow from national news agencies. Online media receive EU news from news agencies as well as other media with which they have content exchange contracts (e.g., newspapers such as *Kauno diena*, *Lietuvos žinios*, etc.). In addition, individual journalists have their own sources, e.g., letters and phone calls from readers, online resources such as ministry websites, and press releases.

An abundance of information also comes from EU institutions and representations, but journalists are not satisfied with the quality of EU information that reaches them. The official language is very difficult to

understand and it usually has very little news value. It has been suggested that EU communication patterns need to be tailored to the media logic. Most journalists are not EU experts. Consequently, much information slips past their eyes, said an editor of the online news portal Bernardinai.

Journalists face many challenges in reporting on the EU. Sometimes journalists lack language skills and knowledge of EU politics, other times they are under time pressure or cannot find the needed information. At the same time, it is important to remember that communication with political actors is a two-way flow. As the online news editor of *Verslo žinios* said, each journalist must know how to ask for information. But he also acknowledged that the abundance of information creates the impression that “even a devil might break its leg while looking for important facts.” Another challenge to communicate information arises at a later stage of news preparation: it takes a long time to produce information. It is not always the media that must be blamed for the lack of news consistency. Other communication drawbacks arise from complex and bureaucratic official language.

From the point of view of journalists, one needs special skills and resources to report on the EU, such as professionalism, motivation, contacts, and knowledge of the EU’s institutions and politics.

Media policies and their impact on EU news presentation

Only *Kauno diena*, LRT, and BNS have explicit editorial policies on Europe. The political news editor of *Kauno diena* said that there is such a policy because EU politics has become Lithuanian politics as well. Political decisions accepted at the EU level have a direct bearing on Lithuania; therefore, newspaper readers have to know what decisions were taken and how they impact on their daily lives. The newspaper seeks to provide news that is interesting to its readers: “The newspaper needs an audience, so it has to tailor information to its readers.”

At LRT, too, there are attempts to report more news about the EU. Its newsroom policy corresponds with the public broadcaster’s mission, viz. to inform and to educate the public. The two TV and radio news department directors at LRT said that it is important to repeat information as well as to show and explain

complex things. In short, LRT programmes are both news-driven and audience-centred. According to the director of the TV news department, the journalists working at the TV newsroom would like to provide more international news, but at the same time they understand that news has to be interesting and relevant to the national audience. According to the deputy editor, “The public service broadcaster reports rather than artificially constructs news stories and scandals.” This statement suggested that the logic of LRT differs from what commercial media aim at, viz. entertainment, sensationalism, and commercialism.

The news agency BNS performs a special type of information management that consists in a signal code to identify EU topics. It uses a system of news categories, “EU and international world news” being one category among others such as “Local news”, “National security news”, and “International news.” Each journalist assigns the news s/he writes to a special category. News items with an EU news caption will go into the EU information section regardless of the desk they come from. Customers can choose to which categories they want to subscribe. This system has two effects: the journalists autonomously assign a label or colour to the news item they have written and readers are offered a choice of news categories they want to subscribe to.

The audience of BNS influences the latter’s news presentation. According to the editor of the economic news section of BNS, “Sometimes it is sufficient to send just the basic facts. Later, the news will be updated.” For instance, BNS seeks to limit its reporting to news of high priority. Its goal is to inform in a consistent and clear way, therefore, the news agency provides news of just one genre, namely news items.

The news agency ELTA has no explicit EU policy but it also uses a code to signal the importance of news items: green indicates breaking news, which may be run 10-12 times per day, whereas red signals extraordinariness of news, which may occur only a few times each year. According to the editor-in-chief, the strongest factor determining whether news is published and how it is done is its news value, i.e., European news has to be evaluated according to criteria like any other news. “The fact that news comes from Brussels does not make news important,” he said. He continued that news is valuable if it is interesting to the audience (or “consumers,” as the interviewees sometimes chose to say). In other

words, EU news must go through the same selection process as news from, say, Lithuania, Russia, or China. Neither of the two news agencies has a European news desk. All journalists write about the EU.

