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ISTANBUL  
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INDEPENDENT MEDIA FORUM



**ANOTHER  
COMMUNICATION  
IS POSSIBLE**

ADDRESSES

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***Another communication is possible***  
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## **The International Independent Media Forum Sevilay Celenk\***

We are deeply feeling the vital importance of independent media in the disappointing climate we have been living in since the first days of November 2006, when the Independent Media Forum had been organized. Many developments have taken place in the very short period since the Forum. We have left behind yet another parliamentary election. One of the most important topics of the recent months was the discussion over a mandate for a cross-border operation to Northern Iraq. The mainstream media, at times, participated in these discussions by devilishly supporting war and glorifying discriminatory and racist reflexes. During these discussions, we were in desperate need of an alternative voice; a voice, which had not lost its conscience amidst calculations of strategy, of foreign vision, of domestic missions etc... These voices were a breath of fresh air for us amidst dark clouds of ambiguity. Our need for alternative voices is deepening each passing day.

The book that you are holding includes the texts of media employees, activists, educationalists, students and academicians, who gathered together at the Istanbul International Independent Media Forum on 3-4 November 2006, with the belief that a different kind of communication is possible. In this article, which I hope will make it easier for you to begin reading this book, I will try to discuss the basic issues of the articles without getting into the conceptual discussions revolving around "independent media"<sup>1</sup>.

The feeling that was evident in all the speeches of the Forum, including the keynote speeches, was joy and excitement stemming from the fact that the alternative/radical/independent media can come together and stage a joint struggle. Thanks to this forum, we witnessed that, for the first time in Turkey, the local, the small and the minority can unite on a global scale and internationalize opposition, together with the representatives from

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<sup>1</sup> I have not gotten into a conceptual discussion because many of the people, whose articles are included in this book, and especially John Downing and Sevda Alankus, allocate a lot of space to this discussion.

alternative media from Colombia to North America to Georgia and Azerbaijan...

The book that you have in your hands was prepared to render permanent the excitement of the two-day meeting. We tried to get the texts of all the speeches of the forum and include them in the book. Some of the texts that were sent to us were presented at the forum as the text of the speeches – with very little changes. And some were rewritten in an article form, but sticking to the general framework of the text of the speeches. For this reason, the articles in this book have no standard structure. But all the articles have one thing in common: they explain the past, the present and the new horizons for the independent media on a thought production or exchange of experience basis. We hope that the book will strengthen the belief that the current media content is not the only choice and that “a different kind of communication” is possible.

### **The goals of the forum and what was achieved**

The forum was a three-day organization within the framework of the Media Freedom and Independent Journalism Monitoring and News Network or BIA<sup>2</sup> project<sup>2</sup>. It was jointly organized by the Istanbul IPS Communications Foundation and the *Inter Press Service*.<sup>3</sup> An “Organization Committee”

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<sup>2</sup> The Media Freedom and Independent Journalism Monitoring and News Network Project was initiated on 17 November 2003 by the IPS Communications Foundation. The project, shortly referred to as BIA<sup>2</sup>, was built on the success of BIA (Independent Communications Network) Project, which the Foundation carried out between the years 2000–2003. Nadire Mater served as an advisor to the project, while Ertugrul Kurkcu served as the coordinator. 80 percent of the project’s expenses were covered by a donation from the European Union’s Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIHDR) Program. Some 1,000 local journalists were trained within the framework of the BIA<sup>2</sup> project, with the aim of helping local radios, newspapers and televisions raise their reporting standards, and enabling them to produce higher-quality news with more focus on “human rights,” “women,” and “children.” Training seminars were offered in 40 different provinces and around 50 academicians took part in them. Notes from these training seminars were gathered in a series, comprised of five books, titled *The Reporters’ Handbook*. There were two different editions of the series. 15 thousand copies were distributed to the local media free of charge. *The Reporters’ Handbook* is currently on the reading list of most communications faculties in Turkey. Freedom of expression violations in Turkey was monitored as of 2000, within the framework of BIA and BIA<sup>2</sup> projects, and reports were compiled. Quarterly and yearly “Media Monitoring Reports” serve as the most fundamental and trustworthy source on the issue for the general reader as well as the national and international media. Besides, BIA<sup>2</sup> has also offered legal advice to at least 100 journalists, who were standing trial or whose freedoms of expression were limited in some other way.

<sup>3</sup> Ertugrul Kurkcu, in an article in which he announced the Forum, stated that for the employees of the IPS Communications Foundation, this forum would be the “crown” of the three-year old “Independent Journalism Monitoring and News Network Project” or BIA<sup>2</sup> project. “This is a huge organisation. If we succeed in this, we will be able to organise even Olympics,” wrote Kurkcu. He was not exaggerating. There were 90 invitees attending the forum from Turkey and from abroad. 58 of these guests were men, and 32 were women. 71 percent of the invitees were from Turkey, 19 were from abroad: 16 were academicians, 49 were from the Turkish local media, 15 were professional journalists, 2 were NGO

formed by the BIA<sup>2</sup> Project Coordination designed the general approach and structure of the forum. Comprising journalists, academicians, media activists and other friends of BIA, who have also been active in other programs of the Project, the committee constructed the aims of the Forum as follows (Korkut, 2007).

- Bringing together all the activists, experts, workers and analysts who are struggling for "a different kind of media," from all over the world.
- Evaluating efforts to establish an independent media from a perspective of citizen journalism, as successful examples.
- Helping create a more open, democratic, transparent and attainable media environment.
- Getting the global, regional and local alternative media networks to cooperate and contributing to them.
- Encouraging individuals and corporations to support independent media initiatives.
- Contributing to the improvement of independent media practices in Turkey and increasing the number of examples of independent media.

In summary, the Independent Media Forum opened with the limits and problems of the new global mainstream media universe. The Forum discussed the possibilities of development of the non-mainstream media. It discussed the dilemma of communications students, who do not know where to stand between education processes that give priority to a critical media literacy and raising awareness; and sector practices that depend on advertisements and that can often become heartless. It provided for a very important opportunity for the participants coming from all over the world to share their experiences.

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representatives and 5 were students. A total of 366 people registered to attend the forum. About 500 people attended the forum. Taking into consideration that there was a Book Fair in Istanbul on the same days, the "March Against Global Warming" was staged and that there was a heavy snow, it could easily be said that participation was quite high.

Following a widely attended Press Conference on the first day, three panels, one forum and two group discussions were organised on the second and third days. The panels were titled, "The New Global Mainstream media Universe: Limits and Problems," "Independent Media Universe and Improvement Opportunities for Non-Widespread Media," and "Communications Education: Critical or Mainstream?" The title of the forum was "Local, Independent Media in Turkey and Citizen Journalism." The group discussions were on "Social Gender and Independent Media," and "Peace and Independent Media."

Representatives from Acik (Open) Radio, Agos, AMARC, Bianet, Birgun (One day), Evrensel (Universal), Il Manifesto, Inter Service Press, Our Media, Tageszeitung, TeleSur, Express, Ulkede Ozgur Gundem (Free Agenda in the Country), Ozgur (Free) Radio, Ucan Supurge (Flying Broom) and KAOS-GL came together at the forum. The forum served as an opportunity to share experiences and for solidarity and communication between continents and regions. There were photo exhibitions, stands, student works, and film screenings. Lebanese singer Umayma El-Halil, who sings about the inspiration of the people of Beirut, who have stood up to the attacks of Israel, gave a concert. Sema from Istanbul responded to them. The forum also issued two convocations: "convocation for action and observation for the widespread media" and "convocation for action and observation for a different media" (from Kurkcü, 2006; Ozer, 2006 and the Forum Report).

In this book, I tried my best to stick to the very well-planned order and flow of the forum. I tried to place the articles in the book, more or less in accordance with this flow. Following this general explanation, it seems it would be meaningful, in terms of underlining the value of the articles, to make an introduction to some of the information and arguments highlighted by the articles – not by sticking to a specific order but by preserving the internal and intellectual entirety of the book.

### **What are they saying?**

Professor John Downing from the Global Media Research Center at the Southern Illinois University, in his article, underlines how imperative it is to develop a firm critical stance in the face of nationalist movements. This is something that has been on the agenda in Turkey for some time now, and which has gained a thoroughly scary characteristic since the General Staff named it as “mass reflex” one night in June.

Downing, who is the founder of *OurMedia*, brought together 500 academicians from 48 countries, who aim to strengthen citizen journalism and alternative media. “*We live, of course, in the real world, a **deeply flawed one**,*” says Downing. In this respect, he states that social movements have nothing magical about them and that they should not be expected to proceed as a [democratic] development in every case. Downing reinforces this view by reminding the readers that Nazism and the reactionary version of Islam embraced by the regime in Iraq since 1979 also began as social movements. He states that in certain regions of USA, there are movements that advocate that unregistered workers should be deprived of all rights. Nevertheless, Downing expresses that there are global social justice movements, environmentalist movements, feminist movements, worker movements, and movements that advocate civil rights and human rights from Burma to Bolivia, from Iran to Israel and added that these – whether weak or strong – are the closest things to a democratic global power: “*Yes, there are divisions within and between them, disorganization, debacles. This is Earth, not Mercury. But, if the hunt is on for actually existing democracy, as opposed to its calcified official versions, I know of nowhere else to look other than social movements.*”

This emphasis in deed highlights very well the drawbacks in relating every single movement, which brings together huge masses, with direct democratic demands. Because masses can come together to “lynch” the Other in every sense, as much as they can come together for democratic demands. However still, there is no other way but to hope that the “masses” get moving with a democratic transformation demand so that every unfair arrangement/practice is transformed. And this is the faulty beauty of the “masses”!

Downing discusses the same dilemma in relation with alternative media. He says that the best term to use to categorize the media may vary from one political situation to another, and one political moment to another: *"As of the period of this Forum in Istanbul, the term 'Independent Media' clearly has the most traction, and is therefore likely the best one to use. It would be harder to use right now in the USA, where all major capitalist media, such as Fox News, call themselves 'independent.' Here, I am using 'social movement media' as an analytical definition..."*

The terminological problem in defining the non-mainstream media is a common theme in the articles included in this book. During the forum, between sessions and during coffee breaks, the need to highlight the terminology problem gave rise to new discussions. I would like to think that these discussions, where definitions such as independent media, non-mainstream media, alternative media, social movement media, social opposition media, solidarity media, radical media, and other media, came up, do not indicate a deadlock, but rather, a rich apprehension that keeps in mind the importance of concepts and that is aware that terminology has a dimension that in essence gets into interaction with practice.

Naming the non-mainstream media and finding a comprehensive counterpart was an issue that was highlighted in Sevda Alankus' article. Nonetheless, Alankus takes her discussion beyond this point and summarizes her priority as follows: *"since we have gathered here under the slogan "a different kind of communication is possible" and since we have a problem with the mainstream media, my presentation will focus on the 'dark tones' of the photograph. I will try to explain why these are important, I will talk about the opportunities, and I will further try and focus on the 'Turkey fame' of the photograph and attempt to clarify it. My aim is to initiate a discussion over the obstacles and opportunities the new global media environment introduces to the new concept of democracy. By the way, it is impossible to comprehend the obstacles and opportunities provided by the global media by ignoring the different/other media."*

The dark tones Alankus talks about are an outcome of the new right-wing policies and the deregulation and privatisation waves these policies encouraged in the media sector, which weakened the public journalism media as well as the "other media" starting from the 1980s. The "other kind of media" as described by Alankus, either leaves the picture, or loses its strength or becomes marginal in this economically difficult environment. Some can carry on, losing their originality or the radicalism in their content as a result of being imitated by the commercial media. Despite this pessimistic picture decorated with dark tones, Alankus underlines that the other media of the 2000s have an important difference, and that with the convergence of the new communications technologies, and especially the Internet and mobile telephone technology, the new media and the new social movements are transforming and growing stronger together. She

underlines that new social movements owes a lot to the new media in this respect.

In fact, during the parliamentary elections, we experienced this inclination of "strengthening together" revolving around the idea and platform of Independent Common Left-Wing Candidate.<sup>4</sup> This platform, which opened a new window for the left parties and their voters, made water at certain points. But still, it was very hopeful that it was announced that Ufuk Uras and Baskin Oran from Istanbul and some other names from other provinces were being supported as independent left-wing candidates. The role of the e-channels in creating the mobility and interaction that came to the fore around the platform in a short time was especially significant. Some of these e-channels were formed after the Hrant Dink murder.

However, while saying that new communications technologies have gained strength for the democratic social movements, we cannot help but take into consideration that the same technology may contribute to the strengthening of the anti-democratic, nationalistic and even fascist organizations. As Bernard Williams has said on the issue: The Internet shows signs of

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<sup>4</sup> The idea of independent common left-wing candidates was introduced by Seyfettin Gursel and Ahmet Insel on 18 March 2007 in *Radikal İki*. In this article, Gursel and Insel stated that the left-wing parties other than Republican People's Party (CHP), whose left-wing identity is controversial, will not be able to send any deputies to the parliament in the upcoming parliamentary elections even if they join forces, due to the 10 percent threshold. The writers stated that this would be a blow to the credibility of initiatives for the left-wing to restructure and have an effective presence in the political arena. They underlined that this should not be the fate. They proposed opening the way for the left-wing to be represented in parliament through independent democratic candidates, who would be supported by the left-wing powers. This idea gave rise to constructive discussions in a short time. Parties like the Freedom and Solidarity Party (ODP), Party of Labour (EMEP) and Social Democratic Party (SDP), and Democratic Society Party (DTP), which has a high vote potential in the East and the South East expressed that they are in favour of this proposal. Thus, Independent Common Left-Wing Candidate Initiatives that would conduct the negotiations process in provinces such as Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir were formed. Along the way, there were cracks in this project due to disagreements over the selection of common candidates or, as some parties came up with their own independent candidates against the common independent left-wing candidates—although they had announced their support for the project. Despite this, the efforts of *ortakaday.net* initiative, supported by various left-wing parties and groups, various institutions and individuals, received more than 10,000 signatures. An important portion of the opponent left-wing—even though not at the desired level—was persuaded, through these discussions over the electronic environment, blogs by voters and campaigns by the voters themselves, that there is a need to act together. Initiatives like Baris Inisiyatifi, Baris Girisimi (*Peace initiative*), Genc Siviller (*Young Civilians*) and Irkciliga Dur-De (*Say No to Racism*) (most of the members knew each other only through the e-groups) and alternative communications channels such as Bianet, Acik Radio and Istanbul *Indymedia*, supported the discussions and preliminary research over this idea. This process, which saw independent left-wing candidate Ufuk Uras from Istanbul 1st Region get elected as a member of parliament, still attracts attention with the determination of the aforementioned e-channels to continue with the "struggle for the representation of the Left."

creating for the first time what Marshall McLuhan prophesied as a consequence of television, a global village, something that has the disadvantages both of globalization and of a village. Certainly it does offer some reliable sources of information for those who want it and know what they are looking for, but equally it supports that mainstay of all villages, gossip. It constructs proliferating meeting places for a free and unstructured exchange of messages which bear a variety of claims, fancies and suspicions, entertaining, superstitious, scandalous, or malign. The chances that many of these messages will be true are low, and the probability that the system itself will help anyone to pick out the true ones is even lower... The global nature of these conversations makes the situation worse than in a village, where at least you might encounter and perhaps be forced to listen to some people who had different opinions and obsessions. As critics concerned for the future of democratic discussion have pointed out, the Internet makes it easy for large numbers of previously isolated extremists to find each other and only talk amongst themselves (Williams, 2006: 270).

Hesmondhalgh also is skeptic about being too optimistic and hopeful about the democratic potential of new communications technologies. Hesmondhalgh also believes that Internet is an extraordinarily important development in terms of cultural production and consumption and carries a radical potential. However such technologies, in which we make utopian investments, are generally survived by industries that create political and economic inequalities, and that have enhancing their power and increasing their profits as their priority. They are captured by interest groups that do not pursue quite utopian goals. (2002: 220).

However, what I said about masses is valid here too; we have to see this as the paradox of technology and render opposition, alternative and radical social initiatives mainstream and strong with the support of new communications technologies. In this framework, Incilay Cangoz's article, where she discusses "local media as an opportunity for citizen media," is important. Cangoz discusses the philosophical and ethical foundations of "citizen journalist" and the principles it leans upon. She proposes that communications channels, such as newspapers, radios and televisions, are turned into a public forum with such a journalism understanding based on a different professional perception. According to Cangoz, we should take advantage of the opportunities presented by the new communications technologies and place importance on the democratization of relations between the journalist and the people.

Dov Sinar from the Peace Journalism Centre in Israel, which represents a glittering alternative perspective on "Peace journalism," says: "*Internet and other digital technologies that came into the picture in mid 1990s, promised to knock down the central structure of the media, or at least to create alternative channels. It is true that these new technologies possibly created an overblown expectation. It is also true that Internet and other digital*

*technologies have edged towards the entertainment sector. However, at least some alternative channels directly and through digital radio and televisions, have been adapted to democratic societies. Though this, online journalism, blogs and amateur magazines, which are more participatory, and which give way to independent communications, were developed."*

The articles in the book on communications education are of special importance. In an effort to create a real alternative, it is not possible to deny the importance of media employees being able to internalize a critical viewpoint and at the same time, critical media literacy. This is one of the issues especially underlined in the discussions at the communications education panel at the Forum and which were included in this book.

Ozden Cankaya, in the article where she discusses her views on communications education, determines this: *"Communications Faculties face the dilemma of giving education between two opposing approaches; the approach that they should raise people with the qualities that would increase the viewer/reader numbers in the media sector, which is becoming more and more monopolised, and the approach that they should raise people, who would fulfill their responsibilities of public service reporting."* We could say that this problem, which is defined as the situation of being "caught between" the commercial expectations that dominate the sector and journalism responsibility, is at the center of all the articles on communications education. A link is also established between this problem and an old discussion on whether the communications students are trained to become enemies of the media. Ankara University students Selma Arslantas and Ozge Dogan rethink this problem in their articles, through the question "theory or practice?"<sup>5</sup> Esra Arsan discusses ways to overcome this dilemma. She emphasizes that an alternative curriculum is necessary in communications education.

The question "theory or practice?" on which the communications education discussions focused, is clearly important. But we should also think about whether our inclination to build our discussion on this question is making us miss the essence of the problem. I would like to add that this discussion, which looms large on the agenda of communications educationists, gives me the sense that an artificial agenda is being formulated from time to time. When the Turkish media environment or even the general field of communications is taken into consideration, I believe that a discussion, which implies a choice between theory and practice, is not so meaningful. Communications education should not make such a distinction but rather consider both the theoretical and practical axis, because technical knowledge as well as knowledge on technology should be thought as part of being able to build a critical view on media and to exercise a critical media

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<sup>5</sup> Arslantas and Dogan, in the short film they prepared to screen at the panel, posed this question to academicians, journalists and students. It should be added here that this short film brought many different perspectives to the panel and added a real liveliness.

practice. In other words, this question could be discussed as a “balance problem” in education, rather than a “problem of preference.” And we can find the traces of this search for balance in the articles in this book.

Here, I should also mention Tugrul Eryilmaz’s article. Eryilmaz primarily is trying to come up with answers to the question “what can be done in mainstreammedia?” But he gets into the issue through discussions over communications education, and while on the one hand, he tries to overcome this dilemma, on the other hand, he invites the readers to rethink the distinction between mainstream and non-mainstreammedia. According to Eryilmaz, instead of choosing the easiest way and positioning the mainstream media “against” us, we could choose to think about how to transform it from within. Eryilmaz underlines that the media employees should fight so that the profit desires of mainstream media corporations do not overtake the freedom of thought and expression. Eryilmaz says: *“If we chose the easy way and say all journalists are corporate journoes, we would create such an unbelievable terror and hopelessness that this would benefit the real corporate journoes inadvertently. They would be able to walk without sticks in a village without dogs. Moreover, this would be a great injustice to The Guardian’s Naomi Klein, Independent’s Robert Fisk, Turkey’s murdered journalists and Anna Politkovskaya of Russia’s Novaya Gazeta who was killed because she was an opponent.”*

Lastly, a student of Galatasaray University, Gokce Susam, states that from “education as a process of liberalization” she understands being able to see the multi-layered power relations of the society, and more importantly, being able to constantly question these relations and one’s own position. According to Susam, this questioning is only possible if men and women of a society dominated by militarist, patriarchal, capitalist and nationalist rhetoric, can put a critical distance between themselves and the roles—such as honour-bearer, mother, soldier, good citizen, consumer—imposed upon them. And this critical distance is the precondition for liberalization.

One of the most important discussions of the book revolves around “peace journalism.” Here, I would like to return to Dov Sinar. Sinar makes reference to various articles and research, and lists the common characteristics of “non-peaceful journalism” related to conflict situations: preferring violence, sensationalism, turning things personal, nationalism and production of prejudices against certain countries, groups and persons. Preferring simple explanations instead of analysing the roots, reasons and conditions of conflicts. Reflecting the viewpoints of the clashing sides instead of choosing a wider humanitarian dimension. Reporting on the conflicts only when there is violence or on the verge of violence. Instead of lengthier “conflict resolution” or changing processes, creating an “us against them” situation quite like in a sports game. Only focusing on damage and victims, the winners and the losers. Viewing news about peace as news “with little news value.”

While Dov Sinar states the weaknesses of reporting on conflict situations through these words, Tasos from *Elefteropia* Newspaper criticizes the reflection of a conflict that involves us in the Greek media. According to Tasos the necessary thing is not *"censoring any reference to cruelty suffered by our conational (or ancestors) in the past, but to show to our people the other side of our national history. In other words, what 'our' side did to the others: deprivation of basic human rights, ethnic cleansing and even (in some extreme cases) genocide. Only then, will those very well-known 'national sufferings' which are 'reminded' to the people though the national state's ideological devices find their true place among other realities."* According to Tasos, the perception on the "aggressiveness of the neighbour" is most of the time the product of intentional wrong information, or more extensively, the outcome of toying with the fears created by half-truths and terrifying events of the past.

Tasos also talks about a nationalistic and narrow-minded Greek myth. This myth is related to a false statement attributed to the former US National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who, according to the dominant perception in Greece, is the man who "gave "[north] Cyprus to Turkey" in 1974. According to the nationalistic rhetoric built around the myth, the main problem of all US administrations are the disobedient Greeks, who are "difficult to manage" and according to the alleged solution by Kissinger, they should be rendered weak through the subversion of their "cultural roots" and the destruction of their umbilical cord connecting them to their glorious ancestors. Kissinger allegedly said: *"we (the USA) must target their (Greek people's) language, religion, spiritual and historical reserves to free our own hands."*

As we read Tasos, we can't help but remember the "myth" in Turkey about the eternal desire of the Western imperialism to "get rid of the Turks in Anatolia" and the nationalistic, militarist rhetoric that tries to carve this in our national memory as a threat that should never be forgotten.

What Tasos says in this framework is very important. According to Tasos, *one of the vital elements of 'nationalism' is the perception that the other is a homogenous entity, which has no contradictions within itself or no separations based on class or ideology. In other words, that it is 'an army' rather than a national community. The argument that in our region, 'all neighboring countries' have a concrete and complete foreign policy and that 'we' are in a negative position due to disagreements we have among ourselves is a very mainstream and typical cliché. This cliché can be overcome or at least be weakened by telling how politically, socially, culturally etc. mixed our neighbors are – just as we are. Of course, a vital precondition of such a counter-information is for the inner opposition in different neighboring countries to know each other."*

There are three people from the three new countries known as the “three new babies of the Caucasus” (Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia) among those, who wrote on an independent media for peace. Setting out from the way the conflict situations in their countries were handled by the media, they point to the obstacles erected in the way of peace, which we all understand very well. Zlata Kures, in her article about the situation of the Serbian media six years after the regime change, states that in the last three years the Serbian media has been filled with huge unconfirmed political accusations and reports. She says that no suits are brought against the factitious reports that are published and the allegations most of the time, are neither confirmed nor denied. Kures says that the Serbian News Monitoring Group publishes the result of its research on the large newspapers of the country once a month. She states that these analyses demonstrate that the most basic media ethic principles are largely violated. All the articles in this section highlight the importance of an independent media, which has a peaceful language and an approach that provides solutions to conflict situations.

In the articles on social gender and independent media, representatives from SEMlac (*El Servicio de Noticias de la Mujer de Latinoamérica y el Caribe*), Ucan Supurge (Flying Broom), Bianet, Kaos GL and Media Monitoring Group (MEDIZ) talk about the independent media experience of women, homosexuals, and all other groups that are viewed as “the other.” These groups are excluded by the mainstreammedia, are represented though prejudices or stereotypical judgments and their esteems are injured. This sharing of experience also helps us understand the difficulties and gains of the struggle for reporting sensitive to social gender equality.

As we look at the forum articles, it is impossible not to realize the risks taken by the Turkish alternative media initiatives. The representatives of *Gun TV*, *Radio Ses (Voice)*, *Demokrat (Democrat) Radio*, *Ozgur (Free) Radio*, *Acik (Open) Radio*, *Kaos GL Magazine*, *AGOS*, *Evrensel (Universal)* and *Gundem (Agenda)* newspapers, as they talk about their experiences, make us realize under what a huge pressure they function. They have a history full of arrests, harassments, pillage and deaths. As we read the articles, we realize yet again what a painful experience the Turkish independent media has had in its very short –and especially when radios and televisions are considered– history. Trying something different than what is being done by the mainstream media means taking a lot of risks. And it has not been any different for the independent media initiatives of other countries. But still, the feeling we get from all these articles is not weariness or exhaustion at all.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Maybe it is necessary to look at a conversation that took place in a completely different place and setting to understand how they find this strength despite all the hardship and suffering: Agos Newspaper’s writer Markar Esayan (2007), during an interview with Armenian Patriarch Mesrob II, who had announced he would like to meet with the Turkish General

Today, it is impressive to see that the alternative media can systematically bring to life social objections and solidarity sometimes through not so systematic means in a short time. In a couple of hours after the Hrant Dink assassination, hundreds of people gathered in Taksim in Istanbul and in Guven Park in Ankara and other cities and condemned the murder. They became Hrant and they declared that a part of them had died with Hrant. This reaction was only possible through chain SMSs and messages getting around in waves from e-groups. When three workers of the Zirve Publishing house in Malatya were killed, a similar reaction -although not as strong- was organized through similar means. Similarly after the Anafartalar Market attack. These were hopeful democratic reactions and these reactions can get stronger through the common communication tools of the social peace initiatives. The objections of the intellectuals to the General Staff warning that were made public in a short time were collected through these channels and although they were disregarded by the mainstream media, the independent media insistently highlighted the importance of these objections.

I would like to conclude with a sentence from the article of Basha Mika, an editor from Taz in Berlin. *"According to Albert Camus independent media can be both good and bad. But media which is not independent can only be bad."*

In short, the Istanbul International Independent Media Forum, with its panels, group discussions, short films that glided on walls, documentaries, photo exhibitions, stands allocated for alternative publications, lunch conversations, coffee breaks, rush under the rain, the crowd in Cezayir Cafe and Saki and friendly atmosphere, concerts and declarations, was the most hopeful exciting communications activity of 2006 that opened up new horizons. Beloved people of *Bianet* Nadire, Ertugrul, Baran, Ceren, Erhan, Fugen, Nilufer, Leyla and Tolga... they worked for months to create this lively atmosphere. And as far as I understand, many BIA friends, whose names would not fit here, contributed with their words, thoughts and work. Good for you! And this book will render eternal all the discussions there and their efforts...

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Staff, said: "as a religious leader, you are taking a risk. What are your reasons for taking such a risk in such a determined and genuine way?" Mesrob II responded by saying: "When our society's future is at stake, everyone should be able to take risks. If there is no society, none of us would exist. I wish the people, who are governing our society, were aware of this fact. Then, we would be seeing more unity and togetherness in our society." In response to a question on whether there were migrations from Turkey, the patriarch said: "We have no other country. This is our home. We love this country despite everything. We feel an attachment to this country." In fact, these words were said in other ways, through practice, by many examples of social solidarity and alternative media. They choose to take the risk and be in unity and cooperation.

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**Welcome speech to  
The International Independent Media Forum**

**Nadire Mater**

Hello, welcome to you, welcome to us!

We have gathered here today as people who say "another communication is possible," to discuss and share ways of "making this even more possible," and to look for ways to work together in this journey. Yet, another weather was also possible! Snow probably was our last preference. In fact, in the last ten years, the question that we most often asked was: "How is the weather going to be?" I am talking about the 10 years that brought us, the IPS Communications Foundation here. I am talking about the first meetings we had with the local media, the tens of gatherings organized in search of a better journalism and where we answered the question, "is another media possible?"

These meetings brought us to the Independent Communication Network, in other words to BIA, which we established in cooperation with local reporters from all over Turkey. Snow and rain did not prevent us from meeting then. It is not preventing us from meeting today.

In fact, isn't journalism some kind of a failure to be at ease, a profession of being restless? If you are a "restless" journalist in Turkey or somewhere else, you say "something has to be done." You not only say that, but you look for ways to do something, you come together with people like yourself and you definitely do something. We said this many times. We dreamt a lot, we prepared many projects. And we have gathered here as the "restless" of the world. Each one of us have created or are in the process of creating new media in our towns, cities; we worked on "yes but how?" at the universities; we worked; we rejected the reporting that was imposed upon us as young reporters of the future. And we objected as readers. We are together. How exciting!

Welcome to you, welcome to us.

Exactly 10 years ago, when the "restless" of the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects came to the IPS Communications Foundation - it must have been a time when I was really tired with "projects" - I remember thinking "I will never get involved." However, when

Ertugrul accepted the proposal without hesitation with all his excitement and energy as if this was the first time he would be involved in a project, I found myself involved too as early as the second meeting. And fortunately I did!

We were to work with those, who were outside the mainstream, the mainstream media that presents life from a single point of view. We were not to ask whether another media is possible, we were to say: "Yes, it is possible." We set off; we started having meetings with the local media, local reporters in different regions. This was not so easy of course. Especially those, who were affected by the regulations that limited freedom of expression showed more interest at first, but in Antalya for example, only three people accepted our invitation. In fact, even we barely made it to the meeting place; the city was flooded. Those three people are still with us. Dogan Sonmez from Radio Venus in Manavgat is here today; there are people here today, who were present in one of our first meetings. They will tell us about their own story in these two days. Of course, we have grown in number since that day and we are continuing to grow.

We said we would be the voice of the silent, we said solidarity on a production basis, we said we would make visible the invisible, we said we would be the voice of the neglected. We met with journalists from Mersin, Samsun, Diyarbakir, Adana, Bursa, Mersin, Siirt, Canakkale, Mugla, Izmir, all over Turkey numerous times. We discussed ethically responsible journalism together and individually. In 2006, we began to collect what we said in the beginning under the title "rights reporting" and expand these into reporting with a focus on rights, with a focus on women, with a focus on children and of course, with a focus on freedom of expression. When we look at bianet today, we see everything from news reports, to journalism training programs, journalism textbooks, media monitoring reports, to radio programmes for the local media, that we dreamt of on our first day, and even things that we could not have dreamt of. And we have achieved this, not only with our friends in the local media, but the contributions of friends in the world and in Turkey, whom we have never met face to face.

Yes, we are together with the "BIAs" around the world. Journalists and activists, who have created independent media, those who are in the process of creating independent media, academicians, who are working on independent media, communications students, who say that there should be another media and object to existing curricula, journalists from the mainstream media, have all gathered here. Bogota, Tel Aviv, Izmir, Diyarbakir, Athens, Tbilisi, Berlin, Venice is here. This meeting was essential and inevitable; it was inevitable for the purposes of pluralism and a free and democratic media. Thanks to all of you journalists, academicians, communications students, readers...

We are starting with the Rights Reporting Award Ceremony. We will shortly announce the awards to be distributed to three different groups: mainstream media, local media and communications students. We congratulate our young friends, who are awarded, and believe that they will embrace a reporting approach with a focus on rights throughout their professional lives.

We no longer ask "is another communication possible?" because we know that it is. Our two-day meeting begins with the Rights Reporting Award Ceremony. Friends from the local media, the mainstream media and the Communications Faculty of the Eskisehir Anatolia University will get their awards for reports that serve as examples of rights reporting. The first presentations argue that a "different kind of communications is possible." We will discuss the new global mainstream media universe, the limits and problems during a panel. And inevitably, the topic of our second panel is: Independent media universe and the development opportunities for the non-mainstream media.

In the first half of the second day, the communications professionals and the communications students will discuss the topic "communications education – critical or local." Presentations and discussions on the topics Gender and independent media; Local, independent media and citizens journalism in Turkey; and independent media for peace, will follow. I know and I hope that these two days and the experiences we will share as activists who strive for another communication, will facilitate our journey and reinforce our hopes.

At the end, we will call on Turkey and the world to act for the mainstream media and a different media with songs of Sema from Istanbul and Umayma El-Halil from Lebanon.

We thank all our friends, who contributed with their dreams and with their work in these 10 years. And special thanks to the European Union, UNICEF-Turkey, Sweden's Istanbul Consulate General, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Association, Chrest Foundation, Kucuk Eller (Little Hands), Metis Yayınları (Metis Publications), and the Initiative Against Crimes of Thought, who have made this Independent Media Forum possible with their contributions.

Once again, welcome to you all!

## **Combine Local and Global Realities**

**Ramesh Jaura**\*

I am delighted to tell you that while the European Union is caught in what appears to be an endless debate on whether and when to incorporate Turkey as a full-fledged member of the 25-nation bloc, we from the Inter Press Service (IPS) in Europe have already developed close ties with our colleagues in Turkey.

The Istanbul International Independent Media Forum, in which the IPS Communications Foundation and IPS Europe—on behalf of IPS international—are partners, embodies the deepening and strengthening of relations between the two organisations. The large participation of media representatives from all over Turkey underlines an impressive support for the Forum's agenda.

The IPS Communications Foundation and IPS share a common vision and values. The IPS Communications Foundation has over the last three years established a countrywide network in Turkey for monitoring and covering media freedom and independent journalism as part of a project dubbed as BIA<sup>2</sup>.

BIA<sup>2</sup>'s rights-based news production and coverage provides daily specialised coverage focusing on human rights, children's rights and gender and minority issues.

The IPS Communications Foundation also monitors and reports violations of freedom of expression, the functioning of the media along with the guidelines of freedom of expression and professional ethics and the level and degree of newspapers' coverage of human, women's and children's rights issues. BIA<sup>2</sup>'s legal assistance desk continues providing free consultation and guidance for the local media.

In order to help local media achieve high standards of journalism and produce good quality coverage of human rights, women and children issues, the IPS Communications Foundation has been organising training programmes.

All this is in tune with the diverse activities the Inter Press Service has been unfolding since its inception in 1964. The IPS news agency's coverage provides voice to the voiceless.

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\* Director, IPS Europe.

IPS, civil society's leading news agency, is an independent voice from the South and for development, delving deep into globalisation for the stories underneath.

<http://www.ipsnoticias.net> The flagship world service of the agency covers over 150 countries. The service is produced in English and Spanish, with selected stories translated into French, German, Finnish, Dutch, Swedish, Japanese, Portuguese, Thai, Mandarin, Nepali and Kiswahili. The daily output is around 112.000 words.

IPS coverage is focused on developing regions of the globe, but within the context of globalisation and its impacts. The stories cover topics like economy, politics, human rights and democratisation, environment and development. Strengthening the gender perspective in all IPS stories, and giving a voice to minorities and under-represented groups are editorial priorities.

Instead of focussing on scandals and sensations, the network of IPS journalists around the world provides a contextualised coverage of developments. It tells the story underneath.

This is particularly important: In a globalised world it is not possible to isolate national and global realities. The professional journalist is faced with the task of creating awareness in the wider sections of the public about the close interaction between the local and the global and the global and the local.

This is imperative because of multiple threats of a global dimension, above all to global human security—that in contrast to military security focuses on the needs of human beings.

It is of great importance that the Media Forum is taking place at the Istanbul Bilgi University. In a world that is continuously shrinking the universities have a critical role to play: making young people informed individuals so that they might form their own opinions. Informed citizenry, in fact, forms the backbone of a democratic state or a state in which there is participation of the people at different stages

"Another communication is possible": this is the guiding motto of the Media Forum. The experiences both the IPS Communications Foundation and IPS have made since their inception leave no room for doubt that another communication is indeed possible.

## **New Global Mainstream Media Environment Limits and Challenges**

## **The Corruption in the Media, Pursuits for Alternatives and Media Monitoring Centers**

**Hifzi Topuz\***

Once upon a time, people used to believe that media is the Fourth Force. That is to say, media used to be defined as an independent power, along with lawmaking, jurisdiction and execution. It was thought that media would be able to remain free and independent of the pressure of execution, legislation, and jurisdiction instruments, the big capital, parties, banks, holdings, churches and cults. It was thought that media would be able to be absolutely impartial.

People were disappointed already in the years before the First World War. But there were some efforts to protect the honour of journalists. Journalists in every country fought for this cause. They were faced with all kinds of nuisances.

After the Second World War, with the technological improvements and the communications reform, the mass media strengthened, its influence increased, but yet, it lost credibility. This is how we came to these days.

Today, a total of one billion people in the world use the internet. More than two billion people use mobile phones. This means that two thirds of the people in the world communicate with each other through mobile phones.

English language dominated the internet for many years. Today, English constitutes two thirds of the languages used on the internet. It is followed by Chinese, Spanish, Russian, French, Portuguese and Korean.

Organizations and individuals that are against globalization, communicate with each other through the internet. This communication is not limited to the problems of the organization. They inform each other and discuss various issues through the internet. They reveal issues that were not carried by the media, or that were misrepresented.

The candidates of the presidential elections in the United States of America focused on the issue of internet.

According to communications researcher Manuel Castells, the internet played a very important role in the demonstrations and rebellions in South Korea, the Philippines, Ukraine, Thailand, Nepal, Ecuador, France and Spain.

Mobile phones are also being used as a strong tool of protests.

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\* Founder Chair of the Communication Studies Association - ILAD.

Street televisions and radios were set up in different places, like the *Orfeo* TV in the town of Bologna in Italy. Channels like *Zalea* TV in Paris, and *Occupen las Ondas* in Barcelona are examples of the alternative media.

Those who use the internet and mobile phones, form an Individual Mass Communications Network among themselves.

SMSs, blogs,<sup>7</sup> Internet networks such as Skype, the system called Peer-to-peer, enable digital information to be easily transmitted.

In January 2006, there were 26 million blogs in the world. In six-months' time, the number of blogs reached 37 million. A blog is created every second in the world. That means, 50.000 blogs are created each day, and 30 million blogs are created each year. The number of blogs doubles every six months. Turkish-language blogs have been created in recent years. Besides, Web sites like Wikipedia and *Eksi Sözlük* (Sour Dictionary) were created.

Alternative communications networks are developing with an amazing speed and are competing with the classical media.

In recent years, media monitoring associations were set up in many countries. These have different names: Citizens' Association against the Distortion of News, Journalists-Citizens Association, News discussion programmes... Young people have created Web sites like these on the internet.

Such associations and Web sites were created for the following reasons:

### **1. Pressure from State**

The fact that the mass media, in other words, the newspapers, radios and televisions, either did not carry some news at all, or misrepresented them, led to tensions. There are many examples of this in many countries. Some people were kidnapped, killed; their houses were looted, or were set on fire. Government or security officials, secret services did not want these to be revealed. The media was put under pressure. Newspapers, magazines, radios and televisions did not mention these at all. There are countless examples of such events in Latin America, especially in Chile, Guatemala, Columbia, Venezuela, Argentina, and Bolivia; in Asia, especially in Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines; in Arab countries, in the Middle East and here, in Turkey. Journalists did not cover these events.

The war stories from Afghanistan and Iraq were always censored. People were not informed about these events. Or they were informed very late. The American media, and especially Fox News, served as a real propaganda tool during these wars.

According to a research conducted in mid 2004, 40 percent of Americans believed that Saddam Hussain and Al-Qaida operated together, and that

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<sup>7</sup>Blog is a system that enables individuals to post anything on the internet in any way they want without requiring any technical information.

Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. However, these were proven to be wrong back in 2003. The media, which served Bush, deceived the people in such a way that, it was very difficult to make the reality known.

Newspapers such as the Washington Post and New York Times, talked everyday, about the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the biological wars, and the secret production of atom bombs; none of these reports proved to be true. According to them, Americans and their partners were going to be welcomed with applause and flowers in Baghdad and the Iraqis would be exhilarated. This did not happen. Iraqi soil became a grave for American soldiers. Bodies were flown back to America. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi women and children were killed, cities were bombed, Iraq became catastrophic, people revolted, there were earth shattering developments. The media tried for a very long time to hide these developments. However, as the realities were slowly revealed, the newspapers, radios, televisions and journalists that propagated on behalf of the American government, began to confess to their misdeed and ask for forgiveness from the public.

We have witnessed similar things happen in Lebanon.

Is this what you call a democratic media?

## **2. Personal interests of media bosses**

The second main reason why some news did not find a place in mass media, was the interests of media bosses. The bosses refrain from news that would hurt the interests of their holdings.

For example, Serge Dassault, one of the biggest media bosses in France, and the owner of plane and weapons industry, said: "I want all my businesses to be represented in the best way in my newspaper. Some news may do more harm than good. In such a case, the commercial and industrial interests of our country would also be jeopardized."

According to Walter Wells, the head of the International Herald Tribune in the United States, when a decision is going to be made in publishing, the potential impact of that decision on the shareholders should be taken into consideration. The managers of the newspaper constantly take orders from the shareholders. This not used to be the case in the past.

## **3. Pressure from those who place advertisements**

Advertising revenue is the third main factor that shapes the media's editorial policy. Media managers can never ignore this.

Besides the aforementioned factors, people also reacted against the following:

## **4. The concentration of media ownership**

## **5. Pollution of news (prostitution)**

## **6. Finance market culture**

## **7. Pollution of advertisements (*pollution de l'espace public*)**

### **8. The evaporation of information in showbiz**

The media which dominated countries ignored these protests. According to media managers, the evil should be looked for at other places. Their aim was to improve their dominance, and to keep their grip on the reporting and discussion monopoly.

The liberal right-wing circles followed these developments with optimism and said: "Markets propose politicians do what is necessary." Leftists were powerless in the face of these developments and could do nothing but look for ways to have their voices heard in the media.

This situation led those, who were against the misdeeds in the media, to protest and they began to organize. Their aim was to raise awareness on how badly the communications and culture mechanism operates, to oppose the media order, and to come up with alternatives.

On the one side, there were those who advocated the media's position and who supported the order, and on the other side, there were those who criticized the media and created new alternatives.

Those who dominated the media saw themselves as the Fourth Force and could put pressure on the managers and executives. But those who were against them, and especially those against globalization, began to have their opinions and criticisms heard, they got organized and created Web sites on the Internet. After the Second World War, Hubert Beuve-Mery, the founder of *Le Monde*, which is a very well-respected newspaper in France, said: "Events are sacred, thought is free." But this has not been the policy followed by journalists in the last twenty-three years. Events were distorted; the media lost its sacredness and credibility. Media executives got into full cooperation with those ruling and holding owners and followed an opportunistic policy. The crisis resulted from these.

Ignacio Ramonet, the publication manager of *Le Monde Diplomatique* said the following on this issue:

To get information is a productive work. It cannot be done without spending any efforts. It requires a real mobilization of the intellectuals. In democracies, the citizens allocate part of their time, money and attention to this. Information cannot be viewed as part of contemporary entertainment. It is not part of the entertainment rush. Journalism is a critical profession. Its aim is to carve out citizens.

The journalist should be aware of his/her duty and should take measures to prevent the misdeeds of the media.

So, but what kinds of reactions do the media and the journalists get when doing this?

Politicians, generally with a neo-liberal approach, do not want to meddle with the work of the media. As French journalist Yves Agnes says, everyone

is free. The fox is free, and so are the chickens. The fox eats the chickens within the framework of its freedom, and the free chickens become the prey of the fox. When there is no equality of strength and opportunity, mere freedom is the freedom of the chickens.

In France, politicians fear the media. If they contradict with the media, they will not have their voices heard. Julien Dray, the spokesman of the Socialist party fell into such a situation and he was banned from appearing on Channel One and its affiliated news channel LCI. Politicians are very sensitive about this issue because they cannot have their voices heard without the support of the media.

It is never easy to fight against a media that blindly supports those ruling or the holdings. This is why the media monitoring centers have been set up.

Journalist-writer Zeynep Atikkan, in her book named *American Lunacy* published a few weeks ago, gives many examples on the quietness and collaboration of the American media during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. She also quotes George Orwell and Harold Pinter in the book.

Orwell said: "The genius of censorship in free societies is its ability to silence undesirable opinions and its ability to keep in the dark the disturbing realities in the absence of an official ban."

Harold Pinter wrote the following: "Iraq's invasion is banditry; it is a state terrorism that snubs international rule of law. The invasion is an arbitrary military operation realized by continuously deceiving the media and the people through lies."

At a panel organized by the Pennsylvania University, a British academician said: "Don't look at what's going on in the world only through the CNN window. Surf the internet. Read war reports of the Guardian. You will see how the world views the United States of America. Learn to question."

Zeynep Atikkan says:

Didn't the Americans watch television serials that had murder as their main theme at normal times? This is a society, which has been living with the fear of being attacked since past eternity. The American society, who built bunkers during the cold war period, who stored canned food, and who constantly lived with the fear of seeing a mushroom cloud any second, was faced with a horror similar to Pearl Harbor after a short period of time.

This is how the media trained the American people.

Some researchers argue that the American media, that got slack from doing soft news, and that had been disconnected from the realities as it traveled to virtual worlds, met with journalism on September 11. And with the Hurricane Katrina, it met and faced with the other America. The Americans realized the presence of racism, poverty, and exclusion, which they had been ignoring for years with a determined forgetfulness. And so journalism regained speed.

One columnist wrote: "When one is forced to write about sex and bedroom rumors, he cannot be proud of what he is doing. These are not things I can share with my child when I get home. Now my son asks me questions about Afghanistan. I am proud of what I am doing."

According to some observers, Iraq war is a turning point in media history. "Embedded" journalist has become the title of the war in the communications scenario. Three thousand journalists have applied to the government to cover the war. Five hundred of them covered the war as embedded journalists under the protection of military units. Previously, the Defense Ministry had gotten in touch with the media institutions and prepared the communications scenario of the preventive war. The news was kept under stricter control so that the mistakes of Vietnam were not repeated. The function of the media, this time, was not to correctly report on the developments but to contribute to the winning of the war.

In 1945, Albert Bayet, the head of the International Media Federation, said: "The aim of journalism is to give correct news, advocate opinions, and to serve the improvement of humanity." Today, commercial interests dominate even public TV and radios. Public communications has become history. Public TVs prepare their programmes according to ratings. Educative, instructive culture programmes, that do not draw attention, that do not entertain, or that are not exciting, and programmes with a political focus do not find a place on televisions anymore. Every channel is broadcasting showbiz programmes, sex and high-society reports, famous models, popular singers, contests and football games.

On the other hand, the journalists have lost their security. Lay-offs have increased and the number of journalists, who are not staffers increased. For example, in France, the proportion of journalists who got paid per report was 9.8 percent in 1980. This percentage rose to 20 percent in 2005. Journalists started working with no security.

Hundreds of journalists got laid-off in Turkey too. Among those were famous columnists such as Zeynep Oral, Zeynep Atikkan, and Umur Talu. *Bizim Gazete* (Our Newspaper) published by Turkish Journalists' Society employed many of them. Many others had to change careers.

Information became a branch of economy. The number of interns who work for free increased, obstacles got placed in front of journalist unions, and membership in unions got banned in some companies. Long, informative, educative interviews, investigative programmes, research reports became history. Media monitoring centers were set up under such conditions.

Ignacio Ramonet said the following in an article published in October 2003:

Mass media and globalization are strongly connected. The mass media should be expected to comply with professional code of ethics and to respect the realities. The journalist should prepare reports, not in line with the interests of large organizations or the bosses, but in line with his/her own interests.

In the new ideological war imposed on us by globalization, media is being used as a weapon. A Greek philosopher in the Ancient Ages said the world is formed of four elements: air, water, soil and fire. In our global world, a fifth element has been added to these: Information.

But today, information poisons our brains and gets in our heads thoughts that do not belong to us. For this reason, there is need to create an information ecology. Just like the seas need to be cleaned of contamination, it is time that we purify information from lies. Biological news has to be created just like biological food. Citizens need to be mobilized so that the mass media reflects the realities. Searching the reality is based on true news. Mass media bosses claim that their interests are the interests of the people. But the interests of companies can never be more important than the rights of the people.

The corruption in mass media is not just an ethical problem. This corruption is a result of the international economic disorder, the colonialist mentality and globalization.

My friend Roberto Savio of 30 years, as a reaction against these imbalances and lies on international level, set up the IPS agency in Latin America in 1960s. This agency is one of the best examples of alternative communications. Bianet was established with IPS's support.

According to the famous sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who died a couple of years ago, the most terrifying thing is to research the exciting and extraordinary news. In the past, the sports media and newspapers that wrote about murder cases focused on such news. Now the whole media is focusing on such news.

Isn't this the case in Turkey too? Take Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Tercuman, or Posta. Their front pages are filled with exciting news, murders, sex scandals, sexual relations of famous actors and actresses, their love lives, infidelities, honour crimes and corruption stories every day. These are the stories that are carried on the front pages. In the past, such news was not carried by serious newspapers. They were considered against professional ethics. Who cares about professional ethics today?

Did the audience and readers have access to true and adequate information about the Semdinli incidents, the lynching at the Ismailaga Mosque, the explosion in Diyarbakir, the plot to be sold to the Arabs, the illegal constructions, the Council of State incident, and the Iraq and Lebanon attacks?

Aren't the televisions the same? Except some channels like CNN, NTV, and TRT, all television channels are competing with each other for excitement and sex programmes. And the public television, in other words, the TRT, is competing with them for ratings. What ever happened to our public TV approach?

We spent efforts in UNESCO for many years for the determination of and respect for international ethic rules. We lost. Global showbiz reporters won the fight. They did away with our projects. There are no "Ethic Rules in Media" in UNESCO anymore.

In France, politicians can only have their voices heard in showbiz programmes or sometimes talk shows. And public media institutions comply with this situation. The number of programmes and documentaries that would reflect the realities and improve the culture of the public is decreasing each day. This is a grave situation. Books are published in France called, *The Deceased Public TV*.

But the readers, the viewers and the listeners are not sleeping anymore. People are coming together to stop this trend. The first example is the association called Acrimed (*Action-Critique-Medias*). This association, established in 1995, is formed of researchers, university teachers, readers and viewers. They publish on the Internet. Their aim is to get the people know about the independent criticisms. They are against the state of affairs in the media, the corruption in the media, the condensation in the media, and the prostitution of information and culture in the finance market.

The second very important organization set up in France after Acrimed was the International Media Observatory (*Observatoire International des Medias*). Setting up such a center was first proposed at the Social Forum, which had gathered against globalization in January 2002 in Porto Alegre. The center was established a year later in January 23, 2003. The founders complained that the media could not form an anti-force in the face of the capital and the ruling class and that it became the pawn of neo-liberal globalization. Their aim was to protect the society from the deception, lies and poisoning in the mass media. They advocated that the influence of economic power and ideological dominance over mass media should be opposed, news should be protected as public property, and the citizens' right to find out about the realities should be respected.

A second media observatory followed, and on 24 September 2003 the French Media Observatory (*Observatoire Francais de Medias*) was established. The founders of this center advocated that censorship has changed shape, that the media is only giving the people the news it chooses, that it keeps financial and ecological scandals as secret and that a huge silence is formed on these subjects. They said that censorship today is implemented as "self-censorship" and that journalists are always working under blurry conditions.

Such centers have three kinds of founder members:

- Journalists or experienced writers
- University teachers or researchers
- Media audiences and readers

After the aforementioned institutions, other institutions such as *Association Contre la Desinformation, Desintox, Alliance Citoyenne des Journalites*,

*Clemi* were set up in France. Young people also created many Web sites critical of the media.

Some may say "There is no need for such media monitoring centers when there are media ethics councils" There is need for these centers because in many places, the members of ethics councils come from different segments. They may include representatives of media bosses and they may not always be objective. Their aim is to monitor whether journalists are behaving in line with the media ethics rules. They handle issues as they receive petitions from readers. They are not directly interested in whether the media is omitting any news, is misrepresenting or exaggerating. Monitoring centers are institutions that observe how impartial and honest the media is. That is a different thing.

The job of media ombudsmen or mediators is different. They investigate criticisms and applications against the media, express opinion, get paid by the media institution they work for. It is not definite that they will act independent of their bosses.

Media monitoring centers are the products of a new approach, a new attitude and this trend is developing everywhere.

This is why the Communications Research Association (ILAD) has focused on this issue, and its board of directors, in its latest meeting in September, started preparing for the setting up of such a center. The Turkish Journalists' Society, Galatasaray, Marmara, Kocaeli, Cyprus Lefke Communications Faculties, and Dogus University Literature and Science Faculty were excited about this initiative. At least ten communications faculties and some journalists' and writers' associations are expected to join this project.

A forum will be organized in the coming days with the participation of all institutions that are interested in this project. The aim is to carry out this project as soon as possible and to look for measures against the degradation of global communications.

## **Mainstream media and women: female voices in press services**

**Angela Castellanos\***

One of the basic tenets of independent media is to give voice to those groups that are invisible or not well represented in the mainstream media. In 2005 the Global Media Monitoring Project, conducted by the World Association for Christian Communication, demonstrated that women, half of the world's population, "are virtually absent from the news content."<sup>8</sup> Ten years ago, the first study of this kind showed that news was made overwhelmingly by men: only 17% of those in the news were women. However, the study from last year also "found stories that are gender balanced, that give equal weight to female and male voices, or that highlight the often hidden gender dimensions of topics in the news."<sup>9</sup>

News services dedicated to promoting gender balance contributed to these positive findings. One of those news services was born in 1978, within the framework of the United Nations Decade for Women. The Women's Feature Service (WFS), as it was called, and its Latin American chapter, SEMLA (*Servicio Especial de la Mujer Latinoamericana*), was created as a joint initiative of UNESCO, UNFPA and the international Inter Press Service (IPS), with the specific purpose of impacting mainstream media.

In the early 1970s, the United Nations promoted South-South cooperation. In recognition of this guideline, the news project was designed as an international network with a South to South information flow. The news were originated in the South, and written by women journalists hired as freelance contributors by IPS, and then delivered to the South through the IPS network, which controlled and operated the service during the project's lifetime.

Consistent with this approach, WFS set up its global headquarters in New Delhi and established its Spanish Desk in San José (Costa Rica). During the project's lifetime, WFS consolidated a network of 60 women journalists mainly from Asian and Latin American countries, who produced an average of 300 news features annually.

Another criterion of the project was that it would be developed by women, not only to be consistent with its purpose, but because women journalists

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\* Women's rights activist, journalist, Colombia.

<sup>8</sup> World Association of Christian Communication. "Who makes the news?". <http://www.globalmediamonitoring.org/>

<sup>9</sup> Idem

could achieve better coverage: less stereotyped portraits of women and a more sensitive approach to female sources of information.

As a result of such criteria, women's voices gained visibility in the mainstream media. Moreover, the project acted as an incubator for journalists with a gender perspective, as many correspondents continued promoting and working for gender-balanced coverage, and some, like me, became communications consultants for gender projects.

WFS was turned into an independent organization in 1991. From that time on, the news service management was entirely in women's hands, and by doing this, the news service broke through the "glass ceiling" that bars women from media senior management, particularly in international press services.

Over the project phase, WFS focused primarily on printed reports delivered by teletype, although later it produced radio news as well. In addition to press articles, SEMLA published a quarterly magazine called "Mujeres" (Women), with a selection of the most relevant Latin American reports produced over the corresponding time period.

We started by covering women issues, particularly those related to reproductive health and women's contributions to economic development. This focus reflected the approach of Women in Development (WID), which was promoted at the time.

Based on the assumption that development is a process that must fully involve both men and women, the WID approach endeavored to identify key areas and the means by which women's more active participation and greater access to benefits could be enhanced.

By the mid-1980s the WID approach had evolved into the Gender Equality approach, which recognized that women were already present in all sectors, but they were not getting equitable opportunities or benefits from development. Therefore, the Gender Equality approach proposed a new methodology based on gender analysis, in order to identify solutions to overcome obstacles preventing equitable access to and control of resources and the benefits of development.

In line with this new approach, the news service enhanced its coverage of stories which highlighted such obstacles and pointed out where women were in various fields.

The Platform for Action adopted by the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, held in 1995, underlined the importance of women's participation and access to the media, as well as the promotion of balanced and non-stereotyped portrayals of women in the media.

After its adoption, WFS and SEMLA focused their efforts on implementing its guidelines. However, to fully accomplish this goal, the features produced needed to reach the mainstream media. Over the project phase, the news service was marketed by the IPS agency and news reports were sold and published in European, Asian, Latin American and even African printed

media. Some of those clients were kept in the early years of the independent life of WFS, but others were lost, particularly the Latin American clients, partly because of the lack of genuine interest on the part of editorial managers, who prefer to invest their limited budgets in traditional wire services, and partly because of the absence of marketing specialists, who could ensure new and old clients. Then, with the globalization of the Internet, marketing became a major challenge for independent media, due to the enormous flow of free information.

In 1998, the SEMLA completed its separation from WFS, and became an association devoted to women's issues, which continued operating a specialized women's press service under the name of Servicio Especial de Mujer (Special Service on Women), or SEM, with the same editorial criteria and with part of the Latin American group of correspondents.

However, in 2003, SEMLA faced funding difficulties and the Special Service on Women ceased its operations. Meanwhile, WFS continued running in English, with a particular focus on Asian issues.

In 2005, a group of former correspondents from Cuba and Peru joined efforts to relaunch Spanish service, under the name of SEMlac. Recognizing its value in terms of professional and independent journalism and its contribution to gender equality, the Netherlands-based NGO HIVOS provided funding support to SEMlac.

In January 2006, SEMlac began operating again as an alternative press news service, with the main purpose of promoting gender-balanced news in the Latin American and Caribbean mainstream media. However, its press service is also disseminated among policy makers of the region, as a way of impacting public policies from a gender prospective, and to NGOs and academic researchers working in gender issues.

Currently, SEMlac is based in Havana and part of the editorial desk is located in Lima. It reports from 10 countries through a network of 14 women journalists, mainly former SEMLA correspondents. It produces up to 40 investigative reports and news features monthly, delivered through weekly electronic bulletins. Its coverage has a strong focus on gender violence, feminized poverty, HIV-AIDS, human rights, communication, and sexual and reproductive rights.

Its headquarters produces a special monthly bulletin devoted to violence against women and a quarterly bulletin specialized in gender and communication. In addition, it has its own website: [www.redsemlac.net](http://www.redsemlac.net)

As a press service committed to investigative reporting, SEMlac has established an award whose recipients are chosen from among its own correspondents, as a means of funding long term reports.

SEMLac promotes a participative approach in addition to a gender perspective approach. Through virtual and personal meetings, the correspondents play an active role in the content and institutional strategy decision-making processes. In fact, SEMlac in this new phase is still defining

its marketing strategy as well as the use of information and communication technologies to improve its visibility.

SEMIac and WFS, as well as others, are strategies to promote and practice gender-balanced journalism. However, we need more news channels in every part of the world, or otherwise "most news will continue to be at best gender blind, at worst gender biased, as the monitoring study pointed out."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Idem

## **What can be done in mass media?**

**Tugrul Eryilmaz\***

Every student who begins to study communications theories knows. The school and trends by respectable intellectuals like Althusser, Gramsci, Van Dijk, Hall, and Chomsky, who really thought about the issue, more or less say the same thing (I will say right away that I got this opinion from Professor Yasemin İnceoglu with reference to Hall): Media legitimizes the representation practices and power relations and their products, which are constantly built within the domination relations in the society and reproduced and presented to the market. In short, the job of the media is to consolidate what already exists. So, then, what do we do? Are the universal rules of journalism just a set of illusions? Are we, hundreds of journalists, who define themselves as leftist and liberal, in fact, just "corporate journos?" If media is a political warden, is it wrong to do journalism, when the hegemony of the protesters' conception that "journalism just highlights the rightfulness of the government, which is in fact wrong" continues?

In short, have the communications teachers "who convey to students a critical perspective on communications theories, and teach how to become a good journalist" as opposed to effective journalists like Ertugrul Ozkok, who claim that "communications faculties are raising media enemies," lost their minds? Or are they rowing against the tide? Hundreds of similar questions can be asked, but I will leave that to the question and answer discussion section and try to relieve especially my young journalist friends. As I do that, I will utilize 31 years of experience in the profession and the opinions of various communications theorists.

The issues we will discuss are not just Turkey's problems but generally global problems. Still, we will make our emphasis on Turkey. "Transforming the media from within" might sound too pretentious but I will cite master Theodor Adorno as I try to defend the idea that "journalism, which oversees public good, is possible in this system."

We will try and make use of the "transcendent criticism" and "immanent criticism" notions by Theodor Adorno. I extensively used Adorno's article "Cultural Criticism and Society" and statements by Orhan Kocak, who wrote the presentation for Adorno's article. If a journalist wants to remain true to himself/herself and to the object he/she is thinking about (media), he/she should not view the synthesis he/she reached as "final." The journalist should continuously reject those syntheses and draw strength from

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\* Chief Editor, *Radikal İki & Milliyet Sanat*, Istanbul.

contradictions. "Immanent criticism" means evaluating cultural and intellectual products through their own criteria. "Transcendent criticism" means tempering with the historical and social determinants of the product. In immanent criticism, there is such a danger. The traces of history, meaning, the historical and social effects on media, can be overlooked. Transcendent criticism, on the other hand, rejects the comparative autonomy of the cultural objects and forms. It makes all the explanations through market, capital and state instruments. In other words, it also rejects any possible future total autarchy. But "transcendent criticism" enables us to see the full picture. However, "criticism" is not happy with either of these. As Adorno said, criticism has to use these two against each other. If we just turn to transcendent criticism, there is nothing we, journalists, can do. The system has already determined everything. On the other hand, if we only use "immanent criticism," we cannot understand why a journalist struggles to honestly and correctly do his/her job and why he/she needs to pursue various tactics in the name of journalism.

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The duty of the journalist is to turn information into a vehicle for freedom. Of course, we need to view this as a process. One thing, which was successfully implemented once, may not yield the same result in another time and place. In my opinion, that is the problem with the famous book, "Four Theories of the Press" by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, which is still very important and enlightening. The book, which gives examples from only the West, can be adapted to every country. However, the vulgarity of that state, political party systems, economical and political interests, the development of civil society, and other social dynamics differ from one country to another and all these factors should be taken into consideration. Let alone making a generalization for countries, media in one single country is not shaped by a single philosophy or ideology. There is need for empirical research, which is lacking in Turkey.

Now, you have three newspapers in front of you. All three are published by the same publishing group. They all have the same date. Meanwhile, there is violence going on in Beirut. However, while two of the newspapers do not carry this news on their first pages, the third newspaper has it as its headline. All three newspapers have the same boss and belong to the same holding. I believe that the journalists working for each newspaper are the ones who caused the difference. The individual journalists (immanent criticism), who are not taken into account in the face of great theories and ideological jargon. In my opinion, the main difference here is the difference between individual journalists, who work in the same system. Even in the same system, some journalists give the readers, the people, what they think that they want, whereas others give the readers, the people what they need to be able to give some meaning to their lives. This is the result of different journalism approaches and practices in the same system.

### **Working from within**

You can be a member of the alternative, free media. But it is also very important to work in the mass media and try to make a difference there. Powerful journalists and institutions like journalists' unions and associations can force this transformation.

The biggest danger for those working from within is becoming a part of the system. It is possible to be much harsher when criticizing from the outside (media sites, media critics). But these face the danger of not being effective at all.

If the mission of the journalist or the editor is to ensure freedom of expression, to help the weak to have their voices heard, to become their voices, he/she should try to fulfill this mission in the widest possible way and reach the highest possible number of people. You cannot only rely on experts to do this. The journalist should try to be interactive, and try and involve a little bit of citizen journalism. The role of the individual activist is important but one should aim at becoming prevalent and challenging the system collectively. It would not be correct to do journalism based only on experts.

If you ask "what kind of a difference can be brought around?" my answer would be to list the problems and to point to the way out.

- Having a wide list of contacts as sources and not depending on certain interest groups or individuals.
- There is a question of priority in terms of sources. A story about a protest written with the priority placed on protesters would be very different from the story written with the priority placed on the security forces.
- The ethical relationship with the news source would make a difference.
- Having a different approach on the journalism criterion called "news value." Having different ideas on how a good story can be prepared and written. Using activists as the main source (conscientious objector Mehmet Tarhan was able to write a witness account in *Radikal İki*).
- Efforts can be spent to balance the weight of the advertisement sector. This is one of the biggest dangers in Turkey today.

Forming professional unions would be a great step towards becoming free journalist individuals. Members of the mass media should spend efforts so that the desire to make profits does not avert freedom of thought and expression. Individual transformation is very important for social transformation. Thus, it may not be a bad idea to start with close friends and then continue with journalist colleagues.

I would lastly like to say this. If we say that all journalists are corporate journos, we would create an unbelievable terror and hopelessness. This would only benefit the real corporate journos; they would walk around a

village with no dogs without sticks. This would also be very unfair for The Guardian's Naomi Klein, Independent's Robert Fisk, Turkey's killed journalists, and *Novaya Gazeta's* Anna Politkoska, who was recently killed in Russia for being an opposition.

If there are any daunted colleagues or candidate journalists among you, I suggest you buy a DVD of "Good Night and Good Luck" by American journalist Edward R. Murrow, shot by George Clooney.

Let my last sentence be this and go to all my colleagues in the alternative or mass media: "The duty of the journalist is to relieve the injured and injure the comfortable." (Jerome Lawrence - Robert Lee "Monkey Trial").

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## **Independent Media Environment and Prospects for non-Mainstream**

## **A different world will only be possible through a different communications**

**Roberto Savio\***

This article has not been written to meet some academic or technical ends, or to make concrete proposals, but to initiate a wide discussion over news and communications, and to encourage as many people as possible to participate in this discussion. There is a widely known disproportion between the importance of this issue and the level of international discussion over it. It is necessary to enhance the discussion over the issue and associate it with the concrete social and political movements.

The real danger today is the fact that the new situation caused by war and terror, is blanketing the global discussion over the news and the social importance of news. This global discussion had just begun.

During the 40 years I spent in this sector, I have both been a witness and an actor in different waves of these discussions. The first wave came about within the traditional framework of information, where the journalists and editors contributed to the mentioned discussion and the world through their own views on the New Economic Order. It could be said that this, together with the New International Information Order, became the messenger and the beginning of a global discussion. This productive wave was formed as a result of the rising general crisis of the international discussion and the dominant and single ideology of globalisation.

The second wave rose from among those, who entered the world of communications by using the news technologies, such as the Internet. And then there is a third wave, which calls for participation, like the one in Porto Alegre. The productivity of this wave is conditional on its use for the benefit of our civilization and cultural future. The second and the third waves, although they are quite related to each other, introduce different questions. The proportion of those, who use the new technologies for political and cultural purposes, is still not very high. It is known that the type of use of new technologies seriously affects both political and social incidents.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September and their outcomes were viewed live through the media. Those, who committed this crime, also possessed the news content, which left a huge mark on the world. Not only two towers collapsed that day. Thousands of them collapsed through the re-screening of the image of the collapsing towers over and over again.

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\* Chair, World Social Forum, Communication Commission; Chair, IPS Board of Trustees.

Other colleagues will present important ideas on the globalisation tendencies in every field, and on the local news vacuum. They will discuss the use of new technologies in political and cultural events. My article is aimed at explaining these issues within a more general vision.

I guess it would be beneficial to put forward the difference between news and communications, even though this is an artificial separation, according to three historic phases that I put forward. It should not be forgotten that news and communications are related to many other social and economic sectors. For example, although not impossible, it is very difficult to assess cultural globalisation independent from the globalisation of news and communications. Through these subjects, it would be possible to make an important contribution to this discussion.

### **The new concept of news**

I think we should first redefine the use of the term "news." News has changed a lot since the years, when the discussions over a new order of information had first begun. The news and information society is touching not on the traditional concept of "news," but its current change.

Change is not technological, but deeply social and cultural. This is the big change, which turned news into a commercial commodity. There is news in every industrial, commercial, technical, entertainment, scientific, educational development. If we, as people who are fighting for a "possible different world," do not take responsibility for this change, we would remain outside the discussion and outside the game. What is worse, we would neither be able to comprehend the dimensions of the discussion, nor the platform on which it is continuing.

For this reason, "A Different World will only be possible when we have the ability to protect the war in the news world." And if we were to unite that with communications... Actually, communications is a mechanism, through which we convey news.

### **The great "centralization" of history**

People often talk about the centralization, numerically, of the communications networks, and present certain figures. It would be right to remind you that, as in the Software example, we depend on only one company in terms of implementation in some key sectors. The biggest monopoly we can think of;

- We depend on one or two companies to surf on the Internet.
- There are only two or three global companies for enterprise users.
- The same situation goes for search engines.

But first, we need to talk about the centralization of content; the knot in the news network, which has been created by the traditional news companies; and their relation with the Internet. The news society and all the movements of its complicated network structure is based on weaving a network on human experiences and marketing all experiences.

Trade of human relations is definitely proposed in the ideological project of radical supporters of globalisation. Global variety is functional in this project. For this reason; it is very important that we say "a different world is possible!" and struggle with all the power we have for a rich cultural variety, with the aim of preserving and enhancing cultural values.

In the globalised current world, the cultural space is increasingly turning into the commercial market of large global companies. There is repressive experimentation. The culture industry – which is a term introduced by the German sociologists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkeimer in the 1930s – is the fastest-growing sector in the world economy. Cinema, television, radio, music industry, global tourism, entertainment centers, cities and theme parks, fashion, cooking, professional sports and games, betting, all are parts of a commercial enterprise, which is growing gigantically and becoming centralized.

The war against terrorism is turning into a war against "diversity" and "difference."

Large companies of the 20th century were simple atom producers, such as petrol, electric and electrotechnical, chemistry, automotive or siderurgy companies or commercial chains. The large companies of the 21st century will be news, communications and culture companies; in other words, companies, which are powerful in the global media sector.

"The supremacy of the United States is based, not on its advantageous position in the weapons industry, but on the news and the extra ordinary potential of entertainment," according the Vanity Fair<sup>11</sup> , not to a revolutionist community.

This is not the problem of just the southern countries. It is a global theme. We, the people, reached perfection in more than 70 centuries: There is no chance for any technological development or material wealth that would justify risking freedom.