Because many online news portals have special sections for EU news, they can be said to have an implicit policy to report European news. For instance, Delfi, the most popular online news portal in Lithuania, publishes three to five EU news items a day and claims that the EU news section (“Euronaujienos”) is visited fairly often. However, there are significantly fewer reader comments under EU news than under other news items.⁶ In contrast to Delfi, the EU section of Bernardinai attracted even fewer readers so the editors decided to put EU news in other sections of the news portal (national and local news, foreign news, economic and business news, press reviews, etc.).

In contrast, the tabloid *Vakaro žinios* does not specifically aim to provide EU information. When it is provided, though, it must be done in a way that is understandable to its readers. The goal of the daily “is to provide interesting information in an appealing way.”

Even though the media employ various strategies and tactics to report on the EU and use a large variety of news sources (news agencies, EU representation, press releases), it is difficult to understand EU events simply by consuming the media, according to the BNS political news editor. This is perhaps not surprising given that the NAA results show that the economy is the prevalent theme in the mass media. Economic news is saturated with facts, numbers, and legal titles, which provide basic facts, but no background information.

9.4. Factors Influencing the News Agenda

Audience demand, editorial policy, and the competence of journalists as well as the journalists’ perceptions of the EU are the most important factors influencing the EU news agenda in Lithuania. The main goal here is to discuss these factors in relationship to the position of the interviewees (editor or reporter) as well as the media type (print, broadcast, news agency or online media) that they represent.

The respondents from the print media stressed that EU news will not be reported if it is not interesting and

takes place far away from Lithuania. According to the journalists, only relevant and sensational news will be published on the front page of newspapers. This opinion of journalists goes hand in hand with the mid-market status and compact format of Lithuanian dailies. The NAA data also show that all dailies in Lithuania, regardless of their status (national, regional, and tabloid), produced equal amounts of news in textual and mixed (text combined with illustrations) formats.

The public service broadcaster has the duty to inform and educate, so journalists of LRT pay attention to foreign political news. According to ELTA’s editor-in-chief, journalists there prioritise such institutions as the European Court of Auditors and the European Court of Human Rights, especially when cases involving Lithuanians are being decided, as well as institutions that deal with EU policies. Delfi concentrates on human-interest stories, politics, disasters, crime news, celebrities, sports, etc., while the national daily writes about everything: from EU meetings to “adventures” of Lithuanian representatives in the European Parliament.

An important observation emerging from the interviews with media professionals is the economisation of the mass media, i.e., the increasing impact of economic considerations on the news agenda. Economic performance criteria are applied by all media: EU news has to be relevant and interesting to the audience, otherwise it will not be reported. Therefore, the media contextualise EU news, i.e., they present it from a local angle. The domestic focus affects the thematic spectrum of EU news, which is not so wide after all: business and politics are core issues in the news, and the logic of the media for EU news selection is mainly driven by audience demand. To conclude, media in Lithuania produce journalism that is audience-driven rather than news-driven.

The way news is presented is related to the function and logic of the media. For instance, for a news agency it is important to report breaking news. This applies to the Internet as well, but additionally, online news programmes need headlines that are attractive and catchy. For newspapers, the EU news genre depends on other factors such as the type of information, its consistency and availability to journalists, and information relevance to their readers.

A similar medium-focused logic applies to print media. However, LR’s news director admitted that very

often radio journalists do not have time for a more thorough news presentation. Reporters of *Lietuvos rytas* further explained:

If a given topic is relevant and broad and information is available, there is a high probability that it will be presented as a news analysis article. If there is very little information, only brief facts will be given. The news genre depends on the type of news.

9.5. Evaluation of Political Communication

Communication channels

As mentioned before, all media provide EU information on the basis of their audience composition, i.e., what kind of knowledge it has and which EU topics it is interested in. All media in one or another way communicate with official bodies at the EU level, too. Only the tabloid daily acknowledged that they have no contacts with EU institutions, "It is not a newspaper's function to provide EU news; it rather has a function to make things clear and understandable for the readers."

Appearances of Lithuanian politicians in the news are one way (among many others) for the audience to receive information about the EU. For instance, the interviewees indicated that journalists are very often invited to join official delegations to accompany political actors (e.g., the President of Lithuania, the prime minister, etc.) to EU institutions in Brussels. Considerably less often, there is also a chance for a politician to appear directly in the news, for example, when a politician from Lithuania says something important in the European Parliament, according to the ELTA journalist.

Letters to the editor and phone calls are important channels for the audience to express their needs and concerns. None of the respondents from traditional media, however, cited the Internet as an important channel to communicate with their audience. The tabloid receives letters and phone calls from its readers. People call and ask them to explain small, but very important things, e.g., what the anticipated consequences of the introduction of the euro are. The reporter of *Šiaulių kraštas* commented, "Communication is established with the audience almost every time news is produced by a newspaper journalist and not by the news agency." Most people do not have direct contact

to the EU institutions so the media is their main channel for EU information.

How can these communication problems be overcome? Those who work at the EU institutions should think about how to present information for the media. News and information need to be tailored to media logic. For example, press releases sent by EU institutions or the EU representation in Lithuania have little news value so this kind of information cannot become news for the Lithuanian audience.

Media function

The interviews with journalists suggest that the social function of many media is to produce information that can be sold to individual consumers. This commercial logic affects political communication in such a way that the media becomes a central actor in setting the agenda. The political actors use the media as a target to which different techniques are being applied such as advertising, market research, and public relations. At the same time, the focus of news management efforts from political actors has become "shotgun-like," i.e., targeting all outlets with one shot, as opposed to narrowly concentrating on only a few mainstream outlets. Research, therefore, is necessary to assess whether a better approach to reach the media would be to "tailor the news."

In modern societies, the media play a very important role: they show and explain, and they act as mediators when the public cannot get information directly. Therefore, an implicit understanding is that journalists are supposed to produce relevant and interesting news to get the public engaged with information. The role of the media is increasing, but there will always remain a dilemma: should the media be an educator, bringing new facts and information, or should it aim to satisfy audience demand?

Despite the obstacles to EU reporting, the media are intent on creating a forum for the public: different views and opinions are included in the news. For example, LRT, in accordance with its role as a public service, wants to facilitate public discussion through its news programmes by providing background news analyses, e.g., through studio guests or by discussing social problems from many different angles. In short, it keeps its audience in mind: having to address a sen-

ior audience, journalists at LRT are expected to show and explain things.

Another means of providing a plurality of views is to diversify content. For example, ELTA, aside from providing only hard news, produces press reviews of the Lithuanian and foreign press and also makes entertaining news. “Without depth, it would be only a mechanic news production process,” said ELTA’s editor-in-chief. Through the diversity of news and information, the company seeks to become a strong player in the media market. In contrast, BNS centres on hard news, i.e., short and concise information that gives little background information about the EU. Nonetheless, the interviewees of BNS thought that the media has a very big and important role to play in providing EU news.

From the journalists’ point of view, the audience is mainly concerned with their private lives, i.e., with news that is relevant to them on a daily basis. Although some journalists (LRT) might want to cover other things as well, e.g., international events, they have to conform to audience demand and provide information in a way that explains complex things to ordinary people. The audience is mainly addressed as news consumers, and journalism is driven by audience demand and expectations. Therefore, the character of political communication is passive. The journalists implicitly talked about a *vertical function* of the media that only reports news which is relevant to the audience.

“News is business” seems to be a commonly agreed description among journalists, particularly at ELTA and BNS. This understanding also shapes their views on the media’s role in constructing a European public sphere. According to the editor of BNS, “It is not their responsibility to create an EU identity; moreover, it is naïve to think in such way.” Rather the opposite is true: the media are a business like any other, although they are very powerful in shaping public views, he acknowledged.

To summarise, a very important observation regarding journalists’ perceptions of their role in EU communication is that in contemporary political communication, the boundaries are dissolving between political and apolitical genres (e.g., ELTA produces both hard and soft news), between quality and tabloid approaches to politics (news has to be relevant, interesting, and also sensational), and between journalists serving audiences as “informers” or as “entertainers.”

9.6. Evaluation of Identity and Public Sphere

According to the editor-in-chief of ELTA, the concept of the European public sphere (EPS) is closely related to European integration. At present, it is possible only to speak of a partially formed EPS because each member state is very much concerned with its national problems as opposed to European ones. In fact, the media does not have a special responsibility to construct a European identity or EPS, he thought. The main purpose of the media, according to the editor-in-chief of BNS, is to be a profitable business. As for the European public sphere, he thought that there was no need to talk about it since there had been no discussion about a Baltic public sphere until the accession to the EU. According to him, there is little sense in discussing the EPS unless there is further and not just economic integration.