Historian, researcher of means for mass communications, and Washington Post editor Ben Bagdikian says:

Nothing in history can compare to the power of merger of companies with the aim of infiltrating into social panorama. This handful of giants, through the use of old and new technologies, and through alliances and all other forms of cooperation, have created nothing, but the new cartel of communications. The involved do not just constitute a financial statistic, like the indexes of conventional industrial commercial goods (refrigerators or clothing). Those in the game should have power over all men, women and children... and should have the power to alter the country's political agenda, to socialize all the new generations of the United States and to wrap everyone up in images and controlled words. This power is assumed

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<sup>11</sup> *The Power Center*, 1995: 271.

to have the capacity to create a much larger effect than the power of schools, religion, fathers or government in many ways.<sup>12</sup>

If we clearly accept these huge changes supported by the SIC (Standard Industry Classification Codes,) we need to ask this to ourselves:

***Are we going towards a new era of enlightenment, a new Renaissance, or towards an era of cultural break-up through another path?***

As Juan Somavia wrote in the 1970s when the Latin American Institute for International Studies was established, the importance of the news sector (he was not yet speaking about communications) arises neither from its economic dimension nor from its labour force, which is very small. This sector is like the stop lights of automobiles: marginal, but the main part because it illuminates the way of the international system.

Everything except pure news that circulates the world today, has a large news content. Therefore, discussions and criticisms are changing radically. Nowadays, information is like the ENGINE of a car.

Communications, which for the first time, can be looked at economically, opens completely different perspectives in the history of humanity. The people of the lower classes could never benefit from the up-to-date opportunities provided by the informative and communicative events. With these developments, human beings can become a third actor after the two traditional actors: state and the private sector. This is our day's biggest challenge for the civilian society.

News and communications have always existed in human history. But, whereas news had a parallel growth with economic development, communications were local and interpersonal. Newspapers replaced town criers, who read the news and announcements.

Times, in the mid 19th century, during the brightest years of the British Empire, was more literary; and although it embraced the London approach based on avoiding risky ventures, it was the one newspaper most open to the discoveries of the world. It used around 17.000 words. However, at the present day, Times does not use more than 5.000 words.

Other European newspapers of that era were written in a very good style. Churchill or Hemingway, who had no problems writing in the newspapers of their time, would have a hard time being accepted by the newspapers of our times.

While the news media is made up of important commercial companies, is mass and far from being elite, its function and characteristics also radically changed. This phenomenon was developed in the United States, which is act as a basket of cultures with all the mass migration it receives, which is expected to accept and embrace the abandoned and the victims of the world and turn them into its own citizens, and where people are forced to

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<sup>12</sup> Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, Beacon Press, 1997: pp. IX.

adopt a common identity with commitment to the promise and idea of a new peoples.

Those, who migrate to become a citizen of the United States, instead of forgetting their roots, history and former identities, promise to become a new person. The mass communications media is the tool for this ideological transformation.

In the United States, a deontology and the professional criteria of current journalism are being developed. And these show the way for success in the market. This deontology and the criteria of current journalism are not aimed at creating the best possible product, but to achieve the best sales. The famous media person Randolph Hearst, who was immortalized by Orson Welles' film "Citizen Kane" had initiated a war against Cuba. Thus, the families of the media bosses during the last century were very lucky.

Johan Galtung from Norway found a measure of value for "successful news" that shows the commercial value of news. Dramatic, extraordinary, unusual news get through much more easier than ordinary news. Famous people are more important than the ordinary people. Those close to the public have more readers than those who are distant. Everything that is simple is read more than the difficult things.

It is not necessary to study the whole measure of Galtung to understand the characteristics of "successful news." These characteristics are taught to all journalism students through an old anecdote: "a dog biting a man is not news, but a man biting a dog is news." This may seem quite logical and reasonable, but in this era of national independence and globalisation, it seems that news on national issues would be totally unsuitable for the mythical man on the street to gain conscience.

It means that George W. Bush is the most important news subject, rather than the president of a developing Southern country, except for those, who are considered extraordinary like Saddam Hussein and Kaddafi; because the industrialized world sees them as dangerous individuals.

It means that the countries away from large power centers can be in the news only under extraordinary condition, such as natural disasters and wars. The fact that an isolated incident is emphasized persistently in the news means that the central questions of Porto Alegre have not been understood and that no importance is being placed on explaining the developments.

In more developed societies, the amplitude of means of news allow for the formation of analytical focuses. However, within this framework of centralization, those who do not know, do not understand; and those who know, improve their knowledge.

### **The weakness of the discussion over news and cultural-politic**

Only about 10 percent of the total readers in the United States read certain newspapers such as the New York Times, Washington Post or Los Angeles Times or political or cultural magazines.

Although the proportion is different in each European country, it is not more than 20 percent. The inadequacy of the information system globally exacerbates the North-South polarization.

How much access do the readers of Uruguay or Malaysia newspapers have to news about Finland, apart from scandals and natural disasters? Nobody knows the Finnish President. When the unfortunate Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi (he is already a good source of news because he is the richest man in the country) makes the headlines when he announces that Islam is a second-class civilization. At least this could be said on this announcement: It was an extraordinary declaration and undeniably meets the criteria of "successful news."

Although the number of media owners is still high, the number of news tools is decreasing. Maximum profit is sought in mergers and expenses decrease through the centralization of services. When the owners of news (such as Time – Warner) merge with the owners of communications systems (such as the America On Line) their integration with the economic and financial system also increases.

It is calculated that the number of newspaper readers around the world go down by (a proportion of) 1.7 each year. Only 17 percent of Internet users buy newspapers. I think that this is caused by the gap between generations, which is growing each day. The youth, these days, find the news that interest them on the Internet, not in the newspapers. In total, there is a 1.5 percent decrease in the use of news tools each year. As these news tools become centralized, the number of their owners is increasing compared to the past (look at the case in the United States).

It is easy to say that the circulation of a newspaper is the measure of its success. But this criterion has been dragging the journalism styles into a very sensational (scandalous?) path in the last thirty or forty years.

This fact is more visible in the television and radio programmes. The private channels have been glorified as a guarantee of freedom of communications and they reach more and more people each day. Their level of quality however, has always been lower.

The discussions over news freedom consist of a dangerous falsification, which very few people can atone: this freedom can be equated to freedom of ownership and is part of the power to limit the authority of the state as much as possible.

It is quite certain that anti-democratic governments, especially in the developing countries, tend to use the means of news and mass communications as an instrument of propaganda and dominance. But at the same time, it is also certain that these instruments in industrialized and democratic countries are the instruments for disseminating information and cultural development; as in the case of BBC and other European examples.

However, at the same time, we need to ask ourselves this question: Don't the alternative powers have a responsibility in the general impoverishment

of news and the political and cultural discussions, and the acceptance of the new threats, new problems and new realities and retreat in the face of the attack of a sector presented as a divine thing? Here, we cannot take shelter in nostalgia. We have to create and build alternatives and new ways.

...

In this context, we should not forget that the main source of income for news tools is not sales but advertisement. To have a sense of what is going on, we have to underline that if the current tendencies continue, the advertisement expenditures will be higher than education expenditures in seven years.

Do we need to tell the difference between advertisement and education? Today, in industrialized countries, there are free newspapers. Their cost is met by advertisements. It is possible that in the future, we will have free large local newspapers and some large national newspapers. The gap there will be filled through this way.

The crisis created by war and thus the whole economic mechanism is based on the revival of the market and the production of new consumption needs. If this situation is somehow reversed, everything will be open and clear. Neo-liberals become Keynes supporters at any cost. It was enough to see President Bush ask for funds at the Congress to financially assist all sectors of the economy. He blatantly ended the absolute liberalism of the market.

This equation between Advertisement – News – Consumption is a vital equation of globalisation. And the civilian society must, with a huge force, bring to life the union of consumers. Responsible consumption is the key for a “different world, which is possible.” We have little or very little discussion over this issue. The consumers must be the leading actors of this discussion.

This leads us to take into consideration the structural limits of the information system. A vertical system, from top to bottom, is on trial. The news is being published by a group of people called journalists, who are often protected by law – almost under monopoly conditions – to carry out this duty. Their messages reach the highest possible number of receivers through various channels.

The participation capacity and feedback is very limited: it is limited to writing a letter to the editor, ceasing to buy a certain newspaper or getting news through another channel. Audience measures do not question the information content. They only explore the individual reasons that determine the people’s preferences in certain regions.

This vertical system has been used in a very negative way to serve the purposes of power and dominance. Anti-democratic governments or governments with limited participation control the information and news tools. These channels often turn into instruments to express interests in the hands of political or economic interest groups. At the same time, the information system reinforces dominance in North-South relations. This can

be simply seen in the dominance of international agencies. Three of them, Associated Press, Reuters and Agence France Press, disseminate 70 percent of the international news flow (the fourth largest agency is the United Press International and is almost vanished due to the harsh competition in the sector). Still, the myth about media freedom is very strong.

Associated Press survives thanks to the local market; in other words, thanks to the United States, which advocates that media freedom should be filtered by the State. AP gets 94 percent of its income from the local market. AP's international network aims at meeting the demands of the United States and generates only 6 percent of its income.

Any attempt to go beyond this model will face a simple reality: due to the cultural characteristics that make it very difficult to sell one's own news to other countries, no country has a national market as strong –except Japan, whose national news agency survives through almost only the profit in the internal market.

Then comes Reuters, which advocates the Western model to survive in the market, without state intervention. However, only about 20 percent of its budget is met and only 4 percent of its profit is generated by journalism activities. Most of its income is generated through the sale of stock market information to other companies. It seems that its model cannot be imitated. Reuters just about has the monopoly in this sector.

Lastly, Agence France Press follows the aforementioned two in the discussions over the news system. The French government provides more than 60 percent of its budget. Is this a model the developing world should imitate? Almost all the news agencies of Africa, Asia and South America, which get state support, and which are accused of not being professional because they do not make profits in the market, have advocated the opposite.

But Spanish EFE, Italian ANSA and German DPA, although they are not large enough to finance national markets, a global network, they have an international presence due to the fact that they have contracts with the state.

Here, we also have to take into consideration the new global news channels and the huge global television chains.

This concise/short historical tour has a lot to do with our discussion. A majority of those, who will attend Porto Alegre, do not know that the South made a lot of efforts to democratise the international news system in the 70s.

Everything started in 1955 when the "non-aligned" group got together for the first time in Bandung at the "*Conferencia de Solidaridad Afro - Asiática*" meeting. **The foundation was laid in 1961 and the Group of 77 was created in 1964:** Developing countries were gathered around the United Nations and it has 138 participants today.

The discussion over the possibility of a more balanced national news system began outside Bandung. In 1973, the idea of combining the news agencies of the member countries under a News Pool was introduced.

Almost every developing country participated in efforts to create special news and culture policies and to set up news agencies, and radio and television channels. The aim was to create a new international formation in news and communications. In 1964, within the framework of this development, the foundations of the Inter Press Service were laid. IPS was presented as independent and as the professional voice of the third World, and it worked to mobilize this new order. IPS is the leading actor of the theoretical discussion and takes the global discussion into a whole new level (economic, social, and informative).

Almost all of these national news agencies have disappeared and their absence is felt more than the harm globalisation has done on national identities and places. Friends at ALAI will contribute to the discussion within the framework of this question. So I can move on to the most important issue.

Here, we have a new stage of analysis: As discussions continue over a New News System, the improvement of communications technologies is also desired.

The term "communications" is being used in a very complicated way. The French, when talking about newspapers, radio and television channels, which are just news tools, used the expression "social communications tools" and thus increased the misunderstandings.

In reality, with the development of the Internet and other new technologies, we can talk about an era of means of mass communications as of the end of the 1980s. Until that time, we could only talk about news. And if we ever talked about communications, it would have only been about mechanisms and facts limited to local regions.

Our friends from APC will talk about the new communications technologies and their effects on the society. I only would like to talk about the structural differences between news and communications. While communications is an extremely horizontal interaction (sending out, receiving or exchanging) and while it is not based on commercial logic, news, on the other hand, as we have seen before, has vertical characteristics and has commercial values and content.

Tens of thousands of women use the Internet to participate in a horizontal communications process and to express themselves. The values that they gain are the values of the civilian society that encourage participation, objectivity, transparency and solidarity. These values, at the same time, mobilize tens of thousands of people, who got together through the Internet, to advocate environment, human rights or globalisation of solidarity. Porto Alegre would not have been possible without the Internet.

To summarize the historical framework of the discussion in Porto Alegre, we need to study with attention the radical transformation of the apprehension about news and communications in a very short period of time.

Bandung is not a long way away. When viewed within the framework of demographic data, it could be said that it is not even two generations away.

The discussion of the 1955 was only over news, and the United States was advocating the myths of media freedom and objective news and was leading the struggle for the private and commercial property of tools.

The communications technology (actually telecommunications) was viewed as a threatening element in the hands of the State. Exactly like Hermano Mayor (who is known as Gran Hermano today due to bad translation) in Gorge Orwell's novel in 1984, who used to invade the privacy of every citizen.

In our days, the power of Bill Gates is more daunting than the power of President Bush, at least in the field of news. The market interferes in the lives of the citizens more than the State does, in a limitless way. The international discussion over news and communications has been abandoned and no state has the courage to reopen the subject because it is very likely that they could be accused of being anti-media freedom.

The notion of international New Order of Information (NOI) was officially rejected by UNESCO with the coming to power of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. NOI was the extension of the calls of the developing countries to establish an international new economic order through a more participatory and balanced production and exchange system.

The South wanted to participate in the world economy through at least 20 percent of its industrial production. NOI was a call for a more balanced news flow in a world, where the international agencies controlled 93 percent of the news content of the world.

It was thought that each country had its own private news and communications policy as if this was the key for national development.

This was a glorious period for the communications researchers, who showed that the international flow of news is completely unbalanced, divided and far from national perspectives.

At the present day, almost no country spends a serious effort to develop a national news and communications policy. It is not fashionable to talk about a national identity. The international community has become centralized with the integration of the market and thus, around the homogenisation of the identities. The news society has been left to the own initiative of the market to become a part of national and regional strategies.

The Washington agreement is based on the structural compromise policy promoted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. All the strategies of economic neo-liberalism direct countries not towards national integration but instead, ensure the success of international investments.

The news society has taken its place in these compromise policies in line with its seniority order. Now, we are seeing the privatization of telecommunications companies and in more general terms, the call for "integration."

The concept of "improvement" has gone out of fashion because the new paradigm of globalisation required it to. In theory, there is no reason why these two concepts should be contradictory to each other. But in practice, they cannot fit in together because they represent systems with opposite values.

The paradigm of improvement was a desire based on democratic values, and these values in essence, were, objectivity, social justice, participation, solidarity and democracy. Neo-liberal globalisation carries other values: adequacy, competition, maybe transparency (demanded from governments) and free market.

Free Market is not a mechanism, but a value.

And combining old values with the new ones was never discussed in depth.

The theories of the paradigm of neo-liberal globalisation initially embraced a pro-victory and a founding style. After the failure of the multilateral agreements on investments and the Seattle explosion, they were more cautious.

As the elite thought fit to discuss the redistribution of the profits of the Industrial Revolution, today, it is possible to be eager to discuss social values and a fairer development of globalisation.

For this discussion to take place, there is need for people like Marx and Engels. Tens of thousands of men and women lost their lives in a struggle to get freedom of association for workers and other means of expression and participation. I hope history does not repeat itself and we do not have to waste so many lives to accept the notion of globalisation of solidarity (opposite of neo-liberal globalisation), not only because it is fair, but because it is the only defensible way for international unity.

The attacks on the Twin Towers and Pentagon earned a new dimension to the discussion. There were no limits to the unipolar power particular to the United States; and now, we are at a new and clearer stage of an old fact: the manipulation of the news system for political aims. It is important that the American Government asked "Voice of America" not to broadcast an interview with Usame Bin Laden, because the opposition should not be granted an opportunity. And later, asking the media never to publish the statement of the enemy, made us return to the McCarthy years. It is quite tragical that all the leaders of the United States, following a large campaign which related the Arabic Al Jazeera television station with Bin Laden, and which was far from being professional, is now giving interviews to this station. And we are now faced with a big problem, where not the news freedom but the freedom of the journalists is in question. When a journalist had the courage to ask Bush why he did not immediately return to

Washington after the attacks and wasted almost a day, there was a fierce campaign to daunt. Journalists, under such circumstances, usually crouch down and wait until the storm passes off.

The bipolar world includes the absence of international balances. But its obvious unfairness makes the reality of terrorism worse. Shooting off a small amount of food to Afghans so that they can be bombed starts to form the conscience.

I am convinced that this discussion forces upon our conscience that a better world is necessary. In this field it becomes clear once again that communications has a quite different direction than news.

At the same time, when the news channels concentrated on a stupid Europe, faded Japan, and the actions of Bush and Blair, the Internet was booming with the messages of people, who wanted to think collectively and look beyond the war.

The last ten years of the previous century passed with discussions over NOI... and today, we are witnessing the rise of a new news and communications order which is being developed not by governments but by the Market. This new and undeclared order is being approved due to its economic values, as it is with everything in the world of globalisation.

We would like to remind once again that the Time - Warner and America On Line (AOL) merger, integrated things that used to be separate up until then.

AOL, with its traditional objective content, represented the world of foreign telecommunications. When a telegraph began to be used between London and Manchester, Times published this poem: "A message was sent from one end of the line to the other, not better, not worse. Exactly the same."

The merger of AOL with Time - Warner gave just one message. But what kind of a message? The message of an international culture system. The voice of the globalised mechanisms that were born in the United States. Not the voice of different realities and cultures.

The logic of mergers is not a better production. Mergers are aimed at minimizing expenses and maximizing gains. This was a logic coming more from the world of speculation than the world of production. One of the characteristics of the New Economy was that it declared that financial investments lead to faster and higher revenues than productive investments. This is the logic behind the increase in number of the world's richest men. It is also the logic behind them owning New Potential Economy companies rather than factories, nursery gardens or commerce companies.

The "Punto Com" Tiscali company in Italy, with the explosion of speculation bombs, gained even more value than the hundred-year company Fiat. At the right time, the shareholders of Tiscali gained a wealth equal to the one in Haiti. The Market value of Microsoft is now equal to Spain's gross national production. The managers of large international companies, despite the Wall Street crisis, increased their gains independent from the value of their companies'.

We have to pay attention to a certain issue in this new order: Where is the Human Being? I am not involved in the discussion between the owners of large media companies supported by the Western Governments in UNESCO and the Southern Governments.

But there is an important novelty on stage: Human beings.

Civilian society is part of the new order this time. Alliances and political groups manage the networks and national and international agencies have a growing importance. This would not have been possible without the Internet and new technologies.

Without a doubt, due to the inequality in access to Internet and development, this cannot reach half of the humanity. But news technologies, for the first time, allow for the participation of hundreds of thousands of people in communications. This participation is still very varied. While the percentage of Internet users in Europe is 27.79 percent, this figure is 0.76 percent in Africa. While the Internet users in the Middle East are 0.59 percent, the Internet users in Latin America are 4.04 percent, and the Internet users in the United States, Canada and Japan are 41.05 percent. A total 21 percent of the 130 million children do not go to school and 2 billion people in the world do not have electricity today. 33 percent of the 6 billion people in the world do not have electricity and another 33 percent get electricity only once in a while. Lastly, Africa, which is home to 12 percent of the world's population, has only 2 percent of the telephone lines in the world. This is even less than the telephone lines in New York...

Despite all the restrictions we have talked about, Internet means that all non-governmental organizations will try to use the Internet.

The African women at the Fourth World Women Conference in Beijing in 1995, participated in a large struggle with their sisters from other regions and succeeded in dominating the conference in a short time. In other words, to put it in simple words, Internet has become a means for everyone who would like to be active in the society.

Although we should not forget the relation between the two, these people belong to the world of communications rather than the corrupted world of news. They are people who want a globalisation in solidarity and they believe in the importance of national identities having supremacy over local cultures, and the communications policies having supremacy over the old framework of UNESCO's negotiations.

These people, with the equal participation of people from the industrialized world and those from poor countries, globalised the environmental problems, problems about human rights and problems on the methods and impartiality in trade, and overcame the North-South division to a great extent.

People become more and more active and like the representatives who strongly desire change, are abandoning political institutions that create a

danger of losing legality, and are designing their own private participation systems.

From Bandung to Internet, I believe that the main theme of the efforts for news and communications is related with human values. We have to let the witnesses of yesterday and actors of today speak. The communications researchers, who have actually committed themselves to exploring the effects of new technologies, need to renew their alliance with the people to prepare a proposal, which is based on the essence of communications between those who struggle for a better world.

As it is written on Porto Alegre's invitation letter, a better world is possible and one of the keys to a better world is a democratic, participatory communications, rich in terms of content and variety of identities, but which rests on common values.

## **Independent Social Movement Media: Achievements and Issues**

**John D.H. Downing\***

### **Introduction: some definitions**

Let me begin by making some comments to help define "democracy" and "social movement media." I will then offer five basic observations on alternative, independent, grassroots media. I will conclude with a discussion of the global Indymedia network.

Democracy is a word with multiple senses. Tragically, it has recently been dragged through the mud by a U.S. Administration and corporate class who have claimed democracy as their #1 global export, especially to Iraq. And continue to do so, despite having generated a civil war that permits them to maintain their military presence in the region for the foreseeable future, because, they now claim, it would be irresponsible to leave while civil war is raging, and also unfair to the U.S. troops who have died there in the Administration's noble cause.

Since I come from the United States, I feel obliged to insist up front that whatever democracy means, in my view it is not THAT. It is not exportable, it is not a uniquely American product, and indeed the American version, where such a relatively small proportion of the public votes and where the two major parties stand for office, not principle, is as flawed as any.

My vote is for what Benjamin Barber some twenty years ago (Barber 1984) called "strong democracy," as opposed to the notion of "the strong [authoritarian] state," the state that luminaries such as J. Edgar Hoover, Dick Cheney, and Kenan Evren, would like to dance in. Formal democratic procedures only go part way to enabling a *strong* democracy, a democracy responsive to the general public. I am not discounting the importance of democratic procedures, despite the fact they will always be flawed in one way or another. Governance must proceed by some agreed rules. But the mainstreamdecay of traditional political parties and the decline of labour unions in many countries, points us ever more in the direction of social movements as agents of constructive change, as expressions of democracy in action, a democracy that is not just a slogan.

We live, of course, in the real world, a deeply flawed one. There is nothing magical about social movements, nothing even automatically progressive.

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Nazism began as a social movement. The reactionary version of Islam espoused by the Iranian regime since 1979 began as a social movement. In some parts of the USA at present, there are *movements* to deny undocumented workers any rights, not just state laws. Nonetheless, the global social justice movements, the environmentalist movements, the feminist movements, the labour movements, the movements for civil rights and for human rights, from Burma to Bolivia and from Iran to Israel, constitute –whether they are weak or strong– the nearest to a democratic global force that currently exists. Yes, there are divisions within and between them, disorganization, debacles. This is Earth, not Mercury. But if the hunt is on for actually existing democracy, as opposed to its calcified official versions, I know of nowhere else to look other than social movements.

Naturally, there are groups and individuals within traditional political parties, labour unions, local and national government, international bodies, and still other organizational formats, who are movement-oriented and can play helpful, even crucial roles. I am not arguing a Manichean—White Hats/Black Hats—position. But the independent energy and initiative of progressive social movements is the nub of the matter (as it also is with reactionary social movements).

Social movements themselves, I recognize, are a hugely complicated phenomenon, and there is a vast research literature now on them, but one with which I cannot engage in the space of this paper.<sup>13</sup>

Social movement media I can define much more briefly, in line with my existing work (Downing 2001): I have an expansive definition, which covers the simplest or at least cheapest techniques, such as graffiti, dance, political jokes, street theatre, popular song, all the way through to technologically complex formats such as video and the internet. In other words, I have no patience with the limitations conventionally placed upon the term “media” to denote merely broadcasting, print and cinema, or with the artificial division between arts and media.<sup>14</sup>

The best term to use to categorize these media may vary from one political situation to another, and one political moment to another. As of the period of this Forum in Istanbul, the term Independent Media clearly has the most traction, and is therefore likely the best one to use. It would be harder to use right now in the USA, where all major capitalist media, such as Fox News, call themselves “independent,” meaning only that they are not government-owned (though they are happy enough to *volunteer* to support

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<sup>13</sup> I refer those interested in pursuing my current analysis of media and social movements to my essay on alternative media in the global anti-apartheid, Falun Gong and Hindutva movements (Downing 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Since 2000 the research literature on social movement media has grown fast. As well as sources cited below, see for example Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Granjon, 2001; Atton, 2001 & 2005; Meikle, 2002; Couldry & Curran, 2003; Opel & Pompper, 2003; Geerts et al., 2004; Vitelli and Rodríguez Esperón, 2004; O’Connor, 2004; Van De Donk et al., 2004; De Jong et al., 2005; Rennie, 2006.

the US government's war against Iraq). "Community media" is a popular term in Western Europe, but there again the vagueness of the word "community" and its frequent implication of a cosy, class-less, gender-neutral body of people living in harmony with each other, carries its own problems. Here I am using social movement media as an analytical definition – in other words, what is the social and political *matrix* of independent media? – not as a term to use in ongoing political struggles in Turkey against media censorship and commercial domination of media.

### **Five observations on independent/social movement media**

I shall now comment briefly on a number of issues that face us as we seek to understand our options for developing strong media as integral to strong democracies – and please note that I say "democracies" in the plural! In order, the issues are: (a) the relationship between movements to reform mainstream media, and social movement media; (b) the relation between information and imagination; (c) the relation between internet and cell phone mobilization tactics, and social movement media; (d) the centrality of popularizing science and technology; and (e) the issue of scale.

**(a) Media Reform and Movement Media.** This is the self-assigned title of a growing body of domestic activism whose purpose is to check, and if possible reverse, a number of accelerating trends in media industry practice and government policy. There are similar movements in evidence in other nations, including Taiwan, Thailand and the Philippines. Often included among leading campaigners are seasoned professional journalists who have been gravely alienated over their careers by the restrictions and distortions imposed by media owners.

The first national Media Reform conference in the USA was held at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 2004, and attracted one thousand eight hundred people. The second, in St Louis, Missouri, in May 2005 attracted over two thousand. The third, scheduled for Memphis, Tennessee, in mid-January 2007, was expected to draw still more.<sup>15</sup>

The strength of this movement was established in part by the 2003 "Prometheus" Ruling<sup>16</sup> of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Circuit Federal Appeals Court in Philadelphia. Founded in 1998, the Prometheus Radio Project is a small low power FM radio activist organization in the city, dedicated to making media communication affordable and accessible to communities –and consequently highly suspicious of the trend toward the concentration of media ownership. When in 2003 the Federal Communications Commission announced yet another relaxation in controls over concentrated media ownership, the Project, supported by the Media Access Project (another nonprofit), appealed the FCC decision. It should be noted that two out of the five Commissioners were also entirely opposed, and worked closely with grassroots groups, including the Free Press group, in order to ventilate the

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<sup>15</sup> For more information on these conferences, see [www.freepress.net/conference/](http://www.freepress.net/conference/)

<sup>16</sup><http://www.ca3.uscourts.gov/staymotion/033388p.pdf#search=%22prometheus%20decision%22>

issues around the USA. A great deal of energy was expended on the internet in publicizing and lobbying against these changes. A number of members of Congress also began to take up the issue.

The court found against the FCC majority, at least on certain grounds. How the case will eventually be settled is unclear, as the FCC majority is trying hard to get the decision reviewed by the Washington DC Appeals Court, which it anticipates will be favourable to its position. Nonetheless, this was the first time that media reform issues had stirred public interest to anything like this extent, and this court victory was undoubtedly a great encouragement to media reform activists in the short term.

As well as media ownership concentration issues, the Media Reform movement engages with many other contemporary topics, from Network Neutrality issues regarding the next phase of development of the Internet, to copyright and intellectual property issues, to surveillance and privacy issues. Detailed histories are no doubt in process of being written already, such is its degree of visibility, and certainly public relations releases from all sides have constituted quite a snowstorm. It has taken nearly twenty years from the first communication industry deregulation decisions by the Reagan Administration FCC for this groundswell to emerge, but as of the time of writing, there is very considerable energy, and cross-generational energy at that, visible in this movement. It is a critical moment, given the variety of interests anxious to re-legislate the monumental 1996 Telecommunications Act, which means that new legislation in this area is likely to be a constant scene of activity. It is critical for much of the rest of the world too, given the entirely disproportionate weight that the U.S. corporate class wields in the global communication policy area.

The relation between this type of movement and social movement media is sometimes pointlessly dismissive on both sides. For some mainstream media reformers, social movement media only divert energies away from where the action really is, and social movement media activists can easily be found who simply reverse that optic.

In response, I would urge two considerations. Firstly, the media scene is practically nowhere so bright and encouraging, whether in mainstream or alternative media, that we can afford to dismiss any attempts on any level to improve it. Both kinds of pressure and activism are valid and valuable, and *jointly* serve to stimulate a more insistent and media-savvy public. The media literacy movement, especially strong in Germany, but also in some other nations, is a further important push in that direction.

Secondly, though, it is important to recall that there are standard dangers for both camps. Mainstream media reformers always risk putting so much energy into saving or extending existing public service sector media that they lose sight of their steady deterioration into timidity and commercialism (especially visible in the cases of PBS in the USA and of the BBC). Social movement media activism, by contrast, always risks becoming satisfied with being a like-minded ghetto, and precisely because it typically relies on

volunteer energy, of excluding large bodies of citizens who have little spare time on their hands. Especially for endless meetings, though Polletta (2002), in her study of the US civil rights movement, of the US women's movement and of community organizing in the USA, shows how grassroots democracy has been remarkably effective.

The four remaining topics can be dealt with very rapidly.

**(b) Information and imagination.** Much of the energy in all the wings of these movements, media literacy included, often arises out of activists' frustration with mainstream news services, with the poverty of journalism as practiced. Unfortunately this often leads to a "counter-information" philosophy of social movement media, where the solution to political impasse is defined as simply getting the "right" information out in response to mainstream media deceptions and failings. While there is value and even necessity in this kind of media activism, it not only suffers from being overly reactive, taking its priorities from the agents of disinformation, but it presumes everyone is a "news-junkie," only waiting for the truth in order to explode into political activism. Not only is this a fantasy, but it veers toward excluding the imaginative and emotive dimensions of culture, rendering us as reasoning machines rather than as reasoning—and feeling—and imagining—humans.

**(c) Mobilization, internet and movement media.** There has been considerable commentary over the past 3-4 years, beginning to some degree with Howard Rheingold's *Smart Mobs* (2002), and continuing through to Yochai Benkler's recent *The Wealth of Networks* (2006), on the mobilizing potential of internet communication options. Move-On's successes in mobilization against the war on Iraq late in 2002, and before that the meteoric ascendancy of Democratic Party U.S. presidential candidate Howard Dean in 2000, were only some of the indices that seemed to some to suggest we were in a radically new era.

My suggestion is that this is only partly so. Both those campaigns had astonishingly quick results but also astonishingly temporary ones. It is all too easy to sign an internet petition. A sudden spurt of mushrooms likely will not survive the midday sun. The steady operations of social movement media and of face-to-face exchange have in no way been rendered vapid by the listserv or the cell phone "swarm" or 35 million – or 60 million – bloggers.

**(d) Popularizing science and technology.** From pharmaceuticals to fertilizers, from pesticides to petroleum, and from genetic engineering to ubiquitous computing, the public's need for digestible, reliable explanation and advice on technology dilemmas and issues has never been greater. This is a whole dimension of the failure of most mainstream media –in the anglophone world *The Economist* and *The Christian Science Monitor* are exceptions– as well as movement media. Some environmentalist movement media are also exceptions, but the centrality of these matters to our basic ability to evaluate masses of public policies is beyond dispute. Yet we are

mostly left intellectually disenfranchised – and once more, imaginative methods of conveying the subject-matter are urgently required.

**(e) So, lastly, to *scale* and *time-frame*.** One of the enduring shibboleths regarding social movement media is that they are irrelevant because so often ephemeral and small circulation. This is a clumsy conceptual error, presuming that the only modes in which media play a social role are to be found where there are huge media like TimeWarner or Disney. To take the most obvious counter-example, social movement media are usually critical to the focus of the movement in question. Their audience/readership is not composed of couch-potatoes, but of energized activists, a radically different social formation.

In riposte to this, I would direct attention to Clemencia Rodríguez' splendid book *Fissures in the Mediascape* (2001), where among her case-studies is one of a group of women in a poor neighborhood in Bogotá. They developed a local video project, and in the process developed a greatly expanded alertness to their own capabilities, in Amartya Sen's sense of that word (Sen, 1999). They gained a sense of self-worth and self-confidence through finding out that they could successfully use the technology of video, that their accent and dialect "worked" even though it was not "pure" Castilian Spanish, and that their lives and experiences were validated by being recorded and then screened for the neighborhood. They never wished to broadcast to all of Bogotá, let alone the whole of Colombia. Their goal was local and entirely valid in those terms. Furthermore, a number of them became community activists in part due to this experience of self-empowerment.

In other words, judging social movement media achievements solely by measuring their small audiences or their ephemeral lives, is akin to judging nanotechnologies by their size and finding them to be failures. The research question is wrongly framed. The issues of scale and time-frame are often vital to organizing sensible research into social movement media. The local and small-scale and the fleeting do not equal the irrelevant. Samizdat and magnitizdat media in former Soviet Russia, Ukraine, Poland, and elsewhere in the former Soviet zone, abolitionist and suffragist media in the USA and elsewhere, are only some cases in point.

### **The Indymedia network, 1999-2006<sup>17</sup>**

I will conclude by offering a brief commentary on the origin and growth of one of the most interesting independent media developments recently, namely the global Indymedia network.

In the late 1999 WTO confrontation in Seattle, the roles of radical media of many kinds were of the highest importance. They served to prepare the ground for the demonstrations months beforehand, to enable on-the-ground communication among the demonstrators at the time, to bypass corporate

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<sup>17</sup> I have drawn here at points on my earlier publications on Indymedia (Downing, 2002; 2003a, b, c).

media in order to inform the global public of what had transpired in the confrontation and afterwards, and to facilitate international discussion of the issues thereafter. At the media heart of this political activity during the demonstrations and over the year following – but not “at the center,” for that implies a form of central direction that was conspicuously absent – was Seattle’s Independent Media Center. In later confrontations during the World Bank meeting in Washington DC in April 2000, during the IMF and World Bank meeting in Prague in November 2000, at the G8 meeting in Genova in 2001 (samizdat.net et complices 2002), and in still other places where the powerful foregathered to forge their policy priorities, Independent Media Centers emerged as a dynamic, original and contestatory mediatic constellation.

In the build-up to the Seattle confrontations, small-scale radical media had been tremendously important.<sup>18</sup> For mainstream media, it often appeared as though the opposition movements had materialized out of nowhere. But the preparations had begun long before with a plethora of groups, from U.S. steelworkers who had booked 1000 rooms in metro area hotels to 700 international groups who had signed on to the umbrella group Citizens’ Trade Campaign, to farmers’, church, environmentalist and peace organizations.

Indeed it is arguable that the real turning point had emerged over two years previously when April 1998 demonstrations in Canada forced the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) into cold storage. The MAI planning documents were a prime example of global neo-liberal policy that many Canadians as well as others around the world saw as subverting national autonomy in vital economic, cultural and political matters. The important conclusion we need to draw from this is what we might call the anti-technology one, namely that the Internet’s *potential* was used by activists who also worked long and hard in countless other ways *as well* to prepare for the confrontation. It was not that the Internet somehow generated the confrontation.

Equally, the mainstream media emphasis at the time on activists’ Internet use blotted out how they combined the most banal forms of communication technology with it. For instance, in listing the practical communication needs for mobilizing media activism, the IMC organizational record (Blueprint 2000) underscored the irreplaceable function inside the physical IMC space...of *whiteboards!* Likewise, in subsequent discussions of the future for IMCs and the wider diffusion of their information, voices were heard calling for print versions of information otherwise out of reach to people the wrong side of the digital divide. Today, indeed, a number of IMC site-organizations organize weekly or monthly newspapers as well.