The situation, however, is not a dead-end street. In the course of globalisation, things change and such change is already affecting Lithuania: people are not interested in abstract matters, but in new opportunities, e.g., working and studying abroad. On the other hand, people are interested in their own environment first and only afterwards in things happening in neighbouring countries and in the world, whether or not they have the same currency or constitution, the editor of LNK felt. The editor-in-chief of ELTA shared this view. Political decisions are made at the national level, he noted, so these issues will dominate even if EU reporting is getting stronger. This should not come as a surprise because the situation is identical in other countries, e.g., in Germany, which is a very pro-European country, he said.

Print media journalists felt more like Lithuanian citizens than European citizens. For them, it is a matter of time and also of generational change until an EPS will emerge. In short, for the media people, “Europe” is a geographic and sometimes cultural concept whereas the EU is an economic organisation.

According to the ELTA editor-in-chief, the concept of a European public sphere is tied to the level of European integration. Today, the character of integration is mainly economic, thus political questions are debated at the national level. The journalist stressed that now one can talk only about a partial Europeanisation of the national public sphere. Domestic issues, i.e., home affairs, dominate the news. To hope that the

media will create an EPS without political integration is a dream of EU bureaucrats, particularly French and German ones, the ELTA's editor-in-chief continued.

In a situation where audience demand is strongly emphasised by media professionals, the question arises whether the public should be treated differently. Today, the media decide what is relevant for people. But if people do not hear about a particular issue in the mass media, it is virtually impossible for them to decide whether the news is interesting or not. Even though the media claim that their main concern is to generate profit and that they do not have a role in creating an EPS, there will always remain a possibility for the media to become a much more active player in EU agenda-setting by bringing more issues to public attention.

These statements reveal that journalists understand that the public sphere cannot be designed artificially, it does not exist somewhere to be discovered. Instead, it emerges on the basis of information supplied by the media. As the media are struggling to meet so-called audience demand by producing limited, mainly economic EU topics, it becomes more difficult to understand what is really happening at the EU level.

9.7. NAA-Findings

The NAA has quantitative as well as qualitative aspects. For instance, it identifies the *amount* of EU news reported in different types of media (see Table 1) but also describes its *content*. It is important to mention that the NAA only includes results from three newspapers and three TV news programmes. It was not possible to find adequate news priority selection criteria for news agencies (to reduce the amount of news).

In addition to the NAA results obtained from the three-week media analysis, this section also includes the results of a count of EU news items that appeared in all four types of media (three newspapers, three TV stations, two news agencies, and three online news portals) in one week (between 7th -14th March 2005).

The NAA results show that national and regional dailies reported similar amounts of EU news. The NAA analysis confirmed that the commercial TV station LNK outperformed the other commercial channel

TV3, which in other ways is a strong competitor with LNK. In the three-week period, as many EU news items were shown on LNK's evening newscasts as on LTV (see Table 1).

Table 1: Amount of EU news in different types of Lithuanian media

Media outlet	Frequency	Percentage
National newspaper (<i>Lietuvos rytas</i>)	100	31.8
Regional newspaper (<i>Kauno diena</i>)	99	31.5
Popular press (<i>Vakaro žinios</i>)	24	7.6
Public TV newscast (LTV)	38	12.1
Commercial TV newscast (LNK)	38	12.1
Commercial TV newscast (TV3)	15	4.8
Total	314	100.0

Regionalisation and localisation of EU news items

One particularly interesting result emerged from the NAA: the role of the regional daily *Kauno diena*. In Lithuania, the regional and national dailies provided identical amounts of EU news items (99 and 100, respectively). Furthermore, during the three-week period *Kauno diena* alone published more EU news than regional dailies in Germany, France, or Norway where two regional dailies were assessed instead of one (see Table 3).

Table 2: Amount of EU news in regional newspapers (7th – 27th March 2005)

Media organisation	Frequency	Percentage
Belgium (<i>Het Belang von Limburg</i>)	23	4.2
Estonia (<i>Pärnu Postimees</i>)	51	9.4
Finland (<i>Aamulehti</i>)	70	12.8
France (<i>Quest-France</i>)	79	14.5
Germany (<i>Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung</i>)	85	15.6
Great Britain (<i>Eastern Daily Press</i>)	7	1.3
Ireland (no regional paper chosen)	0	0.0
Italy (<i>La Nazione</i>)	33	6.1
Lithuania (<i>Kauno diena</i>)	99	18.2
Norway (<i>Aftenposten, Bergens Tidende</i>)	98	18.0
Total:	545	100.0

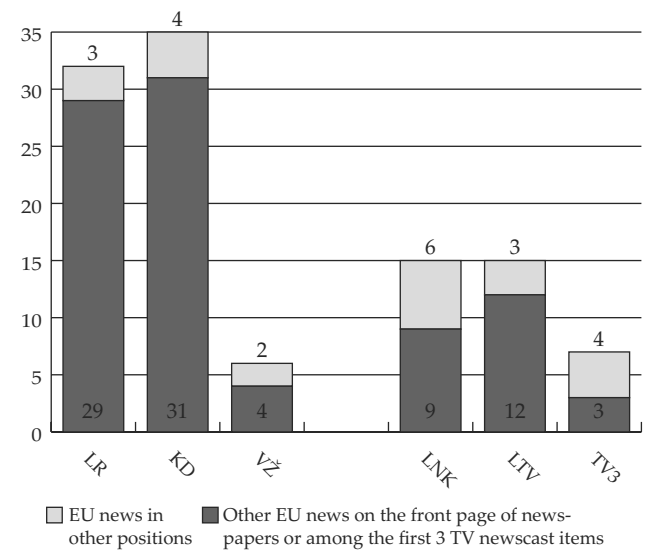
By aiming to bring the EU closer to its readers, i.e., by localising and contextualising EU news, *Kauno diena* demonstrates its regional character, which is also reflected in its editorial policy, i.e., to explain the meaning of political decisions to the local population. It seems that regionalisation as a proposed communications strategy advocated by the EU is already being implemented by the newspaper. In fact, *Kauno diena* is an extraordinary case. The newspaper is the only daily published in Kaunas, which is the second largest city in Lithuania. The newspaper knows its readers very well: a significant number of readers have a subscription instead of buying it at newsstands.

Figure 2 shows the number of EU news items reported in various media outlets during one week (7th – 14th March 2005). If one compares the total amount of news items that appeared during that week in each daily, one finds that *Kauno diena* reported 31 EU news items out of a total number of 161 while *Lietuvos rytas* published 29 out of 297. Another interesting result is that Internet media were as active in EU reporting as traditional media, in particular news agencies, which published a remarkable amount of news during the one-week period. The Internet media have their own logic of news provision: a significant amount of online news comes directly from news agencies. Few online

news portals also have agreements with traditional media to republish their content. In addition, Delfi employs reporters who also write about EU matters.