However, the ability to stream audio and video brought back to the IMC site by a mass of independent media activists ranging the streets of Seattle, combined with the ability to edit together this material later into

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<sup>18</sup> For a valuable account of this preparatory phase, see Kidd, 2003.

documentaries,<sup>19</sup> was indeed a coup. Webcasting this material simultaneously with the events was equally a powerful use of digital technology to convey the reality of the protestors' challenge. But it is vital still to emphasize the bread-and-butter elements: having enough toner, having enough copiers to handle overload breakdown, more than one fax machine, finding the best rates on cell-phone hires, negotiating a DSL line in sufficient time, having a space that worked sound-wise for recording purposes, having people experienced in logging audio and video files, the evergreen dynamism of still photos, having enough network cards: such factors were found to be vital.

In the coverage of the Seattle confrontation the impact was extraordinary of having over four hundred videographers, audio-interviewers, photographers and writers on the streets and *inside* the action. This was very different from the mainstream media professionals, safely ensconced behind police lines, their cameras as our eyes looking out *with* the police *at* the demonstrators, and with their reporting agenda largely pre-set by the combination of their employers and their typical routines.<sup>20</sup> The striking difference in costs of the reporting work of the activists (compared to the paid professional teams), combined with the advantage of physical vantage-point, enabled their pictures, sound and written reportage to dispute with immediate evidence the mainstream media characterization of the demonstrators as violent, disruptive and uninformed.

In the seven years since Seattle, IMCs mushroomed. As of September 2006, there were some 150 worldwide. They were concentrated mostly in the "West," i.e. the USA (62), Canada (12), Europe (48), 7 in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand; but 17 in Latin America, only 12 in all of Asia including West Asia, and 3 in Africa, amounting to almost 25% of the total sites. This enumeration understates, since at least two sites, Brazil and Italy, are federated sites with a number of sub-sites scattered around the country.

Many IMC sites in the first 2-3 years started up as did the Seattle site, in the process of protest movements' organizing a major local confrontation with one or other agency or forum for transnational corporate policy-makers. Then they continued on afterwards as a communication node for news about global neo-liberal strategies and decisions, and for local conflicts over labour, human rights and environmental issues. As time went

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<sup>19</sup> Such as *Showdown In Seattle* (Indymedia, 2000) and *This Is What Democracy Looks Like* (Big Noise Productions, 2000), which traveled the length and breadth of the USA and Canada, and quite widely in other European and anglophone countries. *Breaking The Bank*, a Paper Tiger TV documentary on Washington DC protest of April 2000, and *The Autumn of Praha*, the Belgian IMC documentary on the Prague confrontation, were two further examples.

<sup>20</sup> This is intended as a comment on the employers and the routines, not a personal attack on mainstream journalists, a number of whom, such as Lisa Cohen of King Five in Seattle, while probably not in particular sympathy with the general viewpoint of my analysis here, nonetheless worked very hard to review and reflect upon the failings of Seattle's mainstream media coverage of the events.

by, however, new sites emerged, all hyperlinked. It is possible in principle now to access fresh news, with still photographs, audio files and video files, *from*—not simply about!—global social justice struggles and movements in all these locations around the world. The dominant language is English, but Spanish, French, Portuguese, and some other languages also figure, with certain sites routinely including translations as well.

The specificity of language is one important communicative dimension of the Indymedia process. Another is the dynamic of space and place, international and local (Downing, 2003b). There have been a number of commentators who have claimed that the Internet serves to cancel out space and condense time, to telescope the planet. Indeed, the revival of interest in Marshall McLuhan among commentators on digital technology frames the Internet, as he might have done, as a new kind of time—and physical space—bending prosthesis. Yet as already noted, many Indymedia sites came into being in the context of a specific meeting of global leaders, and afterwards persisted as communication centers in that same locality, combining news and discussion on local political issues with the hyperlinked opportunity to check in on all the other listed Indymedia sites around the world, with their local as well as global news. Place, like the state, has not melted away!

Earlier I also referred to the Indymedia project as neo-anarchist. In my reading, that is not a put-down. The socialist anarchist political heritage is at least one hundred and fifty years old, and has a number of strengths absent from the marxist socialist political heritage (Downing, 2003c). Neither of these, self-evidently, has a satisfactory array of answers to the issues that bedevil the planet at this point in time, but both continue to contribute some critically important perspectives to our dilemmas. As regards the anarchist tradition, among the absorbing experiments in the Indymedia process have been the attempts to actualize certain forms of open publishing and consensual decision-making (Pickard 2006a; 2006b). Anyone, for the most part in most of the sites and for most of the time, can post their news item or their comments and critiques of other news items. And decisions in many Indymedia collectives are taken on a consensus basis.

Clearly, there are serious down-sides to both these procedures. Some sites have been engulfed by neo-nazi postings, or merely frivolous and personal ones. The process of consensual decision-making is one that may demand more time and patience than many working people have. In both cases, the procedures have been modified at a number of Indymedia sites, for example to shunt postings contrary to the basic purpose of the site into a file where they may be inspected by the curious or the mildly paranoid, and to find ways of indicating levels of dissent which fall short of a blocking dissent.

I do not wish to close this brief discussion of the Indymedia network by suggesting that all in the garden is lovely. In a much-cited intervention in the online *LiP Magazine*, one writer long associated with Indymedia work in

a number of countries ripped into what she termed the shoddy standards of postings, both technical and journalistic, and the typical obsession with police repression of street protest (Whitney, 2005). Opel and Templin (2005) have argued that the political surveillance concern of Indymedia sites not to track their server activity is misplaced, and that some sense for what is working and not working for their users is crucial.

Nonetheless, the formation and operation of the Indymedia network, especially though far from exclusively grounded in the USA, constitutes an absorbing example -among many others, but its global and neo-anarchist dimensions make it stand out from the pack- of the cautiously optimistic judgment in the recent book *The Wealth of Networks* by Yale University Law professor Yochai Benkler (2006), that

We are seeing the emergence to much greater significance of nonmarket, individual, and cooperative peer-production efforts to produce universal intake of observations and opinions about the state of the world and what might and ought to be done about it... These practices leave no single point of failure for discourse: no single point where observations can be squelched or attention commanded -by fiat or with the application of money (*op.cit.*, 271).

Let us not only hope he is correct in his analysis of this trend, but let us apply ourselves to strengthening that trend as energetically, boldly and reflectively as we can.

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## **The world of communications today\***

**Ignacio Ramonet**

First of all, I would like to say hello to all, who came together for the Forum. I am sorry I could not be with you due to health problems. And I would like to thank the organizers of the International Forum for inviting me. I apologize once again for not being in Istanbul today.

Communications nowadays displays a complicated situation. I would like to say a few things about this situation in general, and about the Le Monde Diplomatique newspaper, which I direct, in particular.

Today, there is a problem in general, in the print media, and in the world of communications, arising from two developments. These developments are the internet boom and the rise of press, which is free of charge. Especially, the rapid increase in the number and circulation of daily, free of charge newspapers in the big cities of Europe and other countries, has escalated the importance of press that is free of charge.

The following can be said about the internet boom: An individual can reach any kind of information for free from his computer at home with a high-speed internet connection. This fact has altered the mode of consumption of certain people, who formerly used to pay for print media. On the other hand, internet has given rise to newspapers, which only exist on the internet, and nowhere else. Moreover, this situation has brought along the idea that anyone, who possesses a mobile telephone that can take pictures or record videos, or a computer with an internet connection, can become a journalist.

This situation led to confusion about the profession of the journalist. Who is a journalist? All in all, anyone can provide information and analysis about a process if he/she has the skills. Thus, this question keeps arising.

Today, the profession of journalism is going through an identity crisis. At a time when anyone can be a journalist, no concrete definition of journalism can be made.

The second issue that shook the world of communications is the print media; especially, the free of charge newspapers. The free of charge daily media has had a speedy improvement. For example, today, in France, two

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\* The video message by Ignacio Ramonet, the director of Le Monde Diplomatique, who, due to health problems, could not attend the International Independent Media Forum organized by BIA2 in Istanbul on 4-5 November 2006.

of the three major dailies are newspapers that are free of charge. As a result, newspapers that are free of charge can reach a wider crowd of readers compared to the newspapers that are sold.

This leads to problems because the daily newspapers attract advertisements just like the Internet. For that reason, the economics of the press in general, is negatively affected. The press probably is going through the most important crisis of its history.

The print media, which is part of the industry world with heavy printing machinery and a hierarchical working style resembling that of the factories, has become the target of the "disindustrialisation wave," which has hit the developed world.

Added to these developments were developments arising from the numeric and digital evolution. As a result of this, today, there is no distinction between text, visuals and audio. This is more or less the case technologically too. Consequently, the categories existing within the field of communications, but which were completely distinct from one another, are now becoming combined. Today, the same economic and industrial groups dominate the literature, print and publishing universe; audio, radio and music world; and the visuals world, namely photography, television and cinema.

Besides, journalism, advertising and mass sectors are melting away. Consequently, this situation is resulting in the presence of great industrial media groups, which dominate the media world, and which are important actors of globalization.

Due to time limitations, I have to make my comments on this chaos brief. But it is very clear that today, communications, and especially the world of information and journalism, is caught in the middle of a real storm, which is altering professions and practices.

As a result of all these, trust in news is going down. Today, news, which is having certain deviations, and caught in a crazy competition with no direction, is being influenced by speed, suddenness, sensation and entertainment, in order to be able to survive against erosion and other news systems.

For that reason, the people feel like they cannot trust the news. Among a society, which believes that the information it gets is of low quality, mistrust for information is being spread. However, this is a dilemma, because we know that the quality of information that reaches us is related to the quality of democracy. The media, press and journalism, which is the fourth of the basic powers of the democracy we live in, is collapsing, and is not able to fulfill its duty. One of the reasons why democracy today is not in good condition is because the media is not in good condition.

***Le Monde Diplomatique***

So what is the situation of *Le Monde Diplomatique* (LMD) under these complicated and damaged conditions? How does it manage to continue its development?

The monthly LMD, which was founded about 50 years ago, in mid 1950s, was a subsidiary, for a long time, of the daily *Le Monde*, which was a very serious and important newspaper. LMD became specialized in international politics.

While journalism went through the problems I have just mentioned, LMD in recent years, had difficulties preserving the traditional journalism by writers, journalists, experts and academicians from all over the world, whom we think are most qualified to talk about a problem.

Consequently, everyone, provided that the analysis or work he/she provided is of high quality, can contribute to LMD. The newspaper, which brings a critical perspective to problems of our times, mostly carries long articles. The readers of the newspaper, through the large number of footnotes provided at the end of news, can also refer to articles published in other newspapers, or books and essays. This method by the newspaper prevents the imposition of a dogmatic context.

LMD, which is an orderly and serious newspaper, increased its sales in a short time due to these characteristics. Although its sales dropped slightly due to the aforementioned problems, the newspaper has a circulation of over 300.000 in France. Besides, the newspaper's subscribers outside France are increasing. And what is interesting is that LMD has over 60 publications today in the world. It is the only such example in international press. No newspaper in the world, except LMD has more than 60 (exactly 62 at present) all over the world in 40 languages. The monthly circulation of the paper in the world is over 1.5 million. Not many newspapers sell 1.5 million in so many different languages in the world today. As I said, LMD has more than 60 publications today in Korean, Persian, all European languages, Arabic, Spanish, Latin American languages, English and many other languages. Half of these publications are on paper, the other half is over the internet. There are Chinese, Japanese and Russian publications over the internet. Publishing over the internet gives us the opportunity to spread our opinions to a wide circle.

However, this high number of publications does not mean that the newspaper has an expansionist and imperialist goal. This richness, in essence, is a result of the demand for LMD. In every country, there are groups who would like to publish LMD as supplementary of a newspaper or who would like to publish LMD in a certain language. Most recently, I personally have traveled to South Korea and initiated Korean publications of the paper. The commercial and industrial risk lies with the group, who argues that the local market is in need of LMD's perspective.

The popularity of LMD verifies our evaluations. Today, in any case, there is more information out there compared to the past. In fact, there is so much information that, this is now leading to problems in terms of evaluating the

news. Many people are not able to hierarchically classify all the information they receive due to the fact that the media is not taking on this responsibility. Which is the important information, which is less important, which is the superficial information that is concealing the important and serious information? How did democratic censorship take place in situations where the important information was concealed or covered up by the unimportant information that constantly crowds us?

Under these circumstances, in every country, a rising number of individuals, usually from among the most educated, have given rise to a demand for information that is high-quality, classified and serious, in an attempt to put an end to the chaos in world of information and communications.

In my opinion, this is the demand that we are receiving from all over the world. Our newspapers published in five continents point to the displeasure of people towards this abundance of information and disinformation. Although we are pleased a humble in the face of the demand, this demand, in a way, proves that the LMD, under every condition, is providing high quality journalistic responses to the problems of our day.

Thank you very much.

## **Acik (Open) Radio Experience**

**Omer Madra\***

*"The Radio that is open to all voices, colours and beats of the universe."*

*Açık Radyo, 94.9, has been broadcasting in Turkey with this motto for 11 years.*

### **Açık Radyo (Open Radio) in terms of establishment and structure**

Açık Radyo, which was established on 13 November 1995, is a "regional" radio station that broadcasts in Istanbul and its surroundings. It is a corporation with 92 partners but it is a not-for-profit establishment. The 92 partners have almost equal shares in this general partnership. As a "partnership certificate," each of the shareholders have one of the "Sultan's signatures" lithography series, numbered from 1 to 100, by the deceased artist and sculptor Abidin Dino. The back side of the certificate reads:

*With the hopes that the support you gave in 1995 to the project to establish a free, independent, democratic, self-respecting, sensitive, and extraordinary radio, will set an example for new projects in Turkey...*

Open radio, which does not have an objective of making profit, is not affiliated with any interest or capital group or the state. It is not attached to any "ideology" except for pluralistic democracy, rule of law, and basic human rights and freedoms. Consequently, it is independent. It can even be said that in an environment of media owned by huge capital and influence groups, Open Radio is one of Turkey's –and maybe even the world's– rare independent media organs.

In an environment, where media is becoming more and more monopolized and turning into a bigger and bigger "weapon of mass destruction" and where "information" is poisoning minds, we believe that Open Radio will always remain as a channel that strives to represent joint reason and conscience. When we said we would like to "breathe some fresh air" in the manifestation we wrote before Open Radio began its broadcasts, this is what we meant:

"...What is a radio good for?"

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\* Chief Editor, Open Radio.

'For establishing the Mental Theatre.  
For bringing together intelligent, sensitive and courteous people.  
For constantly having a party of 100.000.  
For establishing the most direct possible contact.  
For preparing 'Programmes for the Deaf'.  
For establishing a 'platform' to bring together people with a certain view and cultural framing.  
For bringing these people together in a democratic, free and a high-quality 'channel'.  
For creating a focus rooted in 'common sense'.  
In short, for breathing in and out. For 'breathing some fresh air'.  
We have to do some respectable work..."

(June 1995)

### **Open Radio by figures:**

During its 11 years, maybe 100 million words have flown to the space from the microphones of Open Radio; maybe 500.000 songs have remained in this world; the voice of silence echoed for 3 million seconds; about 800 volunteer radio programmers from 20 nations have made 750 programmes for more than 96.000 hours; they have earned 24 national and one international award for the radio; the radio became the subject of more than 4.000 news reports in the international and the national media....

People of various professions and expertise, or people with no expertise or jobs, but who had something to tell the world, or the music they would like the world to listen to, shared their views and ideas with the listeners.... they hosted 11.000 people from 72 nations in the small studios of the radio...

They published more than 16.000 articles, studies, commentaries, analysis, stories, games, translations and caricatures on the Web site of Open Radio ([www.acikradyo.com](http://www.acikradyo.com)).

The people of Open Radio saw their "songs" as a means of social transformation and that's how they played them. They took their sounds out of that huge open-air prison called popular entertainment music and used them to return to the world of social conscience or the "sensation of shared community."

In short, the people of Open Radio never deserted values, definitions and cultures: they were always in the forests which were on fire, in the world with warming waters, in the countries going through economic crises, in Bosnia, in Susurluk, in Manisa, in Kosovo, in Baghdad, in the squares of Sihhiye, in Beirut, in Saida, in Sur, in Porto Alegre, in Evian and the streets of Mumbai...

## **The Listener Support Project as a "Model for Sustainable Independence"**

The Listener Support Project is, in a way, Open Radio's "life style." It targets the sustainable independence of Open Radio. The project was launched in March 2004 with the motto: "Open Radio is looking for its Listener!" The aim was to complement the joint efforts of the founders and volunteer programmers with the participation of listeners. In other words, to become a lasting channel through the continuous annual financial contribution –and the intellectual participation– of a couple of thousands of listeners.

Within this scope, the listeners can extend support to an hour of the programme they choose. They may also choose to support more than one programme or more than an hour of a certain programme. The listeners can make their financial contributions by installments, if they choose to, with their credit cards over the phone or "online", or by money transfer. The names of the contributing listeners are announced at the beginning and end of the programmes they support.

The Project, which began in 2004, continued through 2005 and 2006. In 2004, Open Radio had 2.250 supporters, who provided for the 2.5-month expenses of Open Radio. In the year 2005, it had 1.710 supporters and its 2-month expenses were provided for.

It can be said that the Open Radio listeners look after their radio. The project, which entered its third year with a special broadcast on 11 – 19 March 2006, proves that a sustainable independence model, in other words, an "Always Open Radio" is possible. We are expecting that the number of supporters this year will reach 2.500 and provide for the 3-month expenses of Open Radio.

On the other hand, the week-long special broadcast aimed at announcing the Listeners Support Project with guests and special programmes is becoming a traditional radio festivity.

### **Media Independence and Open Radio:**

Open Radio broadcasted a series of programmes of 38 hours in May-September 2006, under the framework of a project called "Media Conversations." A group of 40, made up of Turkey's leading writers, journalists, newspaper and magazine managers, radio and television broadcasters, lawyers, communications experts, philosophers, researchers and media representatives conveyed their views on various issues of media from media ethics, to advertisements, from the right to obtain information, to ombudsman mechanism, from journalism education, to problems of environment journalism..

Moreover, the AC Nielsen international research company conducted a comprehensive "Media Confidence Research" for Open Radio. The results were maybe expected in terms of confidence in media and institutions in Turkey, but they still entailed striking findings. The study, which consisted

of a quantitative, and one qualitative research was discussed and presented in the Open Radio's to "Media Conversations" programme that followed one another. The "Media Conversations" prepared with the support of the Dutch government, will be published as a book in 2007.

**Open Radio in its twelfth year:**

Open Radio, which can be considered as an alternative channel with its independent presence outside the mainstream media, is continuing its efforts in its 12th year with its establishment, its structure and function, its programmes and internet publications. Its efforts focus on:

- Sharing information and feelings about the goings on in the world,
- Becoming a "forum" which is oriented for discussion, influencing each other and organizing for the future,
- Showing that a different world is possible and required...

## ***Evrensel* Newspaper**

### **Mustafa Kara \***

*Evrensel* Newspaper is a daily newspaper that began publishing on 7 June 1995, a time when labour and the labour class were being sidelined. *Evrensel* had to change its name three times up until now to escape state pressure to close it down. It comes with a Sunday supplement, a biweekly youth and city supplement, and a monthly book supplement. It is published daily in Europe and has special German pages in its European edition.

When talking about *Evrensel* at the "Independent Media Forum," it would also be beneficial to discuss the word "independent." "Is *Evrensel* an independent newspaper?" Maybe it would be best to start from here. Much of the criticism against us in our twelve year history has been because we were perceived as being not independent. Especially, during our first years, we were frequently criticized with being "engaged," with being "the newspaper of an idea," and with being a "group newspaper."

The state has targeted our newspaper more harshly. *Evrensel* has been confiscated many times, it has been closed down, and had to change its name three times. *Evrensel* reporter Metin Goktepe was tortured and killed in detention. The newspaper has been banned in a certain region in Turkey, etc. I am telling you all these not to create an image of a newspaper "under pressure," but to explain the state's general approach towards our newspaper, *Evrensel*.

Let's first make this clear: when we say "independent" at *Evrensel* newspaper, we mean "independent from the power relations." With the word "power," we mean the class in power and all its institutions and vehicles.

We have always defined ourselves as being outside the main line that the power relations have drawn for the media. Independence from capital groups, independence from the secret/open organizations of the state, independence from the international orientation of capital and its targets...

Rejecting such links and state of belongings, without doubt, brings along the acceptance of new links and state of belongings. We declared on the day we were established that *Evrensel* would not recognize any state of belonging other than the state of belonging to workers and the public. This state of belonging formed the basis of our reporting. A reporting that is on

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\* Journalist, *Evrensel* Newspaper.

the side of the workers, freedoms, human rights and the brotherhood of the people...

Our reporting has been shaped by the struggle of the labour class against bourgeoisie, exactly the way the history of modern journalism is rooted in the struggle of bourgeoisie against aristocracy; exactly the same way it was shaped by the needs of that struggle. *Evrensel* is a product, a vehicle of the struggle by the labourers and workers against bourgeoisie...

Journalism, which was a very important modern means during the rise of bourgeoisie, is today exhausted, in terms of bourgeoisie. Just looking at any newspaper, which reaches 100 pages on weekends, clearly reveals the situation of journalism today. I am saying this also in terms of the models of reporting, which have become traditional. We are at a point where reporting, that conveys just the visible side of the story and which has been formulated by the "5W 1H" questions, is exhausted for many reasons. A reporting that does not consider the "reason-result relationship" besides the "5W 1H;" what happened just couple of hours before the "incident;" the influence of capital on the incident and many other factors, is no longer able to meet the needs and fulfill its function.

Let me give a simple example; the arguments over the amendment of the Labour Law were in the media for three-four years. Many newspapers carried reports and comments on the issue. *Evrensel*, right from the start, fought against this law through its news, and sided with the labourers who fought against the law. In the Sunday supplement we prepared two weeks ago on the topic of "profession illnesses" we showed the consequences of this law. In these reports, there were life stories from Turkey's famous factories. We interviewed experts, academicians, and labourers, who work for 16 hours daily at these factories and who have serious illnesses. They all pointed to the same necessity: Flexible work. Moreover, we also wrote about the labourers, who are immediately fired when they get ill because of intense work schedules and negative working conditions.

This example is meaningful for many reasons. First of all, it underlines a newspaper's enlightening role by pointing at the consequences even before the law went into effect... Secondly, there is the reality that media companies, which have serious economic relations with large capital groups like Ford, would never be able to publish such a report... Third, our reporting went beyond the impasse of reporting that gets stuck on the "incident" and incorporated serious clues. Fourth and finally, nowadays it is impossible to find newspapers that care about such an issue, let alone report on it...

Another example is from the district of Tuzla... There is a need for alternative newspapers that would report on the labourers at the Tuzla Shipyards, at a time when main newspapers are reporting that "we have become a world leader in shipbuilding". This need is one of the reasons that led to *Evrensel's* existence in the last 12 years. It would be possible to give similar examples in our reporting about the war in Turkey, the nationalist incitements, and reactionary efforts in the fields of culture and arts....

Right from the beginning, we declared that we would create a newspaper that is truly of the people instead of one that is of only professionals. I should add here that our newspaper, from its organization to distribution, from its reports to letters, is published through an extensive reader-volunteer effort.

*Evrensel*, which is referred to as “workers’ newspaper,” has been practicing an approach similar to the “citizen reporting” approach for many years. We place great importance on readers’ letters and reports by our readers as a means for the workers from different regions to communicate. We consider each reader as a reporter. In this respect, we know that we are one of the newspapers with the widest network of reporters throughout Turkey. Otherwise it would have been impossible for us to reach the shipyard news I mentioned earlier. Our news network is so wide that a work accident at the Tuzla Shipyards reaches us in 15 minutes.

This is our greatest advantage. Our disadvantage is to be a newspaper that is trying to stand on its feet by itself in a world of monopolies. If we let aside pressures by the state (the closing down of the newspaper and banning it in certain regions have heavy economic consequences) and the fines that have intensified over the last period, it is a big problem just to distribute such a newspaper in Turkey.

The distribution monopoly is shaped according to the big newspapers’ needs in every respect. This situation does not make our job easier. Although we are far from setting up our own distribution network for now, we are trying to overcome the distribution problem with the help of the volunteers, who sell newspapers in front of factories and poor neighborhoods.

What I have tried to explain in such a short time is that *Evrensel*, which is in its 12th year, is also becoming a school that has taken upon its shoulders the reporting of labour. I would especially like to express that *Evrensel*’s publication process, which incorporates all labourers, workers and readers besides the professional employees, is an important experience in terms of journalism.

Since the topic of this session is “Independent Media Universe and the Possibilities for the Non-Mainstream media to Improve” it would be beneficial to determine a necessity. We need to dream of the more mainstream media in Turkey such as the television. I am calling it a “dream” because when we established *Evrensel*, we were faced with comments such as “This is just a dream!” and “It will not survive for more than a month.”

A television channel that rests on labour and the people, and which exists with their efforts, can succeed in doing what *Evrensel* has done. I have no doubt the labourers, intellectuals and progressives of Turkey will make this “dream” come true. I hope to see a TV representative from Turkey on this table at the next Independent Media Forum...

I would like to thank all participants.

## ***BIA/bianet* as an “Independent Media” experience**

**Ertuğrul Kürkçü**

I would like to begin with a brief comment about the nature of the relationship, which we conceptualise with the expression, “Independent Media,” which names this forum too.

We hear suggestions that this conceptualisation does not say much about the nature of the media it features, it does not present any indicators about the nature or the content of the media in general, or a single broadcast, radio, newspaper, television, news agency, Internet site or page it designates: “Independence as such has no significant meaning!”

Or, within the context of a semantic discussion, it may even be argued that independence of media is impossible: “How independent can media be? In the end, a particular media is dependent on the power, person or group who owns it. Independence is a pretension, which can never actually materialise!”

“Independent Media” may constitute a definition which, indeed is not scientifically crystal clear. It could even be said, from a semantic point of view, that it is a paradoxical phrase. However, since it has also given its name to this forum, the conceptualisation of “Independent Media” should bear a certain value. This relative value, in my opinion, does not stem from its terminological punctuality, but rather, from the implication it has assumed within the context of the ongoing “class struggle” in the field of communications.

“Independent Media” is actually a programmatic conceptualisation. A programmatic conceptualisation arising out of the strife to put social benefit in place of the commercial dominance over the physical and intellectual instruments of reproduction and redistribution of communication/information. When we say “independent media,” we voice the will to establish the independence of the information/content provided by the media, from capital and state; the will to transfer the ownership and control of the media from corporations to the society.

Until it is replaced by a more elaborated one, this conceptualisation will continue to signify the physical basis and programmatic target of the struggle for media freedom, ongoing through different techniques, technologies, within different scales, levels, environments and content, and in different national, regional and local boundaries against dominant relations of communication. No matter how complicated this process is, and how

"pluralistic" its subjects are, it can be named using a single term: "Independent Media." At any time and place this concept is voiced, it will make clear to us that a class struggle is going on within the context of the media.

### **BIA/bianet**

The Independent Communication Network (BIA) project is one of the hubs formed in Turkey in the last decade within the framework of the struggle for freedom of expression/communication. As the coordinator of this project, I will try to convey to you our experiences, comment on them and to draw some conclusions.

Our activity is known in Turkey and across the globe mainly through our news web site bianet.org. Actually, bianet is only one of the tens of activities organized within the scope of BIA. But, it would not be an exaggeration to say that bianet.org, due to its influence, permanence and stability is the crown of BIA. Still, there exists a head and a body that this "crown" is placed on. And creating this head and body was one of the main issues in our efforts to set up a starting point in the struggle for "independent media." Bringing them to life has cost a lot of time and effort. Bianet would not have existed without them and equally, they are organically related to BIA.

Indeed, if we had to define BIA with a single word, it would be best to call it a "process." BIA, according to our experience, is equivalent to the "transition" between the "thesis" -the dominant relations of communications/production- and the "antithesis" -the socialisation of the communications/production instruments, in both ontological and philosophical terms. BIA is not a completed thing, an institution, organisation, company, association or something of that sort: You could call it somewhat a "citizen initiative" being implemented "on behalf of the citizens," a search for freedom led by reporters, a ground for intellectual quest, or a space of solidarity against pressure... But there is a common denominator intersecting all these: Communications and its physical materialisation level: Production, the production of news and information. BIA is the joint expression, the umbrella for a series of activities revolving around these axis.

BIA's coming into existence is simultaneous with the huge collapse of the Turkish mainstream media in the 1990s, and the burning need of the social opposition for real, honest news sources.

As the two great financial crises of the years 2000-2001 clearly revealed, the ill-fated marriage between bank capital/finance capital and media capital, has led to extremely grave consequences for the Turkish media. The media has finally turned into a source of disinformation under the control of corporate interests. This incited certain segments of the public, whose

voices were excluded from the coverage of the mainstream media, to a quest for an alternative outlet.

It were the directors of the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB), who first voiced that there is need for a separate, independent channel, and came knocking on our door under these circumstances in 1996. In a way, we could call the TMMOB, the trade organisation of the professional engineers and architects, the "think tank" of Turkey, which brings together many researcher groups and individuals who reflect about Turkey's fundamental issues. TMMOB's major concern was the lack of information outlets through which they could convey their messages/alternatives regarding Turkey's social problems -such as the energy crisis- and the ways to combat them. They were looking into whether they could establish a news agency formed on the basis of their own organizational structure. The IPS Communication Foundation, which we had established to "support projects in the areas of communications and development," conducted a six-month field study, mainly based on face-to-face debates with the local media to find out the feasibility of setting up such an agency. Those were the years, when Turkey witnessed a private radio boom. The quest was welcomed by the local media and the result was different from what we, the TMMOB, or the local media had expected:

First of all, establishing a news agency was not feasible. An agency would be very costly, would require a specialized central body and would not possibly be managed/administered under the patronage of another institution specialised in a different field (science and technology).

On the other hand, the study showed that we could reach the same goal by bringing together the skills of these relatively small local media structures, and that a peculiar synergy could arise from this solidarity, without spending so much resources and going through so many difficulties. We jointly reached the decision that it would be possible to establish a base, which oversees the production-based solidarity of the local media, where everyone could put their own productions in a common pool, share voice, image and text. Since they would not be each others' competitors, solidarity and production would be smoothly realized on such a basis. And the Internet appeared as the most suitable media as the physical basis of this cooperation. In fact, in 1996, Internet was yet practically nothing more than sending and receiving electronic mails.

We gathered a national conference in Ankara in 1997 based on the findings of this local media research and its eventual conclusions. A group of 120 local media representatives, reporters, journalists and editors mostly from local radios, newspapers and televisions, the leaders of the TMMOB, and the Turkish Physicians Association (TTB), the elemental consumers of the Turkish news environment, small-scale producers of news and information and the local and foreign experts that our Foundation brought together, were present at this conference.

The basic structure that we had envisaged at this Conference continues to be operational for about 10 years now, sometimes with more, sometimes with less activities:

- The BIA Editorial Desk compiles the dispatch sent to the BIA news pool by local radios, newspapers and televisions, and news reports from the news center in Istanbul and other BIA units; and carries on with the publications of bianet.org.
- The BIA Legal Support Unit monitors and covers the rights violations in the national and local media; produces quarterly and annual reports; responds to legal help requests.
- The BIA Programme Production Centre (PUM) mainly produces programmes, which local radios would not be able to produce with their own means and capacities: "Women's Window," "Children's Radio," and "Today in History."
- The BIA Local Media Training Programme, through the training of the local newspapers, radios and televisions employees, members of the network, strives for the qualitative improvement of the Turkish local media that they would perform in accordance with the guidelines of international professional journalism. It publishes book series to introduce the information gained through the training programmes in the "journalism education" literature.

In summary, bianet.org is not what BIA is all about. It is the visible aspect of our reporting activities. However, our experience shows us that we could not suffice with the transformation of a single moment in the communications process, the news production. Unless all components of the process are transformed altogether, it would be impossible to introduce an alternative to the existing journalism practices.

### **The possibilities provided by the Internet**

In 1996-1997, when we had started to shape the Independent Communications Network project in our minds, Internet in Turkey and in the world did not imply a media capacity further than sending and receiving electronic mails. In 2000, when we began Internet publishing, we saw our website rather as a display window, where a news agency displays its news. In other words, we did not regard it as any different from the website of the Anatolia News Agency, or Reuters or IPS. The number of website audiences in Turkey was very low. There was not enough information on the opportunities of this media and the physical basis was very weak. Internet connections were still through ordinary telephone lines. Yet very rapid developments took place in just one year. In 2001, we realised that there have appeared many new instruments particular to Internet publishing and Internet journalism that we were not taking advantage of: For example, we were not adequately taking advantage of "hypertext;" in other words, the

possibility of linking texts to each other infinitely. Secondly, we were not good enough in transferring images and sound, and we were not adequately taking advantage of the multimedia, and we were not fully open to two-way communication. Thus, during the first period, in 2000-2001, we spent most of our time discovering the characteristics of this whole new world, to think about these, try them, to find the answers to them and to train a reporters' group, who could act with us. In the meantime, we also went through a really serious training.

During the years 2000-2003, there was a huge increase in Internet publishing, Internet usage and the number of people, who used Internet for the purpose of accessing news in Turkey. The increase in broadband Internet connection options and the introduction of Internet in offices, etc. played a significant role in this.

According to our observations, bianet.org is mostly used in offices and schools, and mostly during working hours. Seen from this aspect, it could be said that the Internet is the "media of the working class," or their media to reach news.

One of the important consequences of the prevalence of Internet usage has been "interactivity." First, the students and academicians living abroad, then, those in Turkey, who had something to say but could not find a channel to have their voices heard in the mainstream media, or who did not see the mainstream media as a suitable channel for themselves, started sending news, comments, information, and sources to bianet.org.

Our morning meetings start off with a relatively poor menu. Our editors discuss the reports they gather, or the issues they plan to follow with scarce means – we do not buy news since we do not have sufficient resources for that and also because we want to keep away from their cliches. However, the real agenda is formed in the afternoon or towards the evening. Individuals, who do not gather around the same table with us to form an agenda in the morning, but who live through and feel the agenda in their own environments, and who think about and would like to convey their own issues, environments and things that interest them, send us their own news, comments, observations, criticisms or articles as ordinary citizens. Since they already know our editorial priorities and approach, they write their pieces in accordance with those criteria. By the evening, we receive news, articles, information from at least 3-4 people, whom we do not know. Most of the time, we may receive analyses that are much more well-written than those of the experts we turn to. Therefore, we always assume this: we are not just 5 editors, 1 journalist, 2 publishing managers; in other words, a total of 7 people. We are a world of people. We don't know how many yet. We don't know those people; we don't know which one of them will cooperate with us that day. We are the media of citizen-journalists.

### **Citizens journalism**

Given the means of access provided by the Internet, technically everyone, who has a computer and a broadband Internet connection, is a media boss

on this technology basis. But still, the effect and intensity of the job done is related to where it reaches, and how much.

Within this framework, bianet presents a channel preferred by those, who would like to have greater influence in a shorter period of time. If website traffic analysis are not misleading us, bianet is being visited by daily 30 thousand people. This is a figure that cannot be underestimated taking into account our size. We have an average of 300 thousand monthly page loads. These figures are positive for us and we can assume that they mean that we do have an effect. A blogger may not have this many readers. But blogging has given the opportunity to everyone to express their own thoughts, share their knowledge and opinions with others. This is quite important in terms of Internet publishing and means that an extremely wide and special news spectrum is on the making. Reflecting them, or benefiting from them means that you are introduced to a new world, quite different from the traditional and classical news sources. This means that there is news in every home, at every desk. It means there may be a reporter in every home or a reporter in front of every computer. We have not yet seen all the consequences of the interaction, the synergy they might have created. But we definitely will.

Especially during US occupation of Iraq and the ongoing war, it was a blogger who revealed the usage of depleted uranium bullets by the invasion forces, which were kept secret through the disinformation by the American mainstream media and the embedded reporters under the guardianship of the US administration. An American named Dahr Jamal, who got bored with the American mainstream media, went to Baghdad and established a Web site called Iraq Despatches... Further examples can be given. However blogging should be handled with caution – or “cum grano salis” as the Latin proverb goes- when reporting is the issue in question. There is no guarantee for the authenticity of the material on a blog. Since there exists no professional rule of conduct or deontology that bounds that blogger, there is no way to know how much of it is imaginary, how much of it is true, and how much of it can be confirmed. Therefore it is very important to establish a control/verification mechanism. Yet individual contributions have been extremely valuable for BIA/bianet.

### **Local media**

On the other hand, there is the Turkish local media environment that we have cultivated within the framework of this project. We placed a lot of importance on local media from the very beginning for two reasons. First of all, albeit it, in one way or another, is in some kind of an interaction with the local centres of power, local media is financially and economically more independent than any other central media corporation. Local newspapers are usually published by a printer as a side job. We are talking about newspapers that can survive with 500 subscribers. Local radios can handle their own expenses through local advertising revenues, thus they are not indebted to large banks. At the worst, they owe money to the local grocery store or drygoods store, who in turn owe them for

advertisements. Therefore, they have a higher potential of economic independence.

Second of all, they are more real. They are in direct contact with their fellow citizens. When viewed in terms of citizens journalism, they serve as the direct voice of their environments. Of course, this directness does, on the other hand, go through more than one break up and deterioration within the rhetoric of local hegemony. But still, there is a potential. Moreover, they have the news and information that the central core of Turkey no longer hears, or does not want to hear. For example, we knew in the winter of 1999 that the shopkeepers would uprising in 2000 – I always see this as an evidence of the success of the project, because when you follow the local media and when the information from local chambers of shopkeepers gather in your news pool, you can envisage that something is going to explode. As a matter of fact, this prevision, which we also included in our 1999 end-of-year evaluation, became a reality in 2000.

This is something that cannot be seen in the mainstream media even if you wanted to; because they are not interested in those sources anymore. They don't look there. Such local news by the Anatolia News Agency usually appear in a tiny corner in the economy pages. From the point of view of the mainstream media – and this goes for the mainstream media in the West too – the world has just the North and the West hemispheres. Although Turkey does not precisely belong in either of these hemispheres, take a look at the Turkish media... It never sees down south, Africa, Asia or the Middle East... At the moment there is a serious situation in Iran, so we find ourselves bound to see it. In Turkey, the politics, business, entertainment and sports news of Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir are the centre of attention. And of course, those of Bodrum and Antalya during the summer... The suburbs, small cities, towns, or villages where the majority of people live, and the life that goes on in such places, are covered only when something "strange" – violence, rape, disasters- happens.

Therefore, we place a lot of importance on our interest in the local media, both because the local media is a leg and part of our project, and also, in terms of reaching the realities. The more training relationship we established with the local media, the more we benefited from that news source.

Of course, we could only carry on with our training programmes because we had a grant, which we could allocate to these programmes. Otherwise, since this is something that does not yield profits, it would be impossible to think that a corporation, which sees reporting as a commercial activity, would allocate resources to such a project. This grant provided us with the resources for continuous contacts with about one thousand men and women all over Turkey, who embrace these editorial policies, even if loosely.

We established reporting training relationships with about one thousand people. As a consequence, we gained the opportunity to establish another kind of relationship with the academicians, the university staff. They

established a training relationship beyond their students who are in the universities to become journalists, but with those, who were already journalists but had never received formal journalism training. Therefore, this was a whole new experience for the university, a new experience for us, and provided us with a fundamental news source. From this viewpoint, one of the important aspects of our reporting project is to pay special attention to local news and to put local news into use. However, we have to confess that there recently has been a decrease in this. One of the reasons is that the local media can now express itself through the Internet with their own means. In the national conference in 1997, only two out of a hundred people were aware of the Internet, whereas, in November 2006, there was not one single newspaper, radio or television, which we were in contact with, who did not have their Internet websites. Since they are now able to instantaneously their news on the Internet like we did, they do not need to communicate with us through a separate communications group. But we are aware of each others' news and we still continue to benefit from each other.

### **Rights reporting**

One of the characteristics of our Internet publishing/reporting is that we have a focus on rights in our coverage. Our distinguishing attitude here is that we have a positive discrimination policy for rights struggles, for those who struggle for their rights and the meaning of each incident for the one, whose rights have been violated. We take sides with the oppressed and the marginalised.

For example, during the local elections, we don't just give the results and make an analysis of its political-social meaning. We focus on women, who are "the others" in Turkey's political spectrum. How many women candidates were there? How many women were elected to local administrations? How many of them were elected mayors? As we report, we want to do what nobody else does, and look at politics from the standpoint of those, who are marginalised and neglected: women, Kurds, Alevis, different sexual identities, workers, the poor, the farmers...

We adopt a similar approach in our employment policies. Half of the personnel, who currently work at bianet, are women. Although the ratio changes from time to time, we have always tried to keep at least a 30 percent women quota. If there ever are two candidates for a position with the same qualifications, we always try to choose the woman over the man. Therefore, we take care to live with the principles we apply to our work, and to reflect our principles to our reports.

Within the scope of our project/reporting, rights organisations have an important place as our news sources. Therefore, we believe it is very important to keep in touch with them over the Internet and to support them to express themselves over the Internet or through any other channel. The synergy, which arose out of the functioning of all these organisations,

provided us with such an effective visibility that, we could have never imagined in 1997 or 2000.

Internet publishing does provide you with an advantage here. Someone, who reads the daily Hurriyet may tell another person about a story that he/she has read. But, if people like something they read/see/hear on bianet, they can send that piece to hundreds or thousands of people. Therefore, multiplier effect in Internet reporting is very high. For example, when our daily news list reaches local radios, they can do further work on those news reports, they can convey those news, and those news can successively reach another news source. The report can be transmitted from one website to another. Moreover, Internet reporting provides you with a global effect. Almost one fifth of our audience is from outside Turkey. Half of these are from the US, the other half from Europe, and some are either emigrant workers, those, who are in political exile or students in Australia or elsewhere. Therefore, we are aware that our reports are instantly read and evaluated by people from all over the world, who speak Turkish, and that those people may contribute to us. In this respect, we are immediately warned of our mistakes and we can quickly correct them. One of the most important aspects of Internet publishing is that, we do not have to keep one specific news report as is forever. You can rapidly correct any mistake. And the news is not consumed and put aside at that moment, day or month, like the news on the radio, television or newspaper. You, as an Internet publisher, also represent the past with your archive. Therefore, by correcting your mistakes, you can continuously reproduce your archive. But on the other hand, the speed with which your mistakes spread is much higher compared to the other media channels. And this calls for a higher responsibility.

### **Sources and public media**

As I said at the beginning, we prefer to call what we do: "Independent media" This, for us, indicates a "class struggle" in the field of media/communications. It is a concept that implies the will and inclination of gaining independence from the bases of power: the state and the capital. And it is crystal clear that this class struggle will be resolved into public media. If the basis of journalism is to be public interest rather than commercial interest, individual profit and market regulation, then it seems inevitable that the ownership of the means of communication has to undergo a significant change.

This implies something different than the monopolistic publishing/broadcast, under the ownership of state and of the supervision of bureaucracy, whose approach to news and information is based on security, instead of rights and freedoms. This approach towards public media exists today in certain countries and also in Turkey.

What we are after is a new communications order, with the fundamental aim of helping each citizen enjoy his/her right to communications, which

allocates public funds to help citizens practice this right, and where, you have the right to access everything from personnel training to technical infrastructure just because you are a citizen.

Independent media is the sum of all the initiatives aimed at enhancing the role of the citizens media and at detaching the media activities from the boundaries of the market which is taking and will be taking place between today and the great transformation of the future.

As long as it is under the monopolistic dominance of the communications market, expecting that independent media could replace the mainstream media in the absence of a profound political and social transformation, would only be a futile dream that does not take into account the real powers at play. However, with social policy demands, the democratisation of the relations of communication, with the broadening of the freedom of expression, with increased opportunities and channels for participation, with greater allocation of public funds to citizen media, and the opening up of the state's communications facilities to the democratic supervision of the citizens, you could, up to a certain extent, free communications from the dominance of the commercial media and market pressures.

Finding resources for a not-for-profit journalistic activity is an issue and a problem that cannot be underestimated. We are an Internet news channel. We have been operational for nine years. When we look back, we cannot complain about how far we have come; but we went through so many difficulties to reach this point... At the end of 10 years, we still don't have any money in our cash box. Our financial resources are not from commerce or trade, but from local or international public interest donation grants: we present our projects to programmes for the improvement of human rights and democracy and get resources from them. We spend the grants within the scope of the programme of the projects.

Between 2000-2003 and 2003-2006 we got grants from two different programmes: the MEDA programme and the Human Rights and Democracy Initiative of the European Union. We met 80 percent of our project budget from these sources. We raised the remaining 20 percent from individual donations and small grants.

The expenses of this forum too are being met by the budget of this project.

What will happen when the project is over?

We are yet far from confident provisioning for the next decade. But this is why this forum was organised anyway. We are hoping to learn from our colleagues and friends, who are here from all over the world to join their efforts with ours for independent journalism. Moreover, we are hoping to join our resources and efforts and gain momentum to mobilize the power of the citizens against the power of the communications market. From what we have listened to so far, we can see that we can take the "a different

world is possible" approach of the World Social Forum one step further: "A different communications is possible!"

## **Il Manifesto**

### **Orsola Casagrande\***

First of all I would like to thank the organizers of the forum for inviting me here. In particular my warm thanks go to Ertugrul and Nadire, also for their precious daily work. Let me begin by saying thank you to all the journalists in Turkey. Despite their very matter of fact attitude, we should always bear in mind what journalists in this country have to face everyday to do their job, to report events, to tell us what is happening. We should always remember the repression they face, the mistreatment and harassment and violence they have to suffer. They are put in prison simply for doing their job correctly. I think being a journalist in Turkey is not the easiest job at hand. So I think you would agree with me in thanking and praise our friends and colleagues here in Turkey for what they are doing.

We are living in permanent global war times and therefore the question of independent and correct information is crucial. Correct information, is always important but now, I think, is what could make the difference in the direction the world would go. We have seen too many times during the lasting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq embedded information, with the army generals basically feeding the embedded journalists. Never before, I think, we have seen such a level of subdued information. And this is obviously an attack not only to the right of the people to know what is really going on, but also an other way of promoting this totally false idea that there is some kind of "clash of civilisation" going on. Nothing is further from the truth, I believe, and this is why forum and meetings like this are crucial and must be replicated in other parts of the world. Also it is crucial that we establish nets, that we are able to create our own sources around the world, and this is possible, I believe, only by creating networks of independent media, journalists, papers and television. Technologies now are very sophisticated but access to these new technologies is also very easy. And this is our strength as independent media, because we are able to post news basically seconds after it happened. And we are able to post first hand accounts of what is happening. And the more the news that circulates, the more difficult it would be for those who would rather keep it quiet to manipulate it, or even censor it.

I will briefly tell you what *il manifesto* is. *Il manifesto* is a daily national paper published in Italy. It has a circulation of around 80,000 copies per day. It was founded 35 years ago by a group of communist party militants

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\* [Il Manifesto](#), Italy.

and leaders, expelled by the party in 1969 because of different reading of the situation at the time, particularly the so-called Prague spring events of 1968, but more in general because of different opinions over the 1968 period.

We are a cooperative, which means that we journalists and workers own the paper. We are 120 at present. Being a cooperative also means that we rely on our strength alone. Because we are a left paper we don't have much advertisement and so we rely heavily on what we sell. This is the price of freedom, in a way. And it is a price worth paying. We don't do a "scoop kind" of journalism, rather, we tend to analyze situations, we go around and tell places, stories, with particular attention to issues such as labour, workers and worker rights, foreign policies, social issues, human rights, women, immigration, and of course, culture. In other words, we try to tell a territory in all of its aspects, by making investigations and by denouncing exploitation while at the same time trying to be pro-positive. I mean, we use the paper as a tool, a tool which can be used by the readers also.

Being independent almost always also means living in precarious financial situation. Last summer we launched a campaign among the readers asking them to contribute to the financial side of the paper. In the past we sold shares to our readers, who in fact hold around 40 per cent of the paper's name (*il manifesto* as a logo). This time we spent the summer going around the country doing meetings and raising money. I must add that we all get the same salary. We are constantly changing our design and style, because we believe that it is important to experiment new forms of communication as well, so for example for us the use of images, pictures, photos is very important and hold a special place in the realisation of the paper. Normally the first page will be almost entirely occupied by a photo, itself telling the main news (again, what we believe is the main news of the day). Headlines are also very important: sometimes a good headline is stronger than a full article.

We are not the only experience of independent media in Italy. But we were the pioneers, I would say. The most important experience of independent media came out after the G-8 summit in Genoa, in 2001. In the wake of the rise and growing popularity of the social forums after Seattle, in Italy there was a long and interesting work done in preparation to the G-8. A radio network was established, connecting all the movement radios, i.e., the radios belonging to social centres and not linked with any parties. The radio network worked alongside some papers, namely us at *il manifesto*, *carta* (a weekly magazine, which we could say is an offspring of *il manifesto*) and other smaller papers. For 6 months before the G-8 and then during the time of the meeting and after (unfortunately because as you all very well know it turned out to be a real tragedy, with Carlo Giuliani, a young boy killed by the police and hundreds of people arrested and tortured in police custody) and still to this day the network has been providing daily information on the issue.

In Italy now, along with *il manifesto*, there are other independent media. The movement radios I believe are an important media, along with indymedia. In particular in the north east of Italy we have a global project, an offspring of a social centre radio, "Radio Sherwood" They have created this global television, broadcasting on satellite, which is obviously a huge step in terms of being able to communicate all over the world, literally.

We also have other experiences, for example, UNINOMADE, i.e., a nomadic university. We as a paper are among the founders of this itinerant university, a group of teachers, lecturers, professors, students, workers organising seminars and discussions on topics such as the 'metropolis'. Just now in Venice we started a three-act seminar in collaboration with Biennale architecture on the metropolis, its transformation, conflicts and multitudes. The starting point being the observation of how our cities and suburbs are changing.

I shall finish by adding one more thing. In Italy, as in many other countries, there is big talk about the crisis of politics. In a way the creation of these new forms of communication is an answer to this crisis, which certainly affects political parties. But there is also another message coming for example from the struggles we are seeing in Italy at the moment, and I am thinking for example at the struggle of the people of Val Susa, a place near Torino, north of Italy, against the high speed train which should be carrying goods which are not there to be carried. And I am thinking also of the citizens movement against Mose, the incredibly expensive (and useless, except for those building it) dam project in Venice, or against the building of a second American military base in Vicenza, near Venice, which will make of that area the most important military zone for the U.S.'s next operation against the Middle East. All these movements of citizens are born out of one main request: people are tired of not being part of the decision-making process. They want to decide, they want to say their opinion and contribute to the final decision, to the running of their territory, to the so called governance, and ultimately to the control of their lives and future. This is why, for example, all these citizens committees are extremely informed, they have studied, researched the issues they are talking about. There is a strong demand of representation. What the people in Vicenza are saying is not simply, we don't want another U.S. military base in this area, move it over there. What they are questioning is indeed the Italian government policy of war. They are asking the government to change its strategy of war. They don't want to be part of this global conflict, which brings me to the beginning of my contribution. At stake for us, independent media, as for the people is, I believe, the possibility to take decisions into our hands. Delivering independent, non-biased, non-racist, information is –for me– the starting point of this process of reclaiming our future.

## **Ozgur Radio Experience**

**Songul Ozbakir\***

Hello to you all from *Özgür Radyo* (Free Radio)...

Actually, Fusun Erdogan, the general coordinator of *Özgür Radyo*, was going to make this presentation here today. She is unable to do that although she really would have liked to. At the moment, she is paying the price of being a manager at an opposition media institution, by being under arrest. For that reason, I am speaking in front of you today and I bear the responsibility of talking on behalf of Erdogan, and the responsibility of being an employee of an independent media institution. Not only our general coordinator is under arrest, but our news manager and a colleague are also arrested and are in isolation.

For this reason, today, I will talk to you about the difficulties and problems we face as an opposition media institution, rather than, "independent media universe and the development opportunities for the non-mainstream media," which is the title of this session. I also would like to talk about this issue because we believe that it is one of the obstacles in front of the development of the opposition media institutions.

Before I go into the problems we are faced with, I would like to briefly talk to you about our experience of the last 11 years. As a radio station, which had a place for itself in a metropolitan city like Istanbul among radio stations of the media monopolies, and one, which managed to survive for 11 years despite serious economic problems, we thought it would be appropriate to share our experiences with you.

We began our broadcasts in 1995. As we began our broadcasts, we said we would not become a "music box." We said we would be the voice of workers, labourers, youngsters, women workers, and the oppressed, whose voices are choked by the single-type noise imposed upon them by the monopolist media. Through our programmes and news stories, we tried to voice the problems and demands of the oppressed segments of the society; we tried to inform the people on the solution of their problems. We served as the voice of the laid-off workers, defending their working rights; as well as serving as the voice of university students, who fought for the right of free scientific education. We became the voice of Kurds, who demanded the right to education in their mother tongues, cultural rights, equality, freedom and brotherhood; as well as becoming the voice of the disabled, who

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\* Editor, *Özgür Radyo*.

demanded humane working and living conditions. We demanded freedom both for the intellectuals, who stood trial for advocating freedom of thought and expression, and for those who are harassed for their sexual choices. Our listeners range from political prisoners to housewives, from workers at a textile factory to shopkeepers.

We broadcast from Istanbul, but we report on developments throughout the country, as well as international developments. With the news programmes that we broadcast every hour, our book reading programmes, culture and arts programmes, and programmes on "women, children, workers, youngsters, environment, sports and health," to which we invite people from different segments of the society, we are an opposition media institution; we are an alternative to others. We are independent from the capital, and from the state. But being an opposition and alternative media institution, we are a side. We side with those faced with injustices, the oppressed, the excluded, and those forced to live under inhumane conditions. We want an equal, free and brotherly world for everyone. Our opposition is to this system, and our alternative is an egalitarian society. For that reason, developments and news that are not even slightly mentioned in the monopolist media are usually in our headlines. We see what they don't see and we write what they don't write. We are not a music box, but we have music programmes with a wide archive of songs including those of the different peoples living in this country as well as of people all over the world. This is how we convey and keep alive the culture of the peoples.

We have a very wide news network. Our broadcasting policy provides us with news flow both from within the country and from various places in the world. And as a radio channel with such a broadcasting policy, we pay the price.

Our broadcasts were suspended for a total of three years and ten months in 11 years. The suspension penalties by the Radio and Television Higher Board (RTUK) could be the subject of a humour programme: our broadcasts were suspended once because we played a song from an album sold freely in music markets; and we were handed a penalty of suspension once for reading a news article published in a daily newspaper. The singer, who sang the song that, caused us to receive a penalty, or the newspaper, which published the article, did not receive any penalties. All suspension penalties were handed out for similar reasons. We took our cases to the European Court of Human Rights and won one of them. The court ordered Turkey to pay compensation. Other cases are pending at the ECHR. The latest victim of RTUK has been the *Anadolu'nun Sesi* (Anatolia's Voice) radio. The broadcasts of *Anadolu'nun Sesi* Radio have been suspended for a month.

I am giving you these examples because these are the prices you pay for being alternative, independent and opposition. And we are paying a high price. Lastly, our general coordinator Fusun Erdogan was detained on the street on September 8, 2006 and then arrested. On September 21, teams from the Anti-Terrorism Unit in Istanbul raided our offices and seized all of

our broadcasting vehicles, computers, cameras, recorders and archives. Our broadcasts were interrupted without a RTUK decision. After seven and a half hours of search, our offices were plundered. Our news manager Halil Dinc, and Sinan Gercek, who works in our advertising department were detained and arrested during this raid.

The offices of *Atılım* (Progress) and *Dayanışma* (Solidarity) newspapers, which are both alternative media institutions, and the *Sanat ve Hayat* (Arts and Life) magazine, which is a culture and arts magazine, were raided during the same period. Their employees were detained and arrested. The new Anti-Terrorism Law was shown as the ground for all these raids and arrests. The raids and detentions are not a coincidence for sure. Before this law went into effect, we had radio programmes explaining that everyone who is in opposition of the current system would be victimized if this law went into effect. Those in opposition were not successful in preventing this law from going in effect. The law hit hard mainly the opposition institutions. This law sees all those in opposition as terrorists, and the work of those in opposition, as terrorist activity... And what we went through is the implementation...

We are discussing the development possibilities of alternative and local media. We are discussing the development possibilities of opposition media. It is clear that there are two big obstacles in front of those in opposition. First is economic and the second is political.

The media, which is independent of the capital, has to create its own economic resources. Our economic revenue comes from advertisements and promotions. However, since advertising with an opposition radio has its repercussions, these revenues are quite limited. For this reason, the opposition media should discuss how they can support each other.

The second serious obstacle is political. Being opposition, being alternative has its price. You would have to pay prices similar to those we are paying now. There are things that can be done. We are not desperate. We need to strengthen the opposition front and we need to be in solidarity.

When these two obstacles are overcome, there won't be any need to be alternative or opposition anyway. For that reason, those who want to be opposition or alternative, should be in economic and political partnership, support each other and be in solidarity with each other. This is what we, as the *Özgür Radyo* want from this forum. We came to this day by overcoming the economic, political and human resource problems we faced in 11 years of the radio's life. And now we need your support. First of all, we call on you to pressurize the state institutions and the government so that our friends, who were arrested arbitrarily with no justification, are freed. We call on you to report on our problems. We call on you to visit our friends, send letters and tell you are in solidarity with them... More can be done with the proposals of our guests here from many different countries with vast experiences.

We don't want the workers, those who create this life, to surrender to the noise of the bourgeois media, which is the voice of its owner....

## **Independence is just another word for struggle –every single day**

**Bascha Mika\***

It is easy to talk about independence. And, because everybody likes to regard themselves as independent, a degree of suspicion is required. Suspicion of supposedly independent-minded people, and also of certain newspapers that may use this description in their headings.

Independence must be proved on a daily basis, in everyday life, and in practice. For the *taz* newspaper, independence is a vital necessity. It is the very reason for its existence. Even at the time of its foundation, almost 30 years ago, no one was looking for “just another newspaper.” What was needed was an independent, dauntless media voice. A paper committed to internal and external freedom of the press without compromise, and one prepared to accept the consequences of such a position.

Has much changed since then? In fact, not really. If anything, newspapers’ independence is under threat more than ever. While it is true that in Germany there are still hundreds of regional and local papers and a handful of national dailies, this apparent variety disguises the uncomfortable truth – most of them belong to a small number of large publishing houses and media companies. What appears at first glance to be colourful and diverse, in fact conceals a reality of monotony and conformity. Two-thirds of all German citizens have access to only one regional newspaper. The freedom to make up their own minds? Nigh on impossible.

Today we have to face yet another challenging threat to the independence of the media market: a progressive focus on making money. The more profit a newspaper wants to make, the higher its reliance on advertising. If a paper is geared towards serving advertising interests, there always arises the danger of sacrificing that invaluable good, the freedom of the press, for the sake of commercialism.

Internal and external freedom of the press is interminably linked. The *taz* would never have been able to sustain its identity for so long without retaining its commercial independence. And, no matter how much the paper has changed, in this regard it is reassuringly old-fashioned.

A free press can be both good and bad, according to Albert Camus. However, a press that is not free can only be bad. Independence and press

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\* Chief Editor, *taz* – die tageszeitung, Berlin.

freedom – that is what the *taz* stands for. And, with the help of its readers and associates, it sets out to prove itself every day.

## **It is not easy to be a pioneer!**

**Huseyin Aykol\***

If we take into consideration the Ottomans too, unfortunately Turkey is a country where the arrival and improvement of press was far too delayed. However, the development of the press organs, which we have come to call the "media", has reached an amazing speed in the last couple of years. The media in Turkey now uses the latest technology. We are witnessing the formation of media monopolies in Turkey faster than elsewhere in the world.

In the last 20 years, as the media underwent an amazing development, we also made miraculous progress. Our newspaper experience, which we call "Free Press Tradition," has been continuing for the last eighteen years and I have served as a manager in all the newspapers that were published. I think what I have to tell will draw some attention.

I have been in this sector for thirty five years. I was one of the first members of the Turkish Writers' Union formed before 1980. I published a magazine in the 1970s; I managed a publishing-house; I had translations and compilations published. At the beginning of the year 1990, I was one of the founders of the "Free Press Tradition," which began with the weekly news magazines, *Halkın Gerçeği* (Public Truth) and *Yeni Ülke* (New Country).

Newspapers and magazines, *Halkın Gerçeği* (Public Truth - 1990), *Yeni Ülke* (New Country - 1991), *Özgür Gündem* (Free Agenda - 1993), *Özgür Ülke* (Free Country - 1994), *Yeni Politika* (New Politics - 1995), *Özgür Yaşam* (Free Life - 1996), *Demokrasi* (Democracy - 1996), *Ülkede Gündem* (Agenda in the Country - 1997), *Özgür Bakış* (Free View - 1999), *2000'de Yeni Gündem* (New Agenda in 2000), *Yedinci Gündem* (Seventh Agenda - 2001), *Yeniden Özgür Gündem* (Free Agenda Again - 2003) and *Ülkede Özgür Gündem* (Free Agenda in the Country - 2004), which we published up to today, all acted as an icebreaker in the traditional press arena and had to constantly fight to continue to exist.

Our newspapers were published with the aim of covering the developments of the Kurdish problem in Turkey. The reporting we did in an environment where there was absolutely no tolerance for the word "Kurd" had to survive and then to be improved under deadly attacks. We lost some thirty journalist and distributor friends. Tens of friends were imprisoned.

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\*Journalist, *Ülkede Özgür Gündem* Newspaper.

Moreover, hundreds of friends had to flee to Europe to escape years of prison sentences.

Among the media organs, which utilize very high technology and which embrace the ideological arguments of the state, we were usually seen as the agents of a rival country. Although we had the support of some democratic Turks who believed in the peaceful solution of the Kurdish problem, we were usually left by ourselves. We were not really able to work with educated-qualified journalists. On the one hand, we did not have the financial strength to give them the salary they wanted, and on the other, we were at a position where there was no life safety.

For this reason, we had to train our own journalist, editor, and even writer. Our journalists first had to learn Turkish, and then to write news stories... Then they set out for news without any guarantee of personal safety. It is believed that some 3,000 people have come and gone until now. While some of them still work in the Kurdish media in Europe –in exile– a considerable number of them got transferred to other media companies in Turkey.

If the existence of Kurds in Turkey is recognized today, it would be nonsense to say that we alone made that happen. The political developments in the world and in our country brought us to this day. But we paid a huge price to survive. Moreover, the newspapers we published, led to a new adventure in the Turkish media. After the *Yeni Yüzyıl* (*New Century*), *Yeni Binyıl* (*New Millennium*), *Radikal* (*Radical*) and even *Aydınlık* (*Light*) although it was in a different lane, the publication of first *Evrensel* (*Universal*) and then *Birgün* (*One Day*) all happened after us. In other words, after it was realized that there is such a need.

Our newspapers do not get much advertisements so they depend on their readers. Our newspapers often had to cease to be published due to attacks, legal obstacles (confiscation and trials). Our readers, who are as militant as the newspapers themselves, are the only reasons we could republish the newspapers with different bosses and editors-in-chief. If we could not be annihilated, this is because of our stubborn readers, more than our militant journalist friends. We have witnessed that between the publication of two papers, our readers did not turn to another newspaper. No other newspaper could replace ours. Or they did not want to. So I believe we will always continue to exist...

**Education for Communication:  
Critical or Mainstream**

## **The need for an alternative curriculum in media education**

**Esra Arsan\***

The "Istanbul International Independent Media Forum," organized by the Independent Communications Network, was very important, not only because it served as a platform for criticisms of the mainstreammedia, but also because it provided for an opportunity to discuss alternative action plans. The panel that I facilitated, which was on "Education for Communication: Critical or Mainstream?" was a platform where the most vital discussions on the quest for alternatives, took place.

First of all, a few thoughts on why we need an alternative media education: Today, different meanings are being imposed on the notion of "alternative media." In general, when we say "alternative media," we think of an unconventional, radical and leftist media. Such a point of view is based on the principle that the content produced by this media is different compared with that of the mainstreammedia. The tendencies for commercialization, globalization, and monopolization are inevitably negatively affecting the content produced by the media. The presentation of violence, social injustices, gender and race issues and political communications processes in the media, is defective. In the media, such issues are always exploited on the basis of power/profit and are presented with such a rhetoric and framework that is on the side of the dominant. In the current communications education system, all the stages of this production of defective content can be conveyed to students through the Marxist media theory (political economy) and a critical media sociology, which takes as basis, the school of cultural clashes.

Furthermore, there is an understanding of alternative media as a channel. In other words, besides an alternative content, the idea that the media (channel), which is used to convey that content to masses, should become different. How can an alternative/independent movement be created at a time when the technological opportunities of the Internet have diversified media ownership? Isn't it much easier to think about an alternative communication, at a time when media contents created by the ordinary individual's active participation, gain effectiveness throughout the world (like Youtube), and when blogs are multiplying at a great speed?

Bianet, which is the organizer of this panel, is an important example, since it has the characteristic of being alternative in both senses. Bianet is a

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\* Assistant Professor at Faculty of Communication, Istanbul Bilgi University.

structure, which, on the one hand, supports the production of independent/alternative content that serves democratic and free thought, and on the other hand, makes efforts for local/national media reform and produces ideas/actions. And most importantly, it has prepared a different media education curriculum with the support of Prof. Sevda Alankus and a group of academicians, and is organizing media training programmes for the local media, and publishing books.

When we speak of an alternative media education, we need to think about the action/organization function of the media, like in Bianet's local media training, besides its informative/entertainment function. We also need to think about putting together a new media curriculum throughout the country to be able to commence a new media movement. If we don't like the current media education, if we believe it has shortcomings, and if, as a society, we feel the need for a change, that means we need a media education reform to improve the media education.

To be honest, before the panel on "Education for Communication: Critical or Mainstream?" began, I expected discussions to focus on such issues. I also expected foundations of new action plans to be laid down. However, the communication educationists and students, unfortunately, cannot let go of their old habits and they keep struggling at the same point as they convey to masses their thoughts on alternatives to the mainstreammedia. The discussions basically focus on the old and worn-out topic of "theory or practice in communication education?" While the educationalists say "we are not raising practitioners for the mainstreammedia, we are trying to raise individuals, who correctly read and analyse the media," the students, inevitably, get the support of the social scientists, who have developed theories in this field, and bombard the mainstreammedia, or make fun of the weaknesses of the practitioners of the mainstreammedia.

However, I believe that if we want to improve media education, we have to put behind our criticisms of the mainstreammedia, and think, "yes but what can we do different?" Today, a serious, young activism is on the rise, which can reach great masses using new technologies and does good things in terms of democratization and freedom of thought. So, why aren't the communications students, instead of making fun of Ertugrul Ozkok, creating their own alternative media and spending some efforts to develop new action plans? Is criticizing the existing easier than creating what we think is necessary? Ok, let the communications faculties not raise personnel for the mainstreammedia. But there is no need for thousands of media critics in this country either. For example, why don't the young communications students, with the theoretical and analytical perspectives they gain at school, form an action coalition to bring about the national media reform or transformation? Why don't they propose an "alternative curriculum for faculties of communications" to improve media education?

To tell you the truth, this was my expectation from my young friends especially in such an environment of discussion. I think the younger people, rather than the elder, have the strength and energy to fuel a new media

movement. What Robert Ferguson said at the panel that I facilitated was very important. Ferguson said: "The problem is not about being independent or opposition. It is about understanding that word... People should begin to think for themselves. If you have critical autonomy, you improve that through media education. I take this a step further and call it 'critical solidarity.'"

I guess when the people of Bianet chose the title, "a different education for a different media," they thought of giving an opportunity for brainstorming intended for new action plans, and potential movements based on action, that would come out of this "critical solidarity." But all of us were so busy with criticizing the shortcomings of the mainstream media or the current media education that we had no time to find an answer to the question "what can we do different?" Fortunately, again within the context of the same forum, I heard that another movement was being born with the goal that I was dreaming of: The students were organizing for a different media. The students, who came together after our panel, announced that they were ready to take responsibility to look into and share alternative projects, and to work on new, more comprehensive projects. Without a doubt, this action plan was the most pleasing development of the day. I am curious to see the developments.

## **Communication education in Turkey and the problems**

**Ozden Cankaya\***

The relation between the media sector and the communications faculties in Turkey date back to the 1940s. In 1947, Sedat Simavi, who was the head of the Istanbul Journalists' Society at the time, explained to the Chancellery of the Istanbul University in writing that offering journalism education is compulsory. According to Simavi, the curriculum of this education should have comprised both theoretical and practical courses. During the same period, Peyami Safa, who wrote in the Ulus Newspaper with the nickname Server Bedii on 30 August 1948, responded to opinions that a journalism institute should be established. Safa wrote that at such an institute, a single class not longer than a minute could be taught and saying the following would be enough: "Youngsters, the only institute for journalism is the newspaper itself. Look to work at a newspaper. Don't waste time here for nothing." (Gurkan and Irvan, 2003: 358)

As these dissident arguments went on, in 1948 in Istanbul at Sehzadebasi, a secondary education institution has been established with the name "Istanbul Journalism School."

The Istanbul Private Journalism School, which began schooling in 1966-1967, was taken over by the state, and incorporated with the Istanbul Economic and Commercial Sciences Academy under the name "Istanbul Journalism College" in 1971. In 1973 its education term was brought up to four years ([www.marmara.edu.tr](http://www.marmara.edu.tr)). Later, the number of press and media colleges rapidly increased and with a law published in the Official Gazette on 3 July 1992, these institutions were reestablished as "Communications Faculties." As the number of these institutions, increased every day, the debate over the education offered are still continuing.

Today in Turkey and in Northern Cyprus; there exist communications faculties or departments on communications at Akdeniz (Mediterranean), Anadolu (Anatolia), Ankara, Ataturk, Bahcesehir, Baskent, Beykent, Bilgi, Dogu Akdeniz (Eastern Mediterranean), Ege (Aegean), Erciyes, Firat, Galatasaray, Gazi, Istanbul, Istanbul Ticaret, Izmir Ekonomi, Kadir Has, Karadeniz Teknik, Kocaeli, Kultur, Lefke Avrupa (Lefke Europea), Maltepe, Marmara, Mersin, Selcuk, Uluslararası Kıbrıs (International Cyprus) and Yeditepe Universities and also at the Kirgizistan-Türkiye Manas University in Bishkek. There are a total of 29 Communications Faculties. This increase in quantity has led to discussions both over the position of communications

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\* Galatasaray University, Faculty of Communication, Dean.

faculty students in the media sector and over the different views and opinions regarding these faculties on communication education.