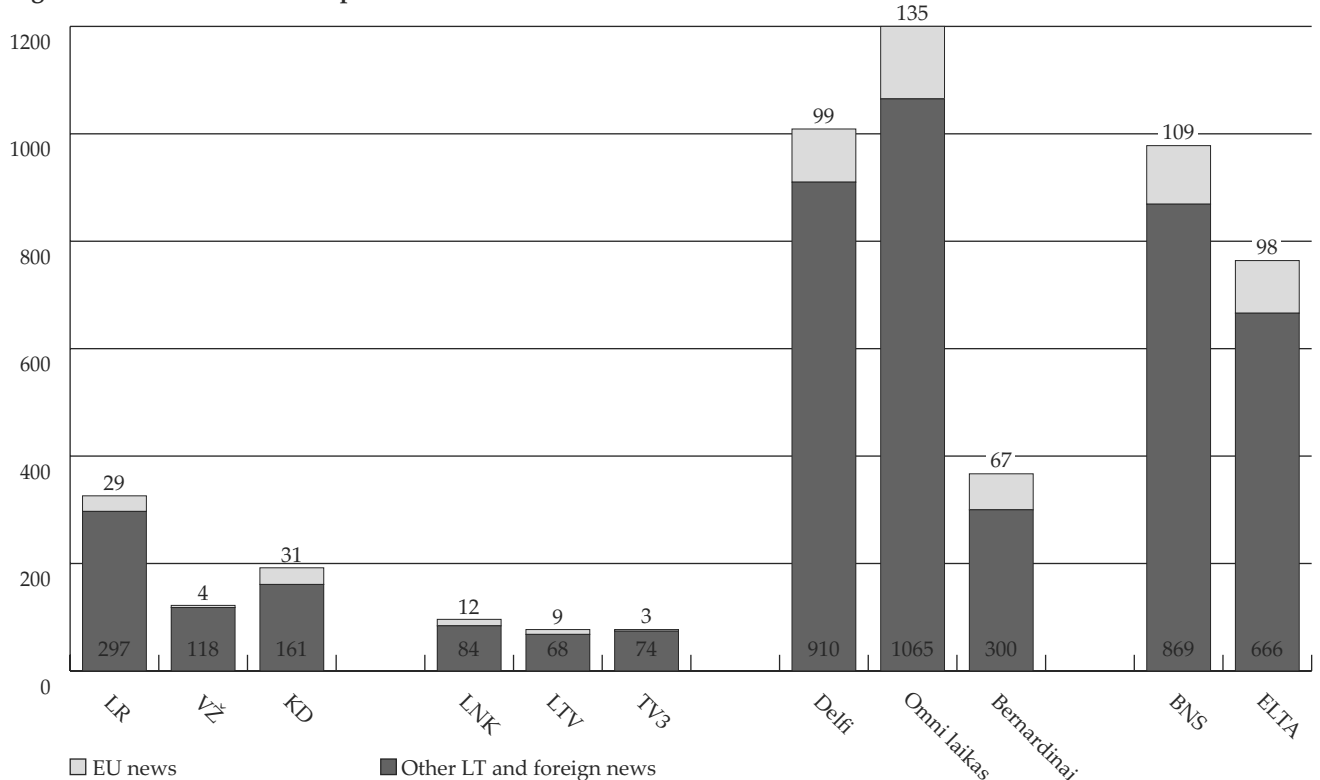
Figure 3 shows that EU news rarely appears on the front page of dailies or among the first three news items in TV news programmes. As confirmed by journalists, to be published on the front page, EU news needs to be not only relevant but also sensational.

Figure 3: Amount of EU news on the front page or among the first three TV newscast items produced



Source: Dvirnaitė (2005), Vinciūnienė (2005)

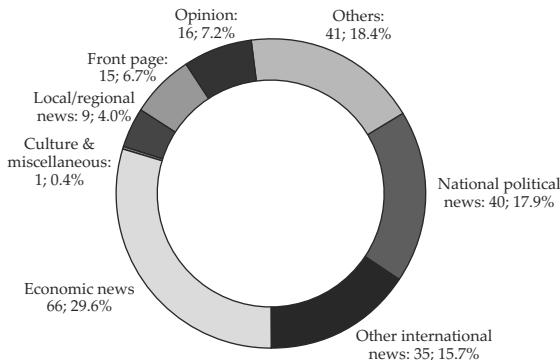
Figure 2: Number of EU news published in one week



Source: Balčytienė et al. (2005)

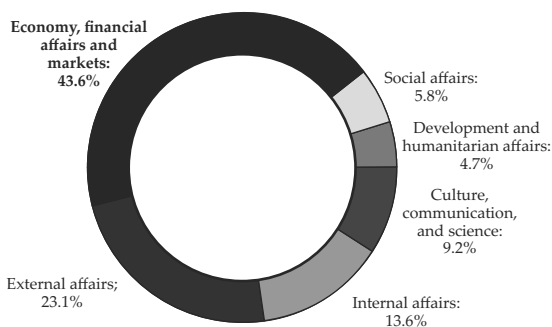
Unlike news agencies and online media, Lithuanian dailies have no special newspaper sections for EU news (see Figure 4). It is no surprise that the majority of EU news goes into the economic and financial news sections. First, the majority of EU news items in Lithuania deal with economic questions such as financial support and the introduction of the euro. Second, very often news agency material is the main EU news source for Lithuanian mass media, especially news from BNS, which specialises in economic reporting.