### **The Character, Features of Communication Education and Expectations**

Communication education is interdisciplinary. The Communications Faculty students get both theoretical and practical education. In an environment of constant technological changes and where the structure of the sector is also changing, the expectations from education are varied.

For this reason, there are differing views on and approaches towards the education offered by the communications faculties at state universities and foundation universities, or the education offered by communications departments at arts and design faculties.

Communications Faculties, during education are faced with a dilemma between contradictory approaches, first, that they should generate workforce for producing programmes/reports that is expected to increase number of the viewers and readers of the more and more monopolizing media sector, and that they should train workforce who would fulfill their responsibilities of public service journalism/publishing. At a time when popular journalists and the popular journalism approach are on the rise, it is a basic choice to see journalism as a public service and to pay more attention to this characteristic.

The question of what the aim of a communication education should be is being answered in many different ways. These questions can be listed as such:

- Should the graduates of Communications Faculties be individuals who are equipped with theoretical information, who can criticize media products, who warn the public about how media products should be perceived, and who reshape their perceptions?
- Should they be equipped with technical information to be able to fulfill certain tasks in the communications sector?

Those who provide communication education may embrace different approaches depending on their view of the communications field, their political stance, scientific knowledge and experiences. For that reason, the curriculums at communications faculties are shaped depending on various differences on views and approaches.

Communications Faculties should not limit themselves to producing and conveying professional information and skills to meet the demands of the media sector and the market. University education should aim for more than just vocational education. Universities have missions besides producing and conveying information that is practical for technologic use. These are; developing the "unwritten professional standard merits", "conveying, making sense of and improving the society's cultural tradition" and to provide for the "political enlightenment of the students." (Dagtas, 2003:

143) When viewed with this approach, it is clear that forming the syllabus or the curriculum is not as easy as it seems.

The general tendency in the communications faculties in Turkey is to offer "basic culture" classes aimed at general formation and "theory and conceptual" classes on communications and mass communications in the first two years. Whereas, in the last two years, the students are offered vocational and hands-on classes depending on their specialization. Even though conceptual classes continue in the last two years, it is observed that the practical and vocational classes dominate quantitatively. In general, the communications faculties in Turkey have three departments: Journalism, Public Relations, and Advertising and Television-Cinema. Classes like Sociology, Psychology, Economy, Law, Philosophy, Anthropology, Political Science etc. are aimed at gaining the students "general formation." Communications Theories, The Political Economy of Media, Cultural Studies, Media Ethics, Communications Sociology, Popular Culture and Research Methods in Sociology are classes that are aimed at "communications theories and concepts." The classes that are vocational and hands-on, are classes like; News Gathering and Writing Techniques, Desktop Publishing, Web Design, Internet Journalism, Photo Journalism, Documentary Cinema, Editing, Public Relations Campaigns, Advertising Text Writing.

While the debate on the nature of classes at communications faculties is continuing due to differences in viewpoints of the media sector and university, the students shape their expectations depending on their particular positions. A research on "How should a good communication education be?" presented by three professors from the Anatolian University at the "First Communications Conference" in 2000, showed that the majority (81,3) of communications faculty graduates believe there should be more practical courses. The graduates who responded to questions believed the education they received in the faculty helped them find jobs. However, only 60 percent said the faculty's education was generally adequate or adequate to meet the purposes at the workplace. The same research showed that the graduates believe more importance should be placed on English education.

A separate research was conducted at the Ege (Aegean) University in 1999. The research conducted among students who had just finalized their internships, showed that 42 percent of students thought the communication education they received was inadequate. 39 percent believed it was adequate. According to the research, the students request practical courses starting from the first year (90). This proportion shows that the students aim to find a job at the end of their education.

The rapid technological improvements in the last five years, and the transition to information society has brought along information technology as well as shortcomings in infrastructure. Together with this, the traditional cultural structure which continues to exert a great influence on the society and the roles determined through a system of values and norms, contradict with the students' expectations from communication education.

The growth of specialization has distanced communication education from being a bridge between different disciplines. The developments in Turkey, has drifted communications science away from being an interdisciplinary subject as argued by the critical viewpoint, but has forced it to embrace an idea and understanding that the main thing in communications is the communications technologies and their employment. Such a change and development turn communications faculties into empty vocational schools. However, the purpose of communication education is to train qualified, highly cultured communication professionals who can challenge the existing society and the word and whose major concern is the public good, not profits.

### **The Problems of Communication Education Arising from Education Policies**

Generally, too many students are admitted to communications faculties, which in turn bring about a negative impact on the quality of education. There should be only a limited and rational number of students if they are to follow classes as necessary. Because of the governments' policy to place more students in universities, too many students are admitted to communications faculties and this fact negatively affects the quality of education.

Many communications faculties have shortcomings in infrastructure in terms of practice. The students are graduating from journalism schools without ever practicing Internet journalism, and graduating from radio-television and cinema without touching a camera. The students who complete their education are unable to meet the requirements of the media sector. The difference between the media sector's and the universities' description of a communications professional leaves the communication faculty graduates in a very difficult situation.

### **Qualification Exam at Communications Faculties**

One of the issues under discussion is the requisition that the students, who are to be admitted to Communications Faculties, should pass a qualification exam. The central-national exams (OSYM) often lead to coincidences. It is being advocated that those who are to work in the communications sector should separately take a qualifying examination.

### **Internship Issue**

Because of the high number of students admitted at Communications Faculties, only a handful of students can take advantage of the internship opportunities. Internships give students the opportunity to put into practice what they have learnt. Responsibility also falls on the media sector.

### **The Communication Student's Concern to find a Job**

The communication faculty students, starting from the first years, are concerned about finding a job in the media sector. And they are right to be. For that reason, those students who get an internship hope that they may start working at the same place. There are many communications students

and graduates who work for months and even years as an intern for free or for the minimum wage.

Besides the fact that it is very difficult for communications faculty graduates to find a job in the media sector, it is further difficult for them to find a job in another field. Although they receive basic education, they cannot find jobs as teachers, district officials or supervisors, as these require further certifications.

### **Communications Faculty Graduates and Working in the Media Sector**

The communications faculties have more graduates than the media sector needs every year. They in fact train slaves for the media sector. The communications students who first enter the media sector as voluntary interns, work for the minimum wage or for free and spend years as an intern with the hopes of becoming a permanent staff. It is usually not possible for them to seek their right because there exist thousands of other voluntary interns on the line. The compilation book called "Journalists without a Column Write" by communications graduates is comprised of real-life problems and of the situation the graduates. I would like to share with you some striking statements by graduates published in this book:

**Ahmet:** When I was a sophomore in 1991, I started interning at (...) which had (...) written below its logo. I was very happy to be working with my journalist big brothers and sisters. They did not pay me but I used to tell myself I had to do that if I was getting a journalism education. However, it was a little difficult to overcome financial problems which arouse from not being paid. To be able to look after myself, I used to either work at textiles factories, packaging shirts and T-shirts after leaving my internship at midnight, or I used to work as a porter. After working at this newspaper for 11 months for free, I was forced to sign a statement saying that the newspaper did not owe me anything and was fired.

**Arzu:** Although we were frequently assured that our social security premiums were paid, we had actually worked without social security for months, but the boss's secretary was a permanent staff under Law No. 212 (the special law regulating the contracts of the journalists and their rights and responsibilities) and had a professional journalist card. It was frustrating to see she had a press card while I and other colleagues had hardly contracts under Law No. 1475 (the general law of employment regulating the contracts of workers in general). Things like this make you lose faith. I can't say I'm a journalist because there are so many people saying this. I believe I cannot be a journalist.

**Gurkan:** The day I entered this cruel world which squeezes people like lemons and where only the interests clash, I understood Kafka better. The school years had not taught me much. Yes I was a cockroach... I studied for years. I graduated from the faculty of journalism. I worked as a reporter for years at Sabah, Aksam,

Hurriyet, ATV, TGRT and many other magazines, newspapers and television channels. I worked for 10 years. I could not become a subject of the Press Law to be able to get a press card. I had no social security, and my payments were not deposited. We were able to complete two years of social security in 10 years. We had to make do with the cards of media plazas.

**Neslihan:** You will frequently remember Kavafis who said "You can not find a new country, you can not find another sea/ This city will follow you / Your hair will turn gray in the same house." You will accept that you cannot quit this sector. After you have accepted that, nothing will bother you. Maybe you will become an alien to everything, to your job, to the things that go on around you. You will react less against setbacks, injustices... Or your happiness will also be limited; you will say "this is Life." And this is how this profession will bring you to maturity.

**Timur:** Many journalists advise the interns to give up when they still have time and find another job. Because when I look at the years that have passed, this job has no security or future. Although the reporter is the one who forms the news of the newspaper, it is secured that he/she feels useless. The reporter is the first one to be fired. When I started working at the (...) newspaper we were 30 people in the department. Today we are a total of 8. All our friends were fired one by one. I have had married friends who were laid off, who could not find another job for years and had to separate and return to their families' houses. The main topic of discussion among our friends is the lack of money. They can't pay rent, they can't support a family.

## **Conclusion**

The problems of the communication education should be evaluated first from a scientific point of view and then as a matter of communications policies. The fact that the students at communications faculties are trained in a way to allow them to find a job in huge and powerful companies that act with the main aim of making profits, is mainly a political choice. However, the universities should embrace a communication education that has public benefit as a priority. It is possible that these very different inclinations are reconciled considering that the media sector is a public service and through establishing political and economic relations with the universities. Succeeding in this is necessary in terms of long-term results.

The organization and quest for quality required by the modern production process in the communications sector should be based on a well-qualified communication education. There should be a healthy cooperation between communications faculties and the media sector. The universities should

pioneer the solution of the sector's problems with their knowledge and experience. In the same way, the sector should pay attention to communication education and contribute to the education methods.

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## **What do we understand from education as a process of liberation?\***

**Gokçe Susam\***

Today, as discuss the opportunities for “a different media” and “a different communication education,” we thought it would be a good idea to make an introduction by talking about a crucial issue. It is important to discuss a different education, and to talk about education opportunities not as a new “disciplinary process,” but as a process of liberation.

Many important theorists such as Foucault, Gramsci, and Althusser, theorized education as a control mechanism for bodies, as a vehicle to strengthen the hegemony of the ruling class, or as one of the ideological tools of the state.

As long as structures, such as a society with different classes, or a patriarchal society, continue exist, education will inevitably serve as a means to reproduce these existing power relationships in line with the interests of the ruling groups.

Nevertheless, there have always been efforts to eliminate the negative and oppressive character that “education” has acquired within this mechanism. These efforts, although criticized for not envisaging a total social transformation, are important experiences. Neil Postman, Paulo Freire, and Ivan Illich are some of the names that readily come to my mind.

When we speak about education as a process of liberation, we may think about many different comments, desires, or utopias. For that reason, we need to explain what we mean when we use this definition... What we mean here is, for example, for an individual to be able to see the intertwined and multi-layered power relationships within the societal structure, rather than abstract definitions, such as “a self-realization” which has no historical (social, local) context. What we mean is, for that individual to be able to position himself/herself among these relationships. And more importantly, for an individual to be able to continuously question these relationships and his/her position.

In other words, we mean for men and women, to have a critical attitude against the roles imposed upon them, like virtue bearer, mother, soldier, good citizen, consumer, etc... in a society dominated by militarist, patriarchal, capitalist, nationalist rhetoric. Such critical attitude is an important precondition of liberation and transformation of life.

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Education is very important in the liberation process that we are talking about. Education would provide individuals with the critical intellectual skills necessary for this act of questioning. I think we can look at the media literacy course that Mr. Ragip talked about yesterday, as such an example. It is such skills we would acquire through social sciences, philosophy and opposition trends of literature.

**How can communication education enable individuals to realize such a point of view?**

When we consider it as part of the liberation process, I think that communications is able to provide individuals with more opportunities compared to other fields. One of the reasons is that communications is an interdisciplinary field. This allows communications to put into use the different problems and methods of many different disciplines.

As a graduate student from the Faculty of Communication, I had the opportunity to take many different classes and I believe I have benefitted from these a lot. At the same time, I feel like I have the lack of the theoretical accumulation and the skills for deeper analysis a social sciences discipline would have provided me with.

We had underlined the meaning of a critical, opposition attitude when talking about education as a liberation process. I believe that it is important to keep strong relations between communications education and social sciences to be able to create an in-depth approach.

In the field of communications, new students are trained each day to reproduce information for wider masses. This positioning brings in a higher value, and a higher capacity of contestation and intervention to the field of communications, and thus, communications education.

I feel it necessary to underline once again the issue of individual responsibility, mentioned by Tugrul Eryilmaz yesterday, in the context of communications education. Although we may very rightly criticize, in many different ways, the current education content, methods, institutions, or within a wider framework, the "late-capitalist system" and its manifestation in Turkey, I believe these criticisms should not deem invisible and inert, small, or even individual efforts.

It is very important to me that today, we have gathered here to try and widen the limits of what we can do in the context of communication education, and to think about creating new areas of improvement.

As it was mentioned in yesterday's discussion, the thing we call "system" is not an absolute, comprehensive structure that operates consistently with no exceptions. Making such an emphasis on its determinative character and feeling small and powerless in the face of it, means to once again approve the absoluteness of its power and to hold it against a giant mirror. On the contrary, we can continuously argue against and question the legitimacy of the ruling, form a real threat and force the limits of power.

When we set the goal of shaping this transformation, thinking about what “education as a liberation process” means, would be a strong starting point that would open new horizons in front of us.

## **The children of "an inauspicious marriage": Overcoming the dilemmas of communication education**

**Selma Arslantas and Ozge Dogan\***

The need to train media personnel led to the establishment of Turkey's first academic institution for communications in 1965. This institution was the Press and Broadcasting Academy (BYYO) of the Political Studies Faculty of Ankara University. The same need within the framework of Lazarsfeld tradition, led to the establishment of other journalism schools that followed. In fact, the support by the media to the establishment of BYYO clearly demonstrates the reason of existence of these schools.

The transformation in the media in the 1980s, and the change in journalism practices brought around different quests and perspectives in journalism education in Turkey too. The press and broadcasting schools differed from one another in terms of the type of education they gave, due to the differences in education policies, teaching staff and administrative processes (Ozbek, 1992: 307-308). The journalism schools, which were established as academies, became communications faculties after publication of the relevant law in the official gazette on 3 July 1992. However the identity crisis resulting from the aforementioned differences is still continuing. This transformation brought along many positive aspects: the students now have a faculty diploma, and the media institutions now, are much more at ease in terms of budget and staff. However, although it reduced the unemployment problem of graduates on those days, the transformation to communications faculties is not really very meaningful today, given the unemployment problem in the media.

The communications faculties, which are still growing in number, have 3.000 communications graduates each year. A very small proportion of these graduates can find jobs. This situation proves that quantity has exceeded quality and thus, the identity crisis gets deeper and deeper. And one of the most important factors that deepens the crisis is the fact that, besides communications graduates, the media companies also hire graduates of other faculties

The identity crisis at communications faculties, the growing gap between the needs of the media sector and the graduate profile, the negative effect on the graduate profile and university structure of the panic this causes at the communications faculties, and other such problems bring this question about: How should the graduate profile of journalism schools be?

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## **Dilemma of theoretical-practical training**

The transformation we witnessed in new information technologies and the media sector after 1980 increased the media sector's need for technical personnel and professionals. This transformation also became a determinant of what the communications training should focus on.

With this transformation, this question/problem emerged among journalists, academicians and even students: should communications faculties provide students with technical training or theoretical training? No matter how big this question is in our minds, it seems that the answer will continue to be very ambiguous. This question brings along another key question, which needs to be answered: Who should the journalist be? By implication, before the profile of the communications training can be determined, a decision should be made on who the journalist should be. In fact, one of the dilemmas of today's communications training is the fact that the faculties are so fixated on this question.

Although it seems simple, the answer to this question is very complex and important. What characteristics should a good journalist possess? Should a journalist be equipped with technical or theoretical information? Or is it not possible for a good journalist to be equipped with both types of information? Questions on whether a school, which only provides journalism students with technical information can go beyond just being a vocational school; whether it is possible for universities to stay limited with just producing and conveying professional information and skills that are functional, in other words, that meet the demands of the market within the process of the rebuilding of the society; and many such questions keep us busy as we discuss the qualities of journalism schools.

Offering classes that were designed for vocational training, as classes intended for specialization, caused the theoretical classes to lose their importance. Does the scale have to weigh on one side all the time? Would it be right to differentiate between theoretical information and technical information? Wouldn't a communications training, which does not bear a mission to create a point of view, which is critical of the communications methods that exist in the society we live in, be incomplete?

When we consider the notion of "technical" within the framework of communications, we see that technical information is not something that can be used by itself. For example, when preparing the pages of a newspaper, or a television programme, the journalists' point of view, approach and language makes the difference, rather than the his/her technical skills. Of course, the opposite is also valid. A person does not have to be a cameraman to be able to prepare a television programme; but that person should know the confines of the camera, the right angles for the best picture etc...

Consequently, when communications is considered as a regional field of work, as Stuart Hall has said, it would be correct to say that there is need for a third type of methodology, which denies the dilemma of technical and

theoretical education, and which places importance on theoretical information driven from various disciplines supported by technical information.

### **Does one need to graduate from a journalism school to become a journalist?**

When we look at the media sector in Turkey today, the situation is not very positive for the graduates of communications schools. The workforce of the media sector in Turkey includes graduates of other disciplines. Today, some of the communications faculties that intend to meet the demands of the media sector, turn into schools that only train professionals; others are caught in the theoretical field because of their attitudes against the sector. Thus, the single-dimensioned approach of communications faculties today has caused the managers of the media sector to prefer those who have been educated in different fields, but who have taken courses on journalism. As Ertuğrul Kürkçü says, because the universities today follow and even imitate the media, and because the industry keeps getting more professional, the "inauspicious marriage" between the media and the university is killing the university and thus, is being reflected in the world of communications.

### **Is a different kind of journalism possible?**

The children of this inauspicious marriage, in other words, the graduates of communications faculties are the ones who are affected the most by the inauspicious marriage. Because some faculties aim at training journalists for the media sector, and because the students of these faculties find a job in the sector as soon as they graduate, they don't even realize that this structure is being damaged. On the other hand, even if the students of faculties known for their critical attitudes towards the sector, find a job, they usually have difficulty surviving in the sector. This distinction is particularly obvious between the Ankara University Communications Faculty and the Anatolia University Communications Faculty. The students of the Ankara University personally experience the cumbersomeness of the academy; the students of the Anatolia University are far from a university system that truly produces, criticizes and one that has an attitude. One way or another, students of both universities are negatively affected by how close or distant their faculties are to or from the media. Thus, today, the journalism schools in Turkey are characterized by the sector in two ways: Those that train enemies to the media; in other words, those that give more theoretical education and have a critical identity; and those that train friends for the media; in other words, those that train journalists for the sector, and that are not critical and give vocational courses. This situation brings this question to our minds: Would a different kind of journalism be possible if a kind of education system existed in Turkey, which is supported by technical information, which places importance on theoretical education too and one which enables students to acquire a point of view, in other words, one which brings together vocational knowledge and theoretical knowledge under a common denominator?

Moreover, the fact that the field of communications is not a field under protection, causes this "inauspicious marriage" to turn more violent. Thus, unless this marriage pulls itself together, the future of communications faculties does not look too bright.

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## **Gender and Independent Media**

## **Reporting with a Focus on Women and Bianet**

**Nadire Mater\***

When we launched the Independent Communications Network (BIA) project, we told the local media: "you are the voice." And through "cooperating" with the local media "on the basis of production," we aimed at rendering visible the invisible and placing at the "centre" the "neglected" –who are more in number than those, who become the subjects and topics of media reports. Thus, the women, the children, the minorities, the poor, the environmentalists, the disabled would become the main subjects of the bianet news Web site with the rights violations they face, their struggle against those violations and their place in the totality of life.

So they were, and they continue to be so... Moreover, women and children, and in general, rights and the freedom of expression have inevitably become our main focus with our Media Freedom and Independent Journalism Monitoring and News Network project, which we shortly name BIA<sup>2</sup> in 2003.

In this group discussion titled, "Social gender and independent media," I will try and summarize the experience of reporting with a focus on women, which has found its meaning in the bianet reporting, especially in the last three years. I believe bianet will thrive with the contributions of women's organizations, friends, who report with a focus on women, friends from KAOS-GL and the contributions of those individuals, who have something to say on the issue, and who make criticisms or proposals. This, of course, opens an important window so that the "reporting with a focus on women" approach gets more widespread.

The notion of "reporting with a focus on women" is a new notion both in Turkey and in the world. In fact, as long as reporting is not done within the framework of ethical and political responsibility, it needs to be broken into new subtitles. However, in my opinion, reporting is reporting. Therefore, titles/fields like citizen journalism, peace journalism, rights reporting, reporting with a focus on children and reporting with a focus on women/social gender point at the "problematic areas" in the media.

What do I mean by that? Men speak everyday in newspapers/on radios, televisions with their photographs, voices, images on issues, "which are considered the essence of life" such as politics, economics and even soft news. In this "world of seriousness," women are given such roles as "the disadvantaged," "the victim," "the lay figure", "the bearer of honour" and

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"the abnormal." These roles are reproduced in the media. Women, as if they are detached from the whole of the world, are jammed in women's pages, where issues such as being a "good wife," "good mother," or "beauty," "shopping" are discussed; in women and soft-news supplements; and morning and afternoon programmes on television. There is no need for intensive research. It would be enough to look at the prime news on radios and televisions and photographs on the first pages of newspapers.

However, I still would like to summarize the study we conducted on this issue. In 2004–2005, BIA<sup>2</sup> studied 12 daily newspapers every day for a year and identified the news on women, children, human rights and freedom of expression. It counted these news and determined the proportion of these news to the total number of news.

In one year, a total of 3,453 news out of a total of 493,103 news in 12 newspapers were about women. The proportion to all the news was seven in 1,000... "*Ozgur Gundem*" (Free Agenda) was the newspaper, which had the most number of news about women, with 2.9 percent, while "*Zaman*" (Time) was last with 0.27 percent. The ranking of the rest from the one with most news on women to the one with the least was: "*Birgun*" (One Day), "*Günlük Evrensel*" (Daily Universal), "*Hurriyet*" (Freedom), "*Vatan*" (Country), "*Cumhuriyet*" (Republic), "*Milliyet*" (Nationality), "*Radikal*" (Radical), "*Aksam*" (Evening), "*Sabah*" (Morning), "*Yeni Safak*" (New Dawn).

We just marked these news, counted them, calculated the ratio, cut the newspaper clippings and filed them. We did not go into doing a content analysis. But leave aside the content; these data alone are enough to show us the gravity of the situation. Therefore, we have to repeat once again that we, the reporters and editors, still have a lot to do. You can find this study in detail on the [www.bianet.org](http://www.bianet.org) web site.

How, under what conditions and with what mentality is this "male picture," demonstrated by these numeric data, painted? In the world and in Turkey, 30-40 percent of journalists are made up of women and 60-70 percent are made up of men. In the world, only three percent of those, who determine to editorial policies of the media, which produce daily news, are women and 97 percent are men. In Turkey, there are no women chief editors. There is only one woman member in the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK), which has nine members.

As of August 2005, only 40 of the 211 names (18.95 percent) on the identification tag of six newspapers, *Hurriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Zaman*, *Sabah*, *Vatan* and *Yeni Safak*, were of women. And 81.05 percent were men. Although this figure does not seem bad, women were mostly responsible of the advertisement and soft news sections. And the fact that Aydin Dogan has four daughters affects the average and the overall picture. In short, we have a media, which is problematic in terms of the representation of women in the production processes, and which renders women invisible in news. News, with their topics, subjects, sources, language, image and decision makers, are mostly made up of men. Moreover, taking into consideration

that a supplement is issued particularly for women, it would not be wrong to say that the consumer is envisaged to primarily be men.

Reporting with a focus on women, first of all, would mean to completely turn this media environment upside down. The kilogram price of potatoes, wars, earthquakes, elections, Nicaragua, the European Union, Turkey-United States of America, and globalisation all interest women at least as much as they interest men. In other words, when we speak of reporting with a focus on women, we mean placing women at the centre of news on every field of life, developing policies in favour of women and transforming life. This would require rethinking, reviewing, restructuring and developing the concept of reporting, with a more pro-women perspective and with an understanding that would strengthen and render women visible and that would convey the voices of women. In other words, we are talking about a more comprehensive reporting, which goes beyond raising awareness on women's rights, and monitoring violations against women including the violations by the media.

This clearly shows the partiality of bianet as a model, which is different from the mainstream media. The mainstream media keeps repeating the inevitability of being "objective" although it never is impartial. Bianet is partial and it is on the side of rights and of course, women.

We at bianet, throughout the BIA<sup>2</sup> period, in other words in the last three years, have been working with editors, who are experts in their fields. The editors responsible for women, children, human rights and freedom of expression are in a way "obsessed" with their own fields, which makes our job easier. However, I must make a note here and say that editors are not limited with their own fields.

So, how are we carrying out our reporting with a focus on women at bianet? We say that; first of all, we have to raise awareness based on social gender in ourselves. And this process is not one that begins and ends. It continues, it should continue... This approach, right from the beginning, turns the classic reporting process upside down.

Every morning, as we gather around our news desk and discuss and determine the reports that are to be prepared on the developments first in Turkey, then in the world, we are guided by a perspective focused on women. We try to prepare at least two or three news each day on issues about women. We pay special attention so that women are not reflected in bianet as "victims" or "lay figures." We want women to be present in daily news not only with their problems and the violations they face, but with their struggles, successes, views, opinions, criticisms and evaluations. We write about and criticize the mainstream media, which, most of the time, make yet another violation as they report on violations against women.

For example, during the budget discussion, we considered budget at length through a "*gender budgeting*" perspective. If we are to get the opinions of universities, opinion leaders or the people on the street on a specific issue,

we first think of women. If we are to use photographs, we pay attention to the visibility of women.

In fact, a perspective with a “focus on women” requires a representation based on social gender, not only in reporting but in the environment, in which news is produced. And this is not just a problem in Turkey but in the world. And it is a problem in every field, including the media. That is to say, as women move up to decision making mechanisms, they run against a glass ceiling, which stops them. In bianet, we place a lot of importance on this. Thus, we try to keep women’s representation not less than 50 percent. Out of two similar job applicants, with similar qualifications, we favour the woman. To be fair, I have to state right away that the “reporting with a focus on women” approach is highly embraced by our male colleagues.

As we evaluate bianet everyday, we ask the following questions both to each other and to ourselves:

- Have I been fair and balanced enough in representing women and men, girls and boys in the report?
- What is this report about?
- What approach, perspective am I putting into use when preparing this report?
- Through what glasses am I looking?
- Which clichés have I reproduced?
- Have I improved the women-men equality in the society or have I reproduced the traditional opinions with the language and news writing style I have used when writing this report?

We often discuss our reporting, although sometimes we get lost in our hurry to produce daily news, and we ask questions to ourselves yet again.

- What is the women/men balance in our news sources?
- Do we most write about women or men?
- On whom do we mostly write positive news?
- On whom do we mostly write negative news?
- What is the situation with the use of photographs?

Especially in the last three years, with the reporting we have done at bianet, we have not settled with just efforts to establish a perspective with a focus on women. We have organized training programmes on “reporting with a focus on women” in the provinces of Batman, Ordu, Eskisehir, Canakkale, Adana and Izmir in September, October and November 2005, attended by 135 men and 113 women journalists from a total of 47 provinces and districts. The trainings were conducted in the format of workshops with the presentations of nine women’s rights advocates, activists, lawyers, academicians and journalists. These training programmes showed us the importance of raising awareness on the concept of “reporting with a focus

on women.” The resistance coming from the journalists, who were mostly men, was very guiding for us. Now, as we see examples of “reporting with a focus on women” in the local media, we are of course very pleased. We are hoping that we will soon be able to organize similar trainings for the employees of the mainstreammedia.

These local media meetings have also won us a book. In the IPS Communications Foundation Rights Reporting series, there is a book on *Reporting with a Focus on Women*, besides the books on *Reporting on Human Rights* and *Reporting with a Focus on Children*. In fact, we, as the IPS Communications Foundation, we had begun our efforts for a perspective with a focus on women –without naming it– by publishing a book in 2000 titled *Gender Perspective Dictionary*, which was on the need for the media to change its male language.

Reporting with a focus on women is also important for the journalism departments of Turkey’s 23 communications faculties. What we are saying is that, since it even has a book now, it should be included in the curriculum and be taught as a course.

## **Kaos GL Magazine: Keep away from the reach of children!**

**Ugur Yuksel \***

The Summer 2006 "Pornography" issue of the Kaos GL magazine was confiscated the day it arrived from the printing house. According to the confiscation decision of an Ankara court, the content of some of the articles and some visuals of the magazine were contradictory to "general morals."

These days, Kaos GL is standing trial at another Ankara court brought against it by the Ankara Republic Media Prosecutor Nadi Türkaslan. Umut Güner, the magazine's editor-in-chief, is facing up to three years in prison in accordance with articles 226/2 and 54 of the Turkish Penal Code. Türkaslan advocates that a photograph by Taner Ceylan named *Taner Taner* "is obscene to the extent that there is no need for an expert study." Türkaslan states that these pictures cannot be viewed as works of art. Türkaslan goes as far as saying that "the magazine, which includes photographs of homosexual pornography, is sold at places that children have very easy access to" and thus, this "falls outside the scope of press freedom, which is guaranteed by the provisions of European Convention on Human Rights and the Constitution."

Of course, this is not the first "obstacle" the Kaos GL magazine has faced with. Our application to become an association last year was again faced with the obstacle of "being contradictory to general morals." Kaos GL magazine, in the year 2000, was found to be "dirty" by the Prime Ministry Board for Protecting Minors from Dirty Publications, and was forced to be sold in plastic bags.

Kaos GL magazine, which is Turkey's first and only homosexual publication, has been "independent" since 1994, despite all financial and moral obstacles. The magazine, which was produced with a photocopy machine during the first couple of years, is not like any other publication in Turkey in terms of language and attitude. Consequently, its problems are not like problems faced by other publications. Being independent means standing against all the rules and attitudes of the heterosexual mentality. The visuals it uses and the remarks are created with such an approach. The magazine publishes articles by different writers in each issue. People of every age and social segment have written for the magazine. It is often criticized; some think the magazine is moralist, while others slam it for being "immoral." ...

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\* Chief Editor, Kaos GL.

Such a struggle of independence by such a publication with nothing alike, is very rare.

Of course, the circulation of the magazine is pathetic. Not because there is a low number of homosexuals in Turkey. It is because the magazine has distribution problems and also because of the trouble the readers go through when buying the magazine! Despite all these, Kaos GL has made many dreams come true. It reached many homosexuals throughout Anatolia. It shattered the feeling "I am the only one in this world." It disproved the belief that homosexuality is just sexuality. It played an important role in making Turkish homosexuals visible.

Kaos GL became an important factor in overcoming negative attitudes against homosexuals. It achieved all these as an independent magazine. It achieved these against the huge plazas of popular media, and sometimes by leaking into it. It achieved them among media institutions that claimed to be independent, but that turned out to be more sexist and more hooked on morals, than the popular media.

The Kaos GL magazine, played a very important role in helping me find out that homosexuality is not a choice, and in turning it into an identity, to end my life that was built on learned things and to build the life of my choice, to retrieve my voice and my body and to create the person that I am today. Now it is time to reach children who live in small or big towns and who believe they are alone in this world. The only instrument able to do this is the Kaos GL magazine. This is why this magazine is important: Because it can change a person's life. Isn't this what the independent media should see: To shatter what has been learnt and to exist to create a new world!

## **Stop women's rights violations in the media!**

**Hulya Ugur Tanriover\***

MEDIZ is Women's Media Watch Group. It was established by a group of women with the aim of preventing women's rights violations in the media. These are women, who all have been working in and conducting studies on this field. When its reason of establishment and area of activities were determined, 22 women's organizations supported this initiative right from the beginning.

Our work on MEDIZ began about a year ago. We called our first meetings with the insistence of our lawyer friend Hulya Gulbahar, whom we worked together with at the training programme of BIA-IPS Women's Rights Journalism training programmes, and Melek Ozmen, who carries out the Filmmor Women's Films Festival and Atolyemor women's films workshops. We first set up an e-mailing group and shared our goals and plans with the member women and organizations. Because all the women who established MEDIZ worked intensively in their own fields or for other initiatives, the process of setting up MEDIZ took a long time. As a result, some time passed but MEDIZ was established.

It is possible to summarize MEDIZ's aim and working space as: "Hey media institutions! We are watching you. Any way you violate women's rights, we will see that, we will warn you and expose you."

The term "any way" we use here is important because the media violates women's rights in many different and sometimes in very subtle/covert ways. Thus, we expressed this in the MEDIZ establishment proclamation. I would like to underline this by directly reading the proclamation to you .  
**"Media is violating women's human rights in various ways. For example:**

1. **Through the use of sexist news, language and visuals:** The usage of naked women's bodies as instruments of male voyeurism is the most obvious example of this type of violation. The more subtle type is the usage of sexist notions. "Businessman" is an example to this. Another example is the name of a recently formed board, which is "the board of knowledgeable men."

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2. **By exposing private life/ by violating the confidentiality of private life and by limiting women's space of freedom.**
3. **By being accusatory towards victims of rape or sexual crimes with sexist attitudes, by attempting to question the "morals" and "life style" of victims of rape or violence, and thus, by judging not the guilty one and the crime, but rather, the woman who was subjected to crime.**
4. **By presenting crimes against women as paparazzi stories, and turning these crimes into a tool of ratings and audience in a way that would harbor erotic, pornographic voyeurism.** We saw the most obvious example of this in the rape news about Gamze Ozcelik.
5. **By not allocating space to women in news and commentaries and thus ignoring them in all the fields of life.** This is the phenomenon that we define in our media rhetoric analysis studies, as "obliterating women symbolically" and is one of the least salient type of women's rights violation. As a matter of fact, some newspapers and television channels/programmes take pride for, for example not exposing women's bodies. The Islamic media, for example... And they present this as an evidence of not violating women's rights. However, the truth is different: yes maybe that type of media organizations do not publish photographs of naked women... but they don't publish anything about women! The same thing is obvious in some pages of the national media: by not allocating any space for women in politics, economy, finance, etc... their rights of visibility and existence are violated.
6. **By not putting into use its own self-monitoring and training mechanisms when violence and discrimination against women is in question.**
7. **By not taking into account women and women's organizations that have been working in the field for years and that have a vast accumulation of information and experience, when covering issues about women, and by not asking for their opinions.** This shows that women are not taken into consideration as sources and experts. Some have begun consulting women's organizations on just "issues that interest women." However, women and women's organizations should be consulted in every field of social and political life. For example, consulting women lawyers on a legal issue.

Since MEDIZ does not currently have an individual source, it does not aim at being completely comprehensive (making a count and analysis of all the rights violations by TV channels, print media, radios and all internet sites). It rather aims at focusing on specific examples of rights violations, warning and showing its presence. However, in a short time, if necessary recourses

can be found, we believe that MEDIZ will be able to conduct more comprehensive studies.

## **For more “clicks”, more “circulation”, higher “ratings” ...**

**Selen Dogan \***

The media is constantly violating women’s human rights in a number of different ways. In that sexist picture, whose frame is drawn by the male-dominated mentality, women are presented to men through men’s viewpoints. Women, most of the time, are presented as objects of desire.

The media is building a sexist discourse over the women’s body. We are continuously faced with expressions, comments, images and extracts in newspapers and televisions that consolidate sexual discrimination.

The media would get the lowest grade in the representation of women in traditional roles. In media scripts, women are usually described as: “good wife,” “altruistic mother,” “efficient housewife,” “fantastic cook”... Of course, if we are talking about third-page stories, then we also need to mention definitions, such as “monster mother,” “unfaithful wife,” and “psycho lover.”

The media, which is a leader in violations of women’s human rights, actually “does not see” women. This is also a way of violating women’s human rights: ignoring and wiping out. Women, who make up half of the world’s population, are visible in the media only when they are mistreated or “victims”; when they are used to decorate newspaper pages; and when they are presented in the television with their sexuality. Thus, the language and approach of the media “wipe” women “out.” There is need for a separate “struggle” to enable women to be presented in the media with their successes, fights, and voices.

A good story of unjust treatment, or a news of “sexual content” with a woman as the subject, would mean more “clicks” on the Internet, more “circulation” for a newspaper and higher “ratings” for a television channel. The media is making profit through the exhibition of sexuality and women’s bodies. Women presented as “victims” earn money for the media organizations. In short, women are appetitive in every way! For example, celebrity shows are the best examples of the role hierarchy between men and women, the different appearances of manhood, and how women are presented as objects and secondary creatures.

*Ucan Supurge* (Flying Broom), through its Web site ([www.ucansupurge.org](http://www.ucansupurge.org)) and magazine (*Ucan Haber* - Flying News) is struggling to make women’s

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\* Editor, Ucan Supurge (Flying Broom Women’s Organization)

news visible. Being visible is not enough; women need to be visible with their lives and what they do, so that the incorrect representation of women in the media can change.

*Ucan Supurge* established the Local Women Reporters' Network in 2003 to contribute to the transformation of the media, starting from the local. The Local Women Reporters' Network was created as an alternative women's network. The network was set up to train women reporters who believe in equality between men and women, and who are responsive to social gender issues. It was aimed at staying informed about local women's agenda through women reporters. This network also aimed at carrying women's demands and priorities from the local agenda to national agenda; at creating a communications network for women; at breaking down the dependency on mainstream media, which currently serves as the only source for local news about women; at creating an effective alternative women's media group; at enabling local women's non-governmental organizations in various regions of Turkey and women to attain a place for themselves in the information society; and at enabling the usage of various information technologies for a fairer, more democratic and a more egalitarian society.

Our local women reporters cover women's news, ignored by the mainstream media, and even the local media, and approach news from a women's perspective. They cover the local developments through a women's point of view, and act as agents so that women's agenda can be followed by the public opinion. The women reporters cover many issues from violence to entrepreneurship, from local politics to family relationships and the work of women's organizations. These news are systematically published on the Web site of *Ucan Supurge*.

The local women reporters and other reporters working at the *Ucan Supurge* News Center also take advantage of the news pool when doing women's reporting. However, the sexist language repeats itself in the majority of these news. The news to be used are evaluated from a women's point of view, and are published after being almost rewritten.

It is very important that women's organizations and alternative media institutions create a force of pressure so that the media acts responsively and responsibly to the issue of women. More women should be present in the decision-making mechanisms of television channels, which compete with each other for more viewers, and newspapers, which do not see anything wrong with trying everything to sell more. This would be one of the first steps to "transform" the media. Moreover, women's organizations should be in communication with journalists to be able to make their work known, should react against wrong and incomplete representations of women in the media and should create their own alternatives. These are some other steps that could be taken.

## **Civic, Local and Alternative Media in Turkey**

## **The Relationship between Democracy and “Other Media”: A theoretical frame to describe the non-mainstream media environment in Turkey**

**Sevda Alankus\***

I would like to begin by reminding to you the black and white picture of the global media environment which works against the interests of the disadvantaged segments of the world. On the one hand, we see the mainstream media, which has become more vertically and diagonally monopolized than ever, and on the other hand, we see “non-mainstream media” which are known with the names such as “independent media,” “radical media,” “alternative media,” “radical alternative media,” “community media,” and “citizen media” in related theoretical studies, but here they will be temporally called as “the other media” until I attempt to re-name it through the end of this paper. All these define a media, which is the means of counter-globalization; the media of those who are discriminated against and are not treated equal; who are looking for a different world, and who try to grow their own horizontal, non-hierarchical communication networks to voice up. But I have to add right away that the global media scene includes many intermediate colors and cannot be understood simply “mainstream media” on the one side, and “other media” on the other side in a sort of dualistic picture, since there are some media that are in between the two and are so hybrid that they would not fit into either group. Nevertheless, the important thing is that; in the current global media environment, the voice of the hegemonic majorities are heard more than the voice of the have-nots and the voice of those who are discriminated against because of their ethnic, religious, sexual, cultural etc. identities.

Since we are critical with the mainstream media and since we have gathered here under the slogan of “another communication is possible,” my presentation will focus on “dark” and/or “grey tones” of the above photograph. I will try to explain the importance and the possibilities of the other media in the global context and then I will further focus on the “Turkey frame” of the photograph and attempt to clarify it. My aim is to open to discussion on the obstacles and opportunities presented by the new global media environment with a new—“radical”—understanding of democracy within the context of Turkey assuming that it is impossible to comprehend the new global media scene by ignoring the role of the other media.

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I may sound too optimistic, but this is my argument: the importance and effectiveness of the “other media” is on the rise. It is argued that while mainstream media was claiming to be the “fourth power” with a role of supervision on behalf of the public, it has become a center of power for itself, thus, the other media constitutes a sine qua non “fifth-power”<sup>21</sup> for those who do not settle for the current liberal democracies that leans against the mainstream media and who look for a different democracy. So, I argue that *there is need for a different communications, and a different media for a different democracy*. But here, in this paper my focus will be on democratization of the mass media, but not on communication in wide sense, although it is a very important and mostly ignored issue when democratization of political and public life is discussed. However, before I carry on with my argument, I would like to draw your attention to some examples that prove that “the importance and effectiveness of the media that fall outside mainstream media is on the rise”.

### **“Other media”: From where to where?**

The “other media” is as old as social opposition. “**other media**”<sup>22</sup> always existed as a result of the need by those who have been suffering from discrimination based on class, ethnicity and religion; those who have been excluded from the public and political arena; and those who have been unable to have their voices heard—and if I use the word “media” with its wide meaning. On the other hand, if the narrow meaning of the word “media” is used, and if the radical newspapers published by the British labour class starting from the second half of the 18th century is taken as a basis; the “other-media” has a history of at least two centuries (Atton, 2002: 2). However, the other media I would like to focus on is, on the one hand, the media with its narrow meaning, and on the other hand, recent/modern media.

To make a long story short, in the second half of the 19th century, thanks to the industrialization and colonization, the development, which accompanied the West to become the economic-political center of the world, was the rise of the media as an industry branch. As a direct consequence of this, the mainstream media positioned itself on the side of the hegemonic. Although the media in the West went under the control of the international capital during this period, it continued to carry on with its mission, that was construction of the national identity through imposing standard national language within the defined the national-borders—to a

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<sup>21</sup> The “Fifth power” notion belongs to *Ignacio Ramonet*, the Chief Editor of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, and I am quoting it from an article titled “Another communication” by *Ertugrul Kurkcu* published in *Radikal Iki* (29 October 2006).

<sup>22</sup> I am using the word “media” here in its widest sense and in a way that ranges from the jokes “that make fun of” those in power; to the grotesque carnivals of the middle ages in the West, mentioned in *Bakhtin’s* book; from the graffiti that turned political again in the climate of the 1968s; to songs, street theaters, to those who circulate their messages using the mass communications technologies (for this use, see J. Downing, 2001), however, the media I will focus on in this presentation, will be the media in its narrow sense; i.e. *newspapers, radio, television, Internet*.

certain extent until the 1980s. However because of this characteristic of the mainstream media, the alternative media stepped in as a vehicle for those, who were not represented by the nation-wide media, to have their voices heard. As a matter of fact, the 1970s were the golden years for the media of those who emerged with important experiences from the new-left political climate of 1968s and with new identities such as – environmentalists, feminists, ethnic identities, and moreover, those who had redefined their relations with the media.

With the beginning of 1980s, the effects of the new-right wing politics on the radio and television broadcasts, and the deregulation and privatization waves, caused the “other” type of media found especially in wealthy geographies of the world and in Latin American countries, and which are known by the names as “underground media”, “community media”, “parallel media,” “alternative media,” and “radical alternative media” to be unable to cope with –like the media that does public broadcasts– the competition of the commercial media. In this way, these examples of the other media, which had found a place at the margins of the media environment and in financial difficulties, began to cease to exist one by one. Those that continued their existence, either became marginalized, or became a part of the mainstream media by losing their specificity or radicalism of content, as many of their characteristics began to be incorporated by the commercial media. The specificity of the other media in the 1980s was the *zines*<sup>23</sup>. Zines were the extension of the *fanzines* being nourished by the sub-cultural groups that were gathered around the groups making *Punk* music, starting from the end of the 1970s. The main herald of the revival of the “other media” was the birth of the media of new social movements of environmentalist and anarchist nature in the 1990s in the West (Atton, 2001: 80–81). Another example of the other media during the same period was the oppositional media of the Eastern European countries, known as *Samizdat*. *Samizdat* flourished under the political climate of the Eastern European countries and played a very important role in encouraging the opposition to organize and take action at the time of the collapse of the “socialist” political regimes in Eastern Europe by the end of 1980s. Now, since the 2000s, we are able to talk about the new-golden age of the other media that are the good example of glocalization of the media of those who are in opposition/in resistance to the hegemonic as it is case with the *Indymedia* as the initiative of many online news sites in horizontal/loose relation with one another.

### **The new-golden age of “alternative media”: 2000s**

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<sup>23</sup> It is difficult to give a definition that has been agreed on about the *Zines*. This word, in essence, is being used to define the printed materials the sub-culture groups published and distributed by using cheap technologies such as photocopy machines, and where everyone could be both the writer and the reader; the “editor” and the “publisher”, with the aim of communicating among themselves. However, with the 2000s, and with the relative cheapening of the Internet technology, e-zines are now on the rise (Atton, 2002: 54–79). For the zines in Turkey, see Altay Öktem, *Genel Kültürden, Kenar Kültüre 101 Fanzin*, İstanbul: İthaki, 2002.

There are important differences between the other media of the 2000s—and the movements that are trying to gain publicity through this media—and those of the 1970s. This difference arises from the changes in the collective subjects of the counter-public spheres. And there is another important point to remind; the characteristics gained in the 1990s by the revival in the public sphere, which had began in the mid 1970s, and whose subject was “new social movements”, owes a lot to the developments of the new media technologies. Or, maybe it would be better to say that the new-social movements and the new media transformed and grew stronger together, with the convergence of especially the internet and the mobile telephone technology, its relative cheapening and its becoming widespread.

Here I would like to clarify my argument more through asking some questions: What was the difference between the “new social movements”, which were struggling at the margin of national-public sphere, but then globalized and earned a trans-national bargaining power, and the old social movements? And how effective was the “other media” in enabling this difference to come into being? Or, in other words, if, as I just argued, there always were counter-publics and their (other) media which served as their voice, then what are the differences of the ones we have today?

Based on my first argument/question, I will first try and explain what the counter-publics of the public sphere are, or what the “new-identities” scattered among these counter-publics are. Meaning thus, that I am making a distinction between “old counter-identities” and “new counter-identities” based on a distinction between “old-identities” and “new-identities.”<sup>24</sup>

The old counter/oppositional-collectivities presented people with identity clothes that were too tight. And those, who tried to wrap these identities around themselves, found the solution in throwing out these clothes, which were tore already to ribbons. Instead, they put on “new identities” that deserve to be described as “rainbow” because of their color and patterns (or they repaired and decorated their old ones that could not be destroyed...). Probably, the best example to the breaking up of the old identities is the dissolution of the Socialist identity, which marked a class-based state of belonging for themselves, and it being replaced by the new feminist, environmentalist, ethnic/cultural minority etc. identities<sup>25</sup>. Because the Socialist identity or class-based identity, at least as in a way it was constructed—exactly like the “national” identity it opposes—was an identity that was too tight on people; that homogenized the individuals and that put their other differences behind the class identity, even if it did not always disregard them. However, today, we are very well aware that, the

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<sup>24</sup> I am making the distinction between “old and new identities” by referring to Stuart Hall (1991).

<sup>25</sup> I mean the breaking down of the socialist/class based identities that remain outside the “socialist” political regimes. Although there is a connection between the both that took place in Socialist and Capitalist blocs, the breaking down of the first in the former ones had other reasons as well.

inequalities that we want to struggle against are (were) not only class-based; the "class" identity, which has been constructed by being loaded with an ontological privilege is tight enough<sup>26</sup> to be able to struggle against the inequalities that we face in the form of sexual, ethnic, religious, cultural etc.

In the meantime, the result of the new or renewed identities' struggle to gain publicity, participation and legitimacy was to diversification and pluralization of the national public spheres, which were tried to keep in so-called unification and cohesion through the uses of every kind of forceful and persuasive techniques, by infiltrating through its cracks. And they gained their "visibility" and "activity" to a great extent by 1) rendering it impossible for the mainstream media, which had ignored them for years, to disregard them; 2) creating their own media.

### **The change in the relations of counter-publics and other media: the "media-familiarity" of New-Social movements**

But the relationship between these counter-subjects of the public sphere, called "new-social movements," and the media, is very different from the relationship between the old identity movements and the media<sup>27</sup>. For the old identity movements, media—as the name implies—was a vehicle.<sup>28</sup> On the contrary, the new-social movements have the characteristic of a "media" or they turned themselves into a media but a "counter-media".

The new social movements or the new identity movements (feminist movements, the identity movements of ethnic and cultural minorities, gay and lesbian movements, counter-globalization movements, and environmentalist, anarchist, and pacifists)<sup>29</sup> are *movements that render themselves a media*. Or that are *media-familiar movements* (I am not using this term in the negative way it has come to mean). This is what I mean; these movements build their presence, sustainability, and actions on "visibility". Accordingly, while on the one hand, they were putting the mainstream media in a position that they cannot ignore themselves, and on the other hand, they use their own media for a very creative publicity and

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<sup>26</sup> For example, for the first time in Turkey a left-wing political movement/party "The Freedom and Democracy Movement/Party" included the groups that define themselves environmentalist, homosexuals, feminists etc.

<sup>27</sup> For a theoretical contribution to the notion of "new social movements", see Mellucci, 1996.

<sup>28</sup> The "old identity" movements were without a doubt using the media –from graffiti to their underground newspapers – for their struggle. However, these, to a great extent, had the characteristic of being the *voice of elite* within those opposition/counter movements. And these elite were usually "white," middle-class and male. Thus, the disappearance or alteration of the other-media examples with the 1980s cannot be explained merely through the new-right policies, speedy monopolization and privatization, in short, through economic reasons. Another reason would be *insistence of some of these media on structures that gave the privilege of speaking on behalf of others only to "some"* although this is against by definition how an alternative media should be working.

<sup>29</sup> In fact, neo-fascist and fundamentalist movements should also be added into this list. Although the latter seems like "religion" based, and thus "old" identity, it has something in common with the aforementioned. And that is, the fact that it is media-familiar and that is why I say "there would be no September 11 if there was no media."

visibility or simply they turned themselves into a media. In this sense, there is a *sine qua non* relationship between new social movement and the media.

I will give some examples: If it wasn't for the mainstream media, and if the Green Peace movement was not so media-familiar, it would not have become so prevalent and, for example, affect the Bergama villagers in Turkey (by becoming glocalized), and render them similarly media-familiar, visible and effective. I will give two negative examples as well: if the media was not so mainstream and accessible, there would probably be no Al-Qaida. There would be no September 11 attacks, and even the suicide bombers!<sup>30</sup>

However, to be able to better explain the relationship between the new social movements and the rise of their "other-media", I will seek the help of another notions; the notion of *globalization and/or glocalization*.

### **The two faces of Globalization and Counter-Publics/Media**

"Globalization," as a notion that has began to become more mainstream in the last 25 years in everyday life, whether we like it or not, or find tens of definitions of it from different perspectives, is in fact, as old as human history. It just gained acceleration in 1990s. In its most "neutral" definition, it means that *shrinking of the world through distancing of the time and space* (Giddens, 1990). And what causes this shrinkage is the circulation in unprecedented quality and quantity of capital, ideologies, people and information due to the developments in access and communications technologies –which interests us more (Appadurai, 1990). And this has two faces that complement each other (Robertson, 1990); inequalities and discrimination are increasing in number and becoming diverse, due to the characteristic of globalization, which enables capital and human fluidity in an unprecedented way. For example, there is an increase in exploitation of migrants and illegal workers; women and child labour; women and child prostitution. And the ethnic and cultural minorities, who make up the cheap labour, continue not only to face class-based discrimination, but also racial, political and cultural discrimination. But parallel to this, the new-social movements that comprise of those, who are faced with such inequalities and discrimination, form the *counter-publics*, due to the new possibilities provided by globalization or the ideology, information and technology fluidity that gave rise to globalization. Through these new possibilities,

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<sup>30</sup> The target of the September 11 attacks was to destroy of the *Twin Towers* of the *World Trade Center* (thus to destroy two important symbols of the U.S.A. and the "New World Order") and to create an absence in the New York skyline. This is an indicator that these attacks were planned with the aim of becoming media-familiar. And let's also remember that after an aircraft hit the first tower, the global news channels started live broadcasts from the scene. So we were able to watch the attack on the second tower "live". In my opinion, another reason the September 11 attacks became a turning point for the U.S.A and the world (in terms of West-East relations), was that they were planned as a "visual festival" and that the U.S.A would have to respond with a similar "visual festival". And it is unfortunate that this "visual war" is still going on at the all corner of the world (such as, in Iraq, in Istanbul – the attacks on the Synagogue, the British Consulate, the HSBC Headquarters– in London metro bombing).

these new-social movements meet with similar movements in other geographies, have one foot on the local and the other on the global, and form the counter-publics with "glocal"<sup>31</sup> characteristic. For this reason, now it is possible to talk about global counter-public spaces or the presence of global non-governmental organizations. As I have said before, the emergence of the environmentalist movements in Turkey and their relation with other environmentalist movements is an example to this. The *May (grand)mothers of Argentina*, first of all have an effect, and then a symbolic support, in turning the relatives of the missing into *Saturday Mothers* in Turkey...The emergence and politization of the Gay and Lesbian Movement in Turkey, and the support they get from similar movements in other countries, such as the *Bursa Walks* that took place recently, is another example to this...Politization of especially the Kurdish movement and other ethnic groups in Turkey have both local and global dimensions is again one example. Finally, the *Global Peace and Justice Coalition (Küresel BAK)*, which opposes the invasion of Iraq, and its coordinated activities, which "bring together" the anti-war activists through various protests, is another example.

Therefore, one of the consequences of globalization, in terms of the easier, cheaper and faster circulation of ideologies, people and information in larger masses, and in terms of the shrinking of distances and time, has been to strengthen not only the dominant/hegemonic, but also the oppositional by enabling it to act beyond its nation. In other words, the counter-publics, be it through the media, or be it through face to face encounters, are now able to act together in a global solidarity. And these encounters are happening through the other media, which is multiplying horizontally and spreading like a network, as well as through the mainstream media.<sup>32</sup>

Following this evaluation, I can go back to the question that I asked at the beginning of my paper, and try to answer it: "why is the other-media important?" The answer to this question rests partly in the evaluation I just made and here other reasons follow.

### **The other media is important, because...**

Freedom of thought and expression are among the basic human rights. The only way to speak about other basic rights, and to fight for them, is to have these basic rights and freedoms. And exactly for this reason, they are of the rights that are violated the most. Those who enjoy exercising these rights usually are the "white", prosperous and heterosexual men. And they have a mainstream media that they can express themselves through. Because *for the mainstream media, the "others" do not have a news value*. For the *other* to have a news value means, s/he should either transfer into a higher class or ethnicity (then became "whiten"), or should change his/her gender as it is case with some of the celebrities in Turkey. Or she should fall victim

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<sup>31</sup> For the usage of the notion, see Robertson, 1990.

<sup>32</sup> For my previous discussions over the globalisation literature and the possibilities globalization provides for the counter-publics/localization, see Alankus, 2000a.

to "tradition" or "honour crimes"; not just a few but tens of them should commit suicide like the women from Batman; hundreds of them should die in an earthquake or flood; or should die because of torture or hunger strike; should be "captured dead"; should be "a martyr"; should "commit theft at a young age"; should be the perpetrator of the crime that is called "murder by the glue-sniffing children"; should be gathered from the streets in the middle of the winter so that s/he does not freeze to death, and then should be left to go back to the streets etc. Therefore, the "others" need an "other" media to be able to become the subject of news before they die, kill, freeze to death, get beaten, get tortured, and in fact, so that these things do not happen to them. As a matter of fact, today, the migrants, refugees, those who are an ethnic or religious minority in their own land or in Diaspora, the homeless, those who are faced with racial, sexual etc. discrimination, in short, the "others," are becoming able to communicate with each other, supporting each other and are sharing experiences that would facilitate their lives a bit, through the other-media.

Do just these "others" need a different media than the mainstream one? In fact, no. Those, who are not at a disadvantaged situation (in terms of poverty/wealth, social class, gender, cultural identities etc), but who do not want to consume the "mediocre" also need "alternative" media. The mainstream media, which has *rating, circulation and audience* concerns, always present the average, grasps and reproduces the standard taste, and supposes that the listener, viewer, reader is of average intelligence. So, those, whose taste, political preferences and special interests are a bit towards the end of the spectrum, need the other media besides the mainstream, which reproduces the mediocre in every sense.<sup>33</sup>

Who else needs the other media or an alternative to the mainstream media?: The migrants/expatriates, who have been displaced because of political and economical reasons of globalization, temporary and/or illegal workers, political refugees, as well as the "wealthy" people, who are constantly or at times, traveling: People falling into this category are businesspeople who have breakfast in one country and dinner at another, or "tourists," who escape the cold weather of the north and spend some seasons in hotels or houses they buy in different countries to take advantage of the sun in the south.

Today, there is something that brings together all these people. And, if I have to repeat, that is *their need for the "alternative" media*.

People are always in need of getting news no matter for what reason. And naturally, they want to find out what is going on starting first with their

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<sup>33</sup> Here, I am not talking about the media examples named "*thematic media*," or "*narrow broadcasting*" we encounter as "products" intended for special cultural consumption or special hobbies (such as *MTV, Sailing Channel, History Channel, Extreme Sports, etc...*), which the media moguls create in an attempt to increase the number of their consumers. I am talking about the media, which is "other" due to its content, organization, capital structure, format, etc... For example, *Açık Radyo (Open Radio)* or *Buğday Dergisi (Wheat Magazine)*, *Git Dergisi (Go Magazine)* in Turkey.

immediate surroundings. Accessing news and keeping informed about the surroundings, give people the feeling that they can control their surroundings, that they are not alone, that they have a say on their lives, and that they belong to a *place* or *places*. Without a doubt, nowadays, the character of the "sense of belonging" has changed quite a bit. The "place" does not strictly have a geographical meaning anymore. The sense of place does not anymore only define the attachment or the state of belonging to the immediate surroundings. In other words, the place we feel a state of belonging to, does not necessarily have to be the place we live in. Or the places we feel a state of belonging to, are not unique or the one and only anymore.

Under these conditions, a German couple who has come to Alanya in Turkey to spend the winter in their house there, would feel the need to be informed about both, Alanya, and their home town in Germany. The situation is not different for other people, who have moved to other places for various reasons and in various dimensions. For example, a construction worker in Kazakhstan, a person from Diyarbakir who lives in Istanbul, a soldier from Mersin who serves in Turkish troops in Afghanistan, a worker from Elmadag in Belgium, a student from Izmir in the U.S.A. The common need of all these people, who have moved to other places for different reasons, is the need to get information about the places that they feel a state of belonging to –so that they can feel secure, so that their life becomes easier, so that they don't feel lonely, etc. And for the same reason, they do not only need to get news, but they also need to be entertained, and to be informed. And as I said earlier, such people need "alternative" media, besides the mainstream media, which present the average people with standard information, news and entertainment. They actually need the "alternative" media even more than they need the mainstream ones.

Beyond this point, I can look at the question "*why is alternative-media important and necessary*" from a more macro conceptual framework and move towards another discussion; I can argue that a "*democracy*," which I believe is the best political regime ever no matter what its problems and shortcomings may be, "*cannot improve without the presence of alternative media.*" Then, right now, I have to focus on the relationship between democracy and the other/alternative media.

### **The relationship between (Radical) Democracy as a Project and Alternative Media:**

Many things have been written and said about the role of media for democracies. The best known of these is the *Liberal media approach*, which argues that the role of the media is to supervise the power of the law making (parliament), law enforcement (government) and judiciary, and thus, is to act as the guardian of public interests. This approach also advocates that the media should be exempt of all regulations and control so that it can fulfill this duty and act independent of the government and political power. This approach also says that the functioning of the media should be shaped by the dynamics of the market. However, with the

monopolization of the national and international media, and the transformation of media corporations into important national/international capital corporations, the media is no longer a watchdog of the public interest, but *its own interests*, since it has become a political as well as an economical power/interest center (Curran, 2002). Exactly for this reason, a commercial media organization can only be expected to support democratization, as long as this does not impede on its own interests, and chiefly to reproduce *status quo*. By the way, as you can all guess, there is no place for a public broadcasting or not-for-profit broadcasting approach in the liberal democracy and media theory –in consistence with the liberal economic approach. Moreover, this approach does not discuss the possibility that those that cannot survive in the market will one be one disappear and the media environment will become mono. For this reason, when trying to understand the relationship between media and democracy, we have to follow a democracy approach other than the Liberal arguments put.

Such an approach can be found in the theoretical discussions by German writer **Jurgen Habermas** in his book called “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere” (1997)<sup>34</sup>. Habermas reviewed these discussions for the English edition of the book and the book has influenced the approach of many communications theorists.

In summary, there are two versions of this theoretical discussion. Following criticisms, Habermas had reviewed his thoughts. Those who are close to his thoughts, think of the public sphere, which is somewhere between the civilian space and the state space, as an area of common good and consensus reached after critical and rational negotiations on public issues.

The important point here is that this public deliberation can only be made through, or via the media. But the current situation of the same media –as criticized by Habermas– is obvious. Consequently, those, who follow this approach, criticize the media, and especially the commercial media for the characteristics it has gained. And the solution is seen to be the restructuring of the public service broadcasting.<sup>35</sup> What’s wrong with this approach is not the fact that the current situation of the media is being criticized and public service broadcasting is proposed as an alternative. The real problem is that the public sphere has been envisaged as a homogenous space stripped of differences, where everyone can equally and without discrimination participate in. It has also been envisaged as a place which, in a suitable media environment, can reach a common good through common intelligence. Consequently, democracy has been envisaged as a *consensual democracy*.

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<sup>34</sup> For a very comprehensive study in Turkish, which criticizes Habermas about the public sphere, but which compiles the theoretical discussions that stand close to his paradigm, see Ozbek, 2004.

<sup>35</sup> For the model James Curran has suggested by putting the public service media in the center and positioning social market sector, private sector, professional sector and civic sector around it, see Curran, 2002: 217–247.

However, according to a second group of theoretical discussion, the public sphere, which as Habermas claims, emerged in the West with bourgeoisie and then disappeared or turned to be a "pseudo" public sphere, was never a homogenous, comprehensive space where everyone had equal opportunity to express themselves and where everyone participated in without being discriminated based on his/her differences and inequalities. It is neither the ideal that has to be sought. Public sphere, even in its most "ideal" form in the 18th century, was a space, where the voices of the hegemonic were dominant at the expense of the appeasement of the voices of others. As a matter of fact, therefore, even the democracies that are believed to be the most advanced are "white and wealthy male"-centered. Therefore, the "consensus" which is believed to be reached through public negotiations, or the "social consent," the mainstream media reproduces, all tell about a hegemony that has been established at the expense of those who have been excluded from the public sphere. This approach is problematic as long as it envisages a "monolithic" and "unique" public sphere cleared of agonisms, after looking at the existing democracies and seeing there only a fragmented/cacaphonic sphere created by the counter-publics and their media by which everybody speaks and nobody listens.

We thus have to seek a democratic project, which takes the antagonistic situation of the public spheres, which arises from the fact that those discriminated against, the unequal, the oppressed and those who are prevented from expressing themselves, and their **counter-publics** are gaining visibility and negotiation power, as an input data. But this project should also try and turn this environment into an *agonistic environment*. It should also be taken into consideration that the public sphere today, as it was before, is increasingly also the space of complex social relations which cannot be simply defined through double contrasts such as poor and wealthy, white and black, women and men. It is also the space of *parallel-publics*, where identities meet from time to time, intercept, clash, but survive without touching one another.

Finally, if I have to underline my earlier resolution, the new-collective identities of public sphere, or the counter publics of the new social movements, have gained an unprecedented bargaining power that puts pressure on the hegemony of the nation-state. *In other words, we can speak of (a) global public sphere to the extent that we can speak of a global civil society.* (Lipschutz, 2005; and Sparks, 2005). Consequently, the national public spheres are now spaces, where opposing/parallel publics with one foot on the local and the other foot on the global, encounter, collide, intercept, interact and create a connection. And I believe the best example to what I am trying to say is the meeting that took place under the "International Independent Media Forum" and brought together the representatives of the independent media and those who write about the alternative/independent media. The two-day meeting took place under the slogan that "A different media is possible."

In summary, this new form of the public sphere and the current situation of the media environment that completes it, render it necessary to look at the media–democracy relationship from a different point of view.

### **Radical Democracy, Agonistic Public Space and Alternative/Different Media**

*The Radical Democracy project envisages a public space based upon the publics, that are not defined as fixed and essentialist but as a space of identities that are re-constructed through constantly rebuilt differences. Again it assumes a public space that is a place where agonistic relationships cannot turned into the antagonistic ones; not based on consensus, but on dissensus that functions within the ethics of “being responsible towards the other.”<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, the Radical Democracy approach, which we have to see as a never–ending project; gives us the opportunity to rebuild the theory of how the pluralism and agonism in the public sphere can be improved “in journalism” and “through journalism” (Carpentier and Cammaerts, 2006: 972). Postponing the discussion of the first part of this issue to the end here I have to mention only that radical democracy can only be brought about through the pluralism created by the “other media” environment, which has become the channel of the excluded identities and anti–hegemonic views, in a way to balance the mainstream media of the hegemonic.*

Do liberal democracies, with their present shape (at least in terms of the other media environment) have the potential to evolve into radical democracies? Or, in other words; is the presence of other media and counter–publics enough for such a transformation? The easy and immediate response would be to say that it is not enough. However, to be clearer on this issue, I would have to focus on two subjects: the characteristic of mainstream and other or alternative media environment(s) and how these media, as one of the channels of radical democratic project, are structured.<sup>37</sup>

However, beyond this point, I will seek to focus on the media environment(s) in Turkey and the structuring of the other media. I will also make some comparisons with the examples from other countries that I am familiar with.

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<sup>36</sup> The Radical Democracy approach is, in many ways, different from *Habermas's* democracy approach, which moves with the idea of a public sphere, where the critical–mind reaches an agreement through negotiating. While *Habermas* makes an emphasis on *consensus* at the expense of discarding differences, *Laclau* and *Mouffe* make an emphasis on *dissensus*, saying that politics will always be the arena of clashes between differences, and that ultimate consensus impossible. Thus, these two approaches are paradigmatically different since—as *Mouffe* says—they “come from a different point of view and lead to different points of view.” Moreover, *Mouffe*, does not like to use the public sphere concept and to make a distinction between her use and *Habermas's* use, she uses prefers the term “public *space*”, and again to point to the amplitude of public spaces, she also prefers to use the term in its “plural” form (Carpentier and Cammaerts, 2006: 973–974).

<sup>37</sup> For a study, in which, being inspired by *Mouffe*, the question has been laid as such and discussed, see Carpentier, Lie, Servaes, 2003.

## **Mainstream and Alternative Media Environment in Turkey and Democratization**

For quite some time now, and luckily, in Turkey, we are no longer limited to a roughly two-centered media environment made up of the commercial media and the media, which is said to be doing public service broadcasting. Let's remember: If we leave aside the relative diversity of the print media, we had to make do with radio and television broadcasts that were under the control of the government for many years similar to many other developing countries, except a very brief period of relative autonomy. This was a broadcasting approach that belittled the society and its taste, that decided on behalf of us what we had to like and dislike, that played local songs with the very same Istanbul (imposed) accent on the Izmir radio and on the Hakkari radio under the name of doing local broadcast. In short, it was an approach that tried to clothe us with the one-piece nation-state identity, that ignored all kinds of accent, dialect and language differences, and that commanded the "standard language" of this identity. Also, unfortunately, because the organized civil society tradition was not strong enough, we never encountered a serious attempt to break the "state monopoly" being carried out under the guise of public broadcasts. Moreover, although the print media is expected to be relatively "freer", due to the penal laws that limited freedom of expression and the clauses of the media law, the print media, which were representing the political, ethnic, cultural, sexual differences had difficulty in surviving. There were only a few newspapers in languages other than Turkish, which were targeting the very small Christian community. Let aside electronic publishing, or the ethnic (Muslim) groups (such as Kurds, Circassians, Georgians, or Laz) other than the Christian Communities like the Greeks and the Armenians, who are regarded as minorities according to the Treaty of Lausanne to publish newspaper/magazines in their own mother tongues, there were times after the 1980 military coup when they could not even name their children in their mother tongues or speak in their mother tongues on the streets.

Despite this fact, for a very long time, there were no pirate radio/TV broadcasts of political, anarchist nature in Turkey as like the examples that we used to see in other developing/developed countries. I do only remember secretly listening to *TKP'nin Sesi (illegal Turkish Communist Party's radio station)* during that period and how "pirate" that was, is open to question...Then, as you know, the 1990s began and we had a boom of first, commercial television channels, and then radio stations. Between 1990-1994 and until the re-regulatory law in 1994, the frequencies were being distributed unchecked<sup>38</sup>.

Did this create plurality and diversity? If we are to look at the television channels, no. When the first excitement of having more channels to watch, starting to discuss issues that were formerly regarded as taboo, and seeing programme formats we had never seen before on the television abated, we

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<sup>38</sup> For broadcasting/publishing politics in Turkey, see Kejanlioglu, 2005.

realized that, in fact, this did not create pluralism, but instead, only proliferation. With radios, the situation was a bit different... We faced a scene more in line with the tendency in the rest of the world. After all, radio was not a means for the wealthy like the television. It was a more suitable means for the different publics to have their voices heard and thus, there was an attempt to use it for that purpose. However, for exactly that reason, the radios were declared "pirate." Although televisions were exactly in the same situation, they were not closed down, as it happened to the radio stations. In fact, it is curious; according to a definition of pirate broadcasts, all of them including the television channels (since there has been no legal allocation of frequencies) are still "pirates."

Moreover, the re-regulatory broadcasting law in Turkey has another characteristic: it is not possible for non-commercial groups, non-governmental organizations, and municipalities to do radio/TV broadcasts. Accordingly, despite the existence of counter-publics in Turkey, when we look for the type of media I have called the "other-media" until now, we can only find them among the local radios which are expected to be commercial—if we, of course, leave aside the print media. In other words, there is no broadcast media example in Turkey, which would be equal to the type of media called *alternative media, community media/radio, minority media, ethnic media, radical media or independent media*, and which has the characteristic of not being commercial. In contrast, with the rise of Internet technologies, this type of media has become more various, more accessible, more creative and more effective in the rest of the world. This is the main reason I have been calling the media, which I view as the voice of the counter-publics, as "other/different media" instead of using one of the names above.