Figure 4: EU news distribution in newspaper sections (NAA)



For many media outlets, as confirmed both by the interviews and the NAA, European news is more national than foreign news. Figure 5 shows that 58 percent of EU news reported in Lithuanian media takes place at home. This suggests that the EU is mainly presented in relation to home affairs, i.e., EU news is contextualised. Another indicator of the national focus of EU reporting is the fact that a significant amount of EU news goes either into the section of economic news or into the national political news section (29.6 percent and 17.9 percent, respectively; see Figure 4).

Figure 5: Types of EU news in LT newspapers and TV newscasts (7th – 27th March, 2005)



A clear attempt of the Lithuanian media to “localise” EU news is obvious from Table 3: EU news takes place at home twice as often as in Brussels or Strasbourg. This result is explained by the fact that very few media have a Brussels correspondent.

Table 3: Locations of EU news

Location	Frequency	Percentage
Lithuania (capital city and other cities)	52	16.6
Brussels, Strasbourg	26	8.3
Others mentioned four times (France and Latvia)	8	2.5
Others mentioned three times (China and Poland)	6	1.9
Others mentioned twice (Kosovo, Moldova, and Spain)	6	1.9
Others mentioned once (Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Israel, Russia, Ukraine, USA)	8	2.5
Not applicable	208	66.2
Total	314	100.0

As a BNS editor said, the media in Lithuania is provincial, i.e., its audience is mainly concerned with domestic matters. Therefore, national politicians are important actors in the Lithuanian media: in the Lithuanian sample they were mentioned in 41.2 percent of the articles, compared to 43.5 percent for foreign actors and 15.3 percent for EU actors.

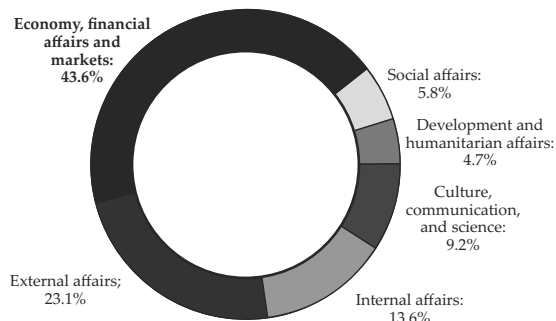
Lithuania is seldom mentioned by the media in other countries. The combined NAA data of all countries show that Lithuania is mentioned only in 17 news items (2.5 percent) as the event location coded by other countries. Excluding Brussels, Luxembourg, Strasbourg, and capital cities, EU stories were mostly located in France (127), Germany (89), Ireland (52), and Turkey (42).

EU news type and presentation

The media in Lithuania clearly focus on economic and financial affairs (see Figure 6). 20 percent of all news items are about money matters. The media do this to satisfy audience demand.⁷ Several factors may be at work here. First, the media, particularly the press, often use news agency material as an important news source. It was already mentioned that BNS

is paying special attention to economic news reporting, and sometimes more than half of the newspaper may be filled with wire service news. Second, economic issues are among the most important questions discussed both at the national and regional level in Lithuania (see footnote 7), etc. Third, the press in Lithuania is actively used as a medium of negotiation between national political actors; therefore, it may be no surprise that the EU is discussed in relation to matters of the national economy and national politics.

Figure 6: EU news topics in LT newspapers and TV newscasts (NAA)



The diversity of EU news genres shows that *Lietuvos rytas* and *Kauno diena* invest more resources in both the amount and variety of EU news. *Kauno diena* is a leading newspaper in terms of providing analytical articles about the EU. It published nine analytical articles in comparison to six published by *Lietuvos rytas* between the 7th and 14th March 2005 (Dvirnaitė 2005). In addition, news items are becoming a common genre of EU reporting (*Lietuvos rytas* published eleven, *Kauno diena* ten, *Vakaro žinios* three). On the one hand, the dominance of news item as a genre is a general tendency that reflects changes in newspapers worldwide. On the other hand, both *Lietuvos rytas* and *Kauno diena* muster resources to include EU information in a wide range of genres, e.g., news analysis, interviews, expert opinions. *Kauno diena* knows its readers: it regionalises and tailors news to their needs, it also maintains a dialogue with readers by publishing letters to the editor and external commentaries on EU matters (out of 223 coded EU news items in three dailies during the three weeks period, six were letters to the editor, including five in *Kauno diena* and one in *Vakaro žinios*).

Seeking to attract more readers, the print media present information in both textual and visual for-

mats. An almost identical balance of textual (in *Lietuvos rytas* – 55 news items, *Kauno diena* – 53, and in *Vakaro žinios* – 12) and visual presentations (in *Lietuvos rytas* – 45 news items, in *Kauno diena* – 46, and in *Vakaro žinios* – 12) can be seen in the papers.

To conclude, the NAA data revealed several interesting characteristics of Lithuanian dailies such as their mid-market and compact character (well-balanced amount of textual and visual information in relation to EU news), their strong emphasis on economic information, a large variety of news presentation types (particularly in national and regional dailies, but not in tabloids), and the appearance of EU news more as national than foreign news. Of the two commercial TV stations whose news programmes were analysed, LNK clearly competes more with the public service broadcaster in terms of sending correspondents to Brussels and producing significant amounts of EU news, while TV3 orients itself toward other matters, e.g., entertainment.

9.8. Synthesis

The qualitative study has demonstrated that the use of EU sources and the use of EU presentation styles can be effective if it involves 1) structural and normative changes in media organisations, such as a re-organisation of the workflow inside the newsroom from a top-down approach, as used by the press, to more autonomous decision-making as it occurs on the Internet, 2) specific skills of journalists including EU knowledge and motivation, 3) a shift in EU communication from shot-gun strategies to more news-based communication, and 4) more demand from the audience.

There are three important actors involved in EU communication: the EU institutions, the media, and the public. Each of these actors bases its activities on its own logic. For example, the media inform the public but also want to be profitable, and they seek to tailor their activities to the audience. They present news that is relevant, understandable, provides many angles for the audience to participate, but they do not aim to create an EPS.

Generally speaking, journalists justify their decisions in the name of the audience as well as the logic of the media they represent (public service broadcaster, tab-

loid daily, news agency, regional newspaper, online news portal). Only few media representatives spoke of a policy to report on Europe. In contrast to such media, the tabloid daily claimed that it is not the newspaper's task to provide EU news.

From the media's point of view, identical news value criteria apply to all news, EU news being no exception. All media produce journalism that is audience-oriented: news is published if it is relevant or interesting to the audience. In Lithuania, European news can be both national and foreign news. The assignation depends on the role of Lithuania in the particular news item.

Print media have the most highly defined newsroom structure, with departments and sections (political, local or sports news) whereby each department is headed by an editor. A similar structure is found at the news agencies, while broadcast media work in less defined structures. The Internet media require special attention in this respect, because newsroom organisation there differs significantly from print and broadcast media or news agencies. Only one media outlet has a correspondent in Brussels, but it appears that a correspondent in Brussels is not very important from the point of view of most media.

Media professionals are sceptical about the media's role in creating an EPS or European identity. Nonetheless, EU matters are gaining importance, but only gradually. In much the same way that the perception of the European Union has changed from purely political to economic, EU news is now changing from distant/foreign to national news. It may even happen that the EU gradually becomes a transnational interest rather than a national one only.

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- ¹ There are four TV stations with national coverage, but one (Baltic Television, BTV) has an audience share of less than 10 percent.
- ² Source: TNS-Gallup media data on the top five newspapers in Lithuania. Recent data, however, indicate that *Šiaulių kraštas* has been replaced by the free daily, *15 minučių* (autumn 2005).
- ³ In Lithuania, there are no license fees for the public service broadcaster, the Lithuanian National Radio and Television LRT.
- ⁴ According to TNS-Gallup, advertisement revenues in 2003 were divided up as follows: television 41.63 percent, newspapers 30.56 percent, magazines 12.61 percent, radio 7.26 percent, billboards 6.49 percent, Internet 1.41 percent, cinema 0.04 percent.
- ⁵ The logic of imitation-innovation rests on a combination of two forces that shape the development of social institutions, including the media. According to Saulauskas (n.d.), *imitation* denotes the assumption of social structures from the outside, while *innovation* emphasises the autonomous generation of new structures and ideas. In the context of online media, imitation-innovation means that they both apply online business strategies adopted from international online media and attempt to create original journalistic solutions online (Balčytienė, forthcoming). On the one hand, the Internet is a powerful instrument for spreading common procedures and skills, but, on the other hand, the influence of technology cannot be separated from the social context in which it is being applied.