Now, I will look at the names and definitions of the media of counter-publics in related theoretical studies, and try to give a clearer answer to the question of what those in Turkey should be called. Through this, I will also be able to suggest a new notion to replace the "other/different media" notion I have been using to define the non-mainstream media.

First let's look at the definition of **radical alternative media** by *John Downing*: According to his definition, being closely connected with the social movements, radical alternative media are the media of the counter-hegemonic publics that have a project about changing the world. *Downing* places importance of the characteristic of this type of media, which questions the political and hegemonic processes, and which enables the people to believe in its own transformative power. However, he makes a distinction between being "partisan" and being "political" media. *Downing's* definition is a broad definition since he considers the street theater or performing art of the new social movements as types of radical alternative media as well. Is there such a media in Turkey? If we take it from the wider meaning, there is a lot. If we take it from the narrower meaning, there is little, because the "partisans" are more in number, compared with the "political" ones.

However, Downing's definition is criticized because of being very wide and because of his over emphasis on these media's direct relations with the social movements. Besides, it is argued that its content (being a political project aimed to change the world) would not be adequate to make it radical and alternative (Atton, 2002:9-18).

Thus, there are some researchers who claim that in order to name a media as "radical alternative", every stage of its processes should be radical and alternative. But they are also being criticized for narrowing down extensively the definition of radical alternative media and for excluding the other counter-media experiences that we come across usually in the hybrid forms (Atton, 2002: 27-29). I am not for such narrow definitions that lead to the exclusion of important experiences. Meanwhile, definitions of Carpentier et al for "alternative media" are;

- "...small-scaled and one, which respects differences by speaking to specific communities, disadvantaged groups,
- independent of state and market,
- organized horizontally, and one, which enables the access and participation of the audience within the framework of democratization and pluralism,
- one, which gives the opportunity to individuals to express themselves, and one, which is based on the non-dominant (anti-hegemonic to a great extent) discourse and representations" (2003: 56).

Another example for the other media is the "*community media*": The examples that first come to mind are the not-for-profit media that is based on and that targets ethnic, religious, cultural communities, or communities as small as a single neighborhood, and that functions with that community's support and membership. It includes a very wide range of media from the "mini-FM" movement in Japan, to the radios with a range of only a couple of villages in India, to the radios of the indigenous people in Latin America, to the radios of the Turks living in the Netherlands, to the media examples of various sub-culture groups. Regardless of the characteristic of the community it is based on, the *community media* examples should be independent of the state and the market and should encourage the participation. We can often see examples of community media that turn their members into the "media" itself, and do away with the distinction the traditional media make between the "producer of the message," and the "consumer." At times when this is not done, the media, which claim to be opponent, can form a media example where the anti-hegemonic communities' elite—i.e the educated, wealthy, "white" men again—speak on behalf of the rest. Meanwhile, while one of the reasons of the low numbers of radio examples, which can be defined as "other media", is the fact that they are commercial, the other reason is because they fail in enabling participation.

Within this framework, the difference between the community media and the radical alternative media is that the latter is based on a movement, while the first —whether politicized or not —is based on an ethnic, religious, cultural community. In other words, the latter puts an emphasis on counter-publics, on more loosely organized, or not organized, possibly temporary groups. The first points at a community, a semi-organized or fully-organized structure where the connection between the members is stronger. However, it is no longer a condition to share the same geography to be a community. Today the notion of “community” can be used to define those who share an *interpretative community* and thus it is possible to extend the definition of community media, as it is possible to extend the definition of community (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes, 2003: 54). But this extended notion of community media to the extent that it makes an emphasis on participatory and horizontal (non-hierarchical) structures, intercepts with radical alternative media definition, or even renders the definition unnecessary.

Before discussing whether it is positive or negative to define the community media in a narrow or wide sense, I would like to try and answer whether or not there is a community media in Turkey in both senses of the community. The same situation applies here. According to certain criteria, there is a community media in Turkey. According to others, there isn't. If we are to disregard the criterion of being non-commercial, we can consider the local commercial Alevite and Kurdish radio channels, or the radios that belong to certain Islamic groups as community media in the narrow or traditional sense. However, within the framework of this example, we have to disregard a second criterion; which is the criterion of “participation.” Because the media examples that fit into the “radical alternative media” definition, like those that fit into the “community media” definition rarely embrace participation that does away with the distinction between the producer and the consumer of the message in a way to abolish professionalism. In other words, it is difficult to find a counter/alternative media example in Turkey that puts pressure on the separation between the source/sender of the message and receiver of the message; let alone one that eliminates that separation of the traditional model of communication. As far as I know, there are only a few initiatives in this regard. One of them is the *Uçan Süpürge's* (Flying Broom) project known as the “Local Women Reporters Network,” which enables women to become local reporters after a certain training period.<sup>39</sup> However, it is not possible to view the *Uçan Süpürge* experience as a community media example since it has more the characteristic of “alternative media.” (Köker, 1996: 23–44). And let me

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<sup>39</sup> The “Local Women Reporters’ Network” project began in March 2003 in 8 pilot cities (*Antalya, Çanakkale, Diyarbakır, Eskişehir, Mersin, Samsun, İzmir and Gaziantep*). Four more cities were added to the project in 2004 (*Adıyaman, Van, Mardin, Şanlıurfa*). The target is to reach 81 provinces and get the women in all provinces to produce news for this network. For information on this project, you may refer to Selen Doğan’s article titled “The Story of Uçan Süpürge ‘Local Women Reporters Network’ or ‘Live is News’” in the book named “Women Rights Focused Reporting” which is the second book of the BIA Rights Reporting series.

add; when we use the "community" notion in its wider sense to cover the interpretative publics, rather than its narrower sense, which refers the traditional-based religious, ethnic communities no matter how modern their structures are, there are no such examples among radio and television channels in Turkey.

In brief, we encounter neither community nor alternative radical media examples in Turkey, which would fit exactly into one or the other definitions I summarized above. Instead, we are faced with *hybrid* media forms, which carry one or a couple of the characteristics of each one, or which bring together the characteristics of more than one model. We have even examples that proof it is a mistake to see the differences between mainstream media and the other/non-mainstream media as a contrast.<sup>40</sup> In that case, are there specific historic, cultural, sociological conditions in Turkey that give rise to these hybrid forms? Separately, is it a disadvantage to have these hybrid forms? Or are encountering with these hybrid forms not exceptional, but simply the typical?

### **Why aren't there Examples of Alternative/Radical, Independent Media or Community Media in Turkey?**

In Turkey, the counter-publics and ethnic, religious, cultural collectivities have unprecedentedly increased in number since the mid 1980s, became demanding and gained strength by learning to act glocally. However, they cannot create permanent counter-media examples that could become alternatives for the mainstream media. This is mainly because they were/are not coming from grassroot but instead, they were/are elite initiatives of ethnic, cultural minorities/communities or political movements. This also explains why the existing examples have very short lives. For example, in the last years, the examples of the feminist media in Turkey, which tried to exist under many difficulties, have one by one disappeared. Despite the entire creative struggle by the *Pazartesi Dergisi* (*Monday Magazine*) to overcome the financial difficulties, it can only be published with intervals. The most important reason for this the fact that it has no rooted support behind it coming from the base supporters. The situation is not different with radios. For example, there are no women's radios except *Radiopink* (104.2), which began broadcasts on 8 March 2006. Moreover, as far as I know, *Radiopink* has no intention or aim to become the alternative voice for women. ICN/BIA (Independent Communication Network, [www.bianet.org](http://www.bianet.org)) is trying to overcome the shortcoming in this respect to a certain extent. It produces programmes prepared from a woman's perspective and presents them to local radios. But it is not easy to say that the local radios have taken advantage of this adequately and that, with BIA's pioneer role, the "woman's voice" is being heard more besides the dominant "man's voice." For this reason, one cannot stop thinking whether there would be less number of women committing suicide in Batman

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<sup>40</sup> An example of this began in the Radikal Newspaper as I was reviewing this speech. Radikal Newspaper started handing over the authority of being the chief editor of Radikal to the intellectuals/artists in Turkey, starting with Nobel prized author Orhan Pamuk.

(Turkey) if there was a women's radio station aimed at strengthening women and one, which was embraced by its local woman audience.

Secondly, despite all demands and struggles, there still is no legal amendment to allow the political parties, non-governmental organizations, municipalities or the communities in Turkey that reflect the multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious structure of Turkey, to do radio and television broadcasts. Nor can the media, which is commercial but not-for-profit, and especially the community media cannot benefit from public funds. I believe this is because of the Turkish Republic's lack of trust in the state's citizens—and actually in itself—with a reflex it inherited from the division of the Ottoman Empire (Göle, 1993). As a result of this, the local media in Turkey, which can potentially provide for pluralism in the media environment to an extent, is faced with the dilemma of either becoming a "bad" imitation of the mainstream media, or not being able to resist the vertical monopolization tendency, selling its frequencies to media monopolies and disappearing within the nation-wide media. In the meantime, only the local newspapers and radios with a "partisan" characteristic, or those that rely on publics that are organized to a certain extent, can stand on their feet even though they don't make profits. The radios in organic relation with leftist groups and Kurdish community radios can be given as examples for the first. Radios supported by various Islamic circles/societies and Alevite communities can be examples for the second. However, the radios mentioned above are faced with all kinds of political pressures because of their identities, are closed down, and become the subject of criminal investigations.<sup>41</sup>

In summary, this special situation caused by the re-regulatory law in Turkey, is both an obstacle and not an obstacle for the existence of the alternative media. Because, even the most controlling, anti-democratic political regimes contain some cracks that allow for leakages. Therefore, it is possible to claim that the mere presence of counter-media examples, that are able to leak through the cracks in Turkey as in other countries with similar conditions, are very important, as one of the channels of the war of position –to use *Gramsci's* notion– fought for democratization and pluralism. However, still, I have to say that the current situation is inadequate even for pluralism in a liberal sense, let alone a radical democratic transformation in the political and media environment. To explain the reasons for this, I have to move away from these determinations of the general characteristic of the counter/alternative media environment, and focus on how these hybrid– "alternative" media examples are structured. But still I will not offering a single comprehensive name to this type of media in Turkey.

However, I have to add that the difficulties in choosing words to define and explain the other media in Turkey do not arise only from particular historical, political and cultural conditions of the country. This also has to do

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<sup>41</sup> Refer to the relevant section of this book for *Açık Radyo*.

with facing in general with the hybrid media forms in the developing countries. It also has to do with development of the related academic studies mainly in the West and their ethno-centric focuses, besides their lack of agreement on definitions. Thus, I believe that a conceptual quest must continue for not disregarding the differences between the mainstream media and non-mainstream media; and also for highlighting importance of the power that the "others" gained through their media as channels for their anti-hegemonic struggle.

Then, what kind of a theoretical framework do we need to understand the relationship between the alternative/other media and democracy? And the answer is this: we need an approach that considers the diversity of the media environment and the specificity of the different structuring within that environment (Carpentier, Lie, Servaes 2003: 66; Carpentier and Cammaertz, 2006).<sup>42</sup> Additionally, an approach that explains neither mainstream and the other media in a dichotomic relation nor cloud their differences reducing the political importance of the second.

Such an approach can be found in the theoretical openings of the "citizens' media" notion that is developed by *Clemencia Rodriguez* upon *Chantal Mouffe's* definition of "citizenship". *Rodriguez* uses the term in a way that would include all the different and lived experiences of all the alternative media practices. In this way, she proposes a notion that places importance on all "citizen" initiatives that would provide for the democratization of the media environment by taking into account all their specifications instead of squashing them within essentialist definitions (Vatikiotis, 2004: 21). By using the term she means a citizenship that intervenes in the present media environment with the aim of transforming it, that contests present social codes, legitimate identities and institutionalized social relations, and that uses all communications practices to strengthen the communities/publics besides a media that is the outcome of such citizenship. And behind this, lies a quotidian understanding of politics, which questions and tries to transform the power relations in every aspect of life and turns every inch of it into a case of intervention through calling help of the media (*Rodriguez*, 2001: 34–35). Therefore, there is a need for "citizen's media" that come

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<sup>42</sup> The writers whom I cite, expand the "community media" notion to such an extent that, there is almost no need for other related notions. But on the other hand, by combining together the Radical Democracy theory by *Mouffe* and *Laclau*, and the Rhizome theory by *Deleuze* and *Guattari*, they propose a different model. In this model, the community media work in relation with more than one non-governmental movement/organization, and by which all become connected with each other. Thus, model points out the importance of the *rhizomatic net* between, and, the joint strength of different democratic struggles. Besides, role of the other-media, including the community media, in radical democratic transformations are determined and importance of relations of the other media with the mainstream media are emphasized. Accordingly, their model introduces an alternative for the situation, where it is alleged that the other-media retires into itself or ghettoized creating an environment where those who speak and listen are the same. For a mention of the *Rhizome* theory by *Deleuze* and *Guattari*, within the context of radios, please see the *Introduction* of the 5th book (*Radio and Radio Broadcasting*) of the *BIA Reporter's Manual* (Istanbul: 2005).

out as *initiative of active citizens*, and become a channel of “*war of positions*” for a radical democratic transformation.

Now one last question; is it possible to consider the non-mainstream media in Turkey as “citizen’s media”? In my opinion, comparing with the others, citizen’s media notion both has the advantage of being enough flexible to explain the hybrid and in-between forms of the media examples in Turkey and also has the advantage of emphasizing the differences between the other media and the mainstream media. However, still, this should not hold us back from saying that media of the counter-publics in Turkey, has to improve in three important aspects that may even influence and change the mainstream media. It is because, the other media examples which I may call by now on as “citizen’s media”;

1. fail to provide opportunities for participation of the audience or their respective publics/communities (and thus they are not embraced by the people enough).
2. are weak in developing participative-democratic models that demolishes the hierarchy in their own inner organizations.
3. are not willing to engage in horizontal networks that would enable them to be in relation with each other and strengthen like an *ivy/rhizome* (and this is somewhat because they have to have a commercial characteristic).

By all means, these –as I tried to briefly explain above– may have certain causes arising from the history and culture of the country. However, if the expansion and deepening of democracy –as *Wasco and Mosco argue*– requires pluralism and democratization *through* and *within* the media (quoted in Carpentier and Cammaertz, 2006: 969), I will say that two things need to urgently change in Turkey. First of all, to allow citizen’s media for pushing radical democratic transformations, necessary conditions for not-for-profit broadcasts need to be created and thus, the media environment will be liberated from the dominance of those that are economically capable. Only by this way can we attain the required pluralism and thus democratization *through* the media. And for that –maybe this is a dream– there is need for a political willpower that does not regard the media of the others as a “(potential) separatist enemy”, and that does not disregard or oppress differences in opinion for the sake of consensus.

And second, steps need to be taken for *inter/intra media democratization*, that open channels for participation of the citizens and thus, even if when they do not have grassroot feature, they will be embraced by their audiences. In fact, the second is easier, since it is up to “us”. It is also more urgent, since a more democratized and embraced media would exert pressure for democratization *through the media*. In any case, the anti-democratic characteristics of the system are not always obstructive. They sometimes incite creative solutions.

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## **An Opportunity for Civic/Public Journalism and Local Media as the Medium**

**Incilay Cangoz\***

### **Introduction**

During this presentation, I would like to question the basic norms of the profession of journalism. I would also like to discuss possibilities of new efforts for producing news in this convenient setting that brings together academicians and journalists, who rarely come together and exchange opinions. The topic clearly sets forth a stance anyway: I believe that the media can introduce democratic openings to a community. And I think that the local media, with the susceptibility it develops within the genuine conditions of its own geography, harbours this potential. In other words, I suggest that the local media abandons the local media approach, which is based on imitating the news production activities of the mainstreammedia; realizes the advantages that it has, and starts producing news with a new understanding of this profession, which also includes a new understanding of the public.

Many individuals, groups and institutions, including journalists, communications scientists, activists and labour unions not only in Turkey but in the world, are discussing and searching for an alternative or a non-mainstreammedia. At the same time, we see more and more gatherings taking place with this purpose. The citizen (civic) or public journalism, which I will focus on during my presentation, is not a journalism concept that came into picture coincidentally.<sup>43</sup> And its arise in the United States of America (USA) was quite meaningful since monopolisation, commercialisation and "apolitisation"<sup>44</sup> in that country is very intense.

The news-gathering, writing and distributing practices of civic or public journalism, which is being developed as a new type of journalism, is in

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<sup>43</sup> Following the 1988 Presidential Election in the United States, serious decline in voting rates incited some of the journalists and communication scholars to reflect on the role of journalists, and look for a new kind of journalism which encourage people to deal with political matters more seriously.

<sup>44</sup> I am using the word "apolitisation" here to refer a media which quite fail to make people concerned about democratisation processes, and therefore become distant from its political responsibility.

contradiction with the news production practices of the mainstreammedia. In America, the local media has embraced civic journalism to a greater extent. The supporters of civic journalism argue that the journalists have a social responsibility in supporting the civilian life and putting into operation democratic processes. This responsibility that has been imposed on journalists turns into an issue of existence, not only within the context of a new journalism style, but at the same time, under the conditions of a crisis of confidence in journalism, as a profession – including the mainstreammedia.

### **Who should be called a journalist ...**

At this point the question: "Who is a journalist?" is important.

Historically, journalists are defined through their professional routines and vocational norms. According to the definitions Singer (2006) compiled from theorists, a journalist is "A person, who wrote the first raw draft of history"; "A journalist is the 'doorstep guard' of a society/community, and decides for them what is worthy of finding out"; "A journalist is a person, who rebuilds daily life through a series of institutional routines and structures"; "A journalist is a person, who reaches information rapidly for the benefit of the society and investigates the arguments of the government"; "A journalist is a person, who provides the society with rational reflections, merits and needs of the daily events." And in short, the definition that we reach through these explanations, is: "A journalist is someone, who gets his/her trustworthiness from the ethical values of being balanced and fair, who gathers and organizes daily data, and distributes them through methods of their own." (Singer, 2006 quotes from Gup, 1999).

Along with this, millions of people all over the world every day, gather information over the Internet through facilities provided by technology, blend them and distribute them. There is no means to determine what is rational/irrational, what is wrong/right, what is balanced/unbalanced, and to screen information. Moreover, some natural or social events are recorded through amateur cameras before journalists, and are distributed to the world. Some examples are the images of the Russian Airlines plane, which caught fire in the air and fell on Ukraine, the tsunami disaster in Southern Asia and the flood in New Orleans, USA. Consequently, from sharing data gathered as a result of scientific studies to slander and manipulations, news and information is distributed through means provided by the new technologies. However, everyone, who gathers and distributes daily information, is described as a journalist. A journalist is defined as a person, "who gathers daily information, organizes them in a certain style and distributes them." However, it is clear that this definition is not comprehensive enough.

Singer (2006:3) argues that a journalist should not only be defined through his/her practices, but through a dialectic process that includes the core of the journalist. He states that the norms of independence and reliability gain new importance as the key notions of the discussion. According to Singer, in

trying to define a journalist, one should avoid depictions of what processes generate or do not generate journalists, what content can or cannot be seen as a work of journalism, what media corporations can or cannot produce news, what technological environments do or do not provide a platform for journalism. In his definitions of a journalist, instead of using such criteria, he relates production –in other words the act of producing news– with the individual producer. And this implicates the journalist. In media environments, journalists, in the act of individual production, may follow existentialist ethical values. But this is not enough. In the current media environment transformed through technology, there is need for more guidance from the ethical values that take social responsibility as their basis. What Singer is trying to bring to the definition of a journalist is meaningful in this sense.

Journalists should have the right to freely choose and act freely within the framework of an approach that leans on the existentialism movement. However, they should not only have a responsibility towards themselves as individuals for these choices, but towards the reader, viewer and listener, who make up the consumer ring of the chain. If the social responsibility approach is replaced by other objectives such as individual interest or serving the boss' financial concerns, the journalists and the media will face a crisis of confidence. This is exactly what's happening today. Thus, Singer points to social responsibility to overcome this crisis.

Singer, in this ethical synthesis he attempts to develop, follows American theorist John Merrill. Merrill (1997), sees the independence of journalists as the most important issue; he argues that independence is necessary in the present media environment, but adds that it is inadequate. He suggests combining existentialist merits such as individual freedom, free choice and activity and taking responsibility for the outcomes of these choices, and the social responsibility approach. According to him, the existentialist philosophers establish connections with the thought of responsibility; however, these associations are directed more towards the individual, rather than the society. Whereas, a journalist bears more responsibility for his/her choice or act when carrying out his/her job, compared with an average person; for example, choosing not to report on a new law that would affect all public servants, and rather, choosing to report on the sickness of a panda at the zoo or the new hair style of a singer, goes beyond individualism without a doubt. His concrete suggestion is to establish a relation between the norms that are fixed on the individual, and the ethical approaches developed from the collective, such as journalists having a social responsibility. He defines this with the notion of "mutualism"; metaphorically, the journalist will follow the "intermediary way."

The intermediary way, Merrill (1997) points at to guide the journalists, is a series of values that stem from the interaction between existentialism and social responsibility theory, and which should be positioned above them. This ethical apprehension he defines as "mutualism," requires a retreat from

the extremes of the existentialism and social responsibility theory on which it is based. What is being proposed here is the "golden rule of average" by Aristoteles... According to Aristoteles, virtue is for a rational person to avoid the two extremes – i.e. the "too much" and the "too little" –and reach a rational position.

Singer (2006) and Merrill (1997) point at the necessity to define "independence," which has historically been used to mean "being distant from political parties or (more widely) any political tendencies." Both theorists study normative ethics and try to develop ethical principles and develop theoretical ground for them. When media ethics is in question, Merrill argues that, we should be talking about the ethical standards of the media employees and the professional decisions they make. From such a perspective, he says that, in practice, media ethics are voluntary, rational and depend on the decisions the individuals make. He explains the notion of being ethical as, the freedom of choosing between different behavior alternatives, such as existentialism and social responsibility. However, taking into consideration the fact that mainstream media institutions have a hierarchical structure, such a freedom would be quite difficult. (Capli, 2002).

In this forum, where we are trying not to think within the limits and mistakes of the mainstreammedia; and where we are trying to develop new openings for democracy in the local media, I argue we should accept the approach by Merill and Singer, which brings together existentialism and social responsibility as a guide for those who practice journalism on the local level and take it from there. This is because both theorists believe that citizen journalism as very convenient to practice such a media ethics approach.

### **Structural Transformations in the Media Field**

The 1980s are important in communications studies, and especially, in the research for "editorial policy." According to Tunstall and Palmer, this change on the global level can date back to pre-1970s; in advanced capitalist societies this period of privatization and deregulation may be the last episode of the century-old discussion over the public communications freedom and control on institutions doing public broadcasts. This is such a breaking point that, those, who make this historic search and even those, who strive to soften the issue, could not stop themselves from writing tens of articles on what has happened over the last 20 years and analysing into bits. (Kejanlioglu quotes from Tunstall and Palmer, 2004: 28).

The reasons of these structural transformations in the media sector, are the practices based on the New Rightist thinking and the Neo-liberal policies that have dominated since the 1980s (Kaya, 2006). New economic policies were embraced to avoid the destructive effects of the economic crisis, which spread to the world at the end of 1970s. The Keynesian policies, which argue that the state should have an active role in the economic field, were criticized and abandoned on the grounds that they imposed a heavy burden

on states. Friedman's approach, which suggests the scaling down of the state, started being widely accepted. Friedman was leading a modern liberal theory (Cankaya, 1997: 72). Thus, the social welfare state, which had been embraced in especially the European countries, began to lose its efficiency.

Ronald Reagan in America, Margaret Thatcher in England, and Turgut Ozal in Turkey were pioneers in implementing neo-liberal policies. Privatizations, the dissolving of national borders to open the way for the free flow of goods and capital in international arena, and the construction of a liberal international market gained speed. The transformation policies and practices in all over the world found its reflection in Turkey in interaction with the country's own specific dynamics: At a time of economic depression in the 1970s, a political and social life marred with clashes described as right-left clashes and a political atmosphere dominated by politicians, who could not develop solutions, the Turkish army intervened in politics on 12 September 1980 for the third time in the Republic's history.

This intervention not only established the constitutional grounds for an economic change; it also deeply wounded the freedom of thought and expression through arrests, executions and bans.<sup>45</sup> The thoughts and initiatives based on Marxism weakened in such a way that they would not be able to easily recover. In such a barren intellectual and political process, the neo-liberal policies by the Ozal government were implemented without facing much of a serious opposition.

The reflection of these new policies on the media sector can be summarized as:

1. The states not forming broadcasting monopolies,
2. The states not imposing legal restrictions,
3. Allowing the capital owners who had operations in different sectors enter the broadcasting sector.

Star 1 television, belonging to the Magic Box company, taking advantage of the legal vacuum in 1990, began broadcasts from abroad targeting the Turkish viewers through satellite; in a short time, many private radio and television channels were established. The increase in private media institutions would potentially lead to some democratic openings such as the crashing the protocol reporting of TRT, and allowing the individuals and groups who were not represented by TRT to have access and be represented. However, it would not be wrong to say that in Turkey, such positive openings were scarce.

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<sup>45</sup> for the details about those journalists who have been arrested following the military coup of **September 12th** 1980; see Hıfzı Topuz (2003). *Türk Basın Tarihi: 2. Mahmut'tan Holdinglere*. Istanbul, Remzi.

When we look at Turkey's media environment in the 2000s, we see the presence of horizontal, vertical and diagonal monopolies (Sonmez, 1996); we see that the broadcasting contents are market and merchandise focused (Geray, 2002); we see that, as a natural prolongation of these developments, the entertainment factor is an important element in news rhetoric (Ergul, 2000) and that there is an effort to get the people accept a consumption focused life style (Dagtas, 2006).

The increase in the commercial concerns in the media management philosophy and the paparazzi style broadcasting, which is gaining ground, has ideological functions much beyond just adding an entertainment dimension to the media content. This situation prevents the people from dreaming of an order different from the existing social structure, propagate that the negative aspects of the social life cannot be prevented or remedied and hinder our thinking power and foster fatalist/pessimistic orientations, which would not provide for any openings in social life: The belief that murdering women for honour cannot be prevented, that the dying or injuring of people in traffic accidents is inevitable, that unemployment cannot be solved, that youth must be wasted in a meaningless examination like the OSS, that the minimum wage cannot be increased so as to provide for humane living conditions, and that we are doomed to have politicians who cannot develop solutions, are being rooted.

However, a different world and different living standards is possible for every society. Media is a quite important power in reaching more egalitarian, more libertarian climates; and the establishment of regional and global peace. However, it is obvious that such democratic openings cannot be achieved through any media institution; especially those, which have organic ties with the military, economic and political segments of the society, which hold the power, and those, which have adopted an editorial policy shaped by market dynamics and commercial concerns. Here, I would like to propose an option, not as the single or final solution, but as something that could contribute to the democratic opening of our country. This option is a different form of journalism/reporting, which would embrace a wider segment of the society, that would give all the groups, excluded by the mainstreammedia, the opportunity to reach the "immediate" media and give them the opportunity to be represented, that would cover the whole geography of Turkey and thus, which would have the potential to touch on regional problems: In short, I am proposing that the local media effectuates "civic" or "public reporting." But, what exactly is this civic reporting?

### **Local Media as an Implementation Medium for Civic Reporting**

Civic journalism is a new journalism method "developed in the United States of America as a reaction against the fact that the media turned into a mouthpiece of those in power" (Duran, 2003). It proposes that the current professional journalism norms are questioned and news are produced through a new understanding/belief, and without neglecting the ethical

values.<sup>46</sup> It aims at healing the corruption in professional values in America; and to enable a higher number of civilians or ordinary people to be represented in particular in the news, and in general in the media. And for this, it strives to provide for the highest number of viewer/reader and listener to be actively participating in the news production processes. The goal in doing this is to “develop the people’s sensibility of accepting their social problems,” in other words, “developing the awareness and responsibility of citizenship.”<sup>47</sup>

Civic reporting proposes the following to reach the aforementioned goal:

Civic journalist –whom I would like to refer to as the local media– should go beyond reporting and informing the public, should have a different way of expression and should not remain just an onlooker to what’s going on. For this reason, the media should not be limited to conveying the economic, political and social developments; during the same news report or in related articles or programmes, the importance for the individuals and society of the mentioned development should be conveyed. Here, I am referring to earning some depth to the job of producing news. Widening the five basic principles of news writing, the 5N+1K norm in this sense would open new horizons for the people.

The public journalism, which is accepted as improving journalism and producing news that includes the people, requires that the settled profession codes are broken and new ties are established with the people (Merritt, 1999). For this, you may begin by interpreting the “news value” norm in a wider sense. Before I explain what I mean, let’s remember to what and whom the notion of “news value” being defended in the current reporting practices, gives preferential importance:

The soldiers, politicians – I would however like to remind that most of these political actors belong to the ruling parties – the authorities of large capital groups, government offices and institutions, the famous and the popular. In short, the segments of the society with a military, social or economic power, are very privileged in being included in the media’s agenda. And this privilege granted to them by the journalists gains its legitimation through the “news value” norm. The average people can only be in the media in cases of natural disasters such as fire, floods or earthquakes; violence such as rape, murder or theft, or in a negative context when for example they violate the laws (Inal,1995). We see that in the local media, this picture is being implemented in a local scale. The governor’s offices, municipalities, chambers of industry and commerce, police and courts, in other words, the local official offices and institutions are the preferred source and subject of

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<sup>46</sup> It should be added that, in its purpose of establishing the future’s new journalism, the project is well aware of the impropriety of a full exclusion of mainstream media which mainly aimed at market domination, and is organically linked with the national and international power-holders. Nevertheless, turning its face to the public and to those people whose voices are not fairly heard makes it even more important.

<sup>47</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civic\\_journalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civic_journalism).

news (Cangoz, 2003). Fourth power, which is a borrowed term used to define media, coming from the liberal doctrine—as long as it remains so dependent on official sources—will function as their voice/word, instead of a power which supervises the other three powers and forces change and transformation on behalf of the people.

Looking from the citizen journalism perspective, this concept would have to be reversed. For example, having a different kind of communications with the sources. Not getting the information about the incident only from the authorities of official institutions; gathering information from a broader range of sources. Including the views of those, who represent the civilians in the report. Not just settling with reports that are about the city centers. Taking into consideration the specific aspects of the city/town we live in and preparing news accordingly; keeping at a distance from the segments of the society and the local environment, who hold the power. Acting independently from the segments such as military, police, governor's office, municipalities, chambers of industry and commerce, mayors, and the famous.

Moreover, as journalists, we should not always position ourselves as the eyes and ears of the public. Instead of speaking or writing on behalf of the people, we should open the way for the people to directly have their voices heard. We should give the chance to the people to state their problems, expectations, dreams directly in our newspapers, magazines, radio and television programmes. When I say we should include the people in our products, I don't mean they should request a song, or make a routine speech about the "meaning and importance" of a certain day or participate in a competition. We have this kind of participation and it does not have the potential of a democratic opening. I am talking about people being able to talk about the concrete problems they face in life, and voice these problems themselves in the media forums I accept to be a part of the public space. Because when problems are voiced through the journalists or stated just by the experts, this leads to the exclusion of the people from the media. And what meaning could the media, which excludes the people, have for the people?

Anatolia and the people of Anatolia are not on the agenda of the mainstream media, which has its basic organization in Ankara and Istanbul. Touching on the specific problems of regions and the lives in the geography we live in, rendering visible the problems and people, which have been neglected, should be more important for the local media. For example, let's talk about the incident where a woman named Naile in the province of Van was killed in an honour murder. No newspaper except Radikal placed primary importance to this story and had it in the headlines. The incident was brushed aside. The women in our country continue to be murdered in the name of honour, and such incidents are reported with titles like "Honour again," "Honour bullet took a life," which indicate ordinariness. Moreover, regional or ethnic discrimination are being presented as the justification for ignoring such incidents. For one thing, this is neither a regional or ethnic problem,

nor specific to women. This violence, which aims at destroying the right to live, is a demolition directed towards all the people and the humane values that create them.

Here, I believe that the profession of journalism should be an existentialist problem which begins from the journalist as an individual and extends to social responsibility as a professional struggle. Announcing that a woman has been killed in the name of "honour" in a just a news format that applies the 5N+1K rule and to try and save the next day is quite problematic. Focusing on problems with a different perception –which can be citizen journalism. Turning the media we work at, whether it is a newspaper, television or radio, into a public forum. Enabling the people to voice their problems in these forums. Taking advantage of the facilities provided by new communications technologies and have more interaction with the people of our geography. All these would render the relations between journalist and the people more democratic.

Can you really compare the quantity and quality of news prepared with information from a limited number of official institutions and news prepared by a media whose face is turned towards the public? It may be very difficult for a news corporation, which has organic ties with industrial capital and different power centers, to show this will power; but we see that the local media has the potential to prepare alternative news, and thus they have the ability to bring this will power to life. In this sense, the local media is of vital importance.

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civic\\_journalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civic_journalism)

## **Local media vis-a-vis the state and market forces**

**Coskun Efendioglu\***

As I begin my presentation, I would like to make a list of some of the leading characteristics of our local media, starting from the times before the establishment of the Republic. The most significant characteristic of the local media in Turkey is the pro-enlightenment stance in line with the understanding of national liberation. Especially before the huge improvement in the means of communications during the last ten years, the local media organs in Anatolia which published using very primitive methods, served as "mission newspapers" and were aimed at much more than just making money. The mission was to enlighten further the intellectuals of the region, to voice the problems in the region and to support certain political groups. The local media organs, which tried to survive in Anatolia under very difficult conditions, were able to carry on with the share they got for official advertisements during the Republic period. Thus, the official advertisement institution was an important means supporting local media. It operated like some kind of "insurance" and ensured revenue independent of the parties in power. It was also a very important means for the independence of local newspapers.

Today, there is no meaning in even trying to summarize the amazing developments that came about in communications techniques. But it is generally financially impossible for the local media to acquire these expensive techniques. On the other hand, the degeneration and unproductiveness of the national, mainstream media resulting from monopolization in line with the economic realities of our country is greatly reducing the public's trust in them. Under such conditions, the increasing need for information and the increasing importance of local media is leading to a kind of reporting that violates moral values and journalism ethics. Parallel with the increasing importance of the local media, local power circles are attempting to use the local media for their own advantage. Together with the attractive increase in the advertisement revenues 3-4 years ago, problems have begun to arise.

Below is the list of some proposed measures arising from more than 15 years of local journalism experience:

Firstly, measures should be taken to eliminate the poor-quality newspapers, which are published with the sole aim of getting a share of the advertising

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\* *Önder Newspaper*, Milas

revenue, and which usually carry reports copied and pasted from the Internet. Up until now, we have been advocating, for the sake of press freedom, that anyone, who presents a petition and has a high-school graduate editor-in-chief, should be able to publish a newspaper. With the condition of always respecting freedom of expression, a professional organization is necessary in order to eliminate the newly emerged newspapers, which only aim at "getting more advertisements," and "getting more profits." Such as a chamber. At the moment, in Turkey, even someone who wants to open a barber shop needs to get a "proficiency diploma" from the Apprenticeship Training Center. Journalism is the only profession where such a document or qualification is not required. Today, even an illiterate person without an elementary school diploma would be able to pay the printing house and publish a newspaper by designating a high-school graduate as the editor-in-chief. It is enough to give a petition to the highest local authority of the region. These can continue to happen. But there is a clear need for a "Chamber of Journalists" just like the Chamber of Architects, to supervise whether the newspaper that is being published is really a newspaper and to prohibit the publication if necessary. We are even late for such a measure. There are so many incompetent journalists around now that it would be even meaningful and controversial to ask "who" would establish the Chamber. Other measures may also be proposed.

The second most important condition for real local journalism is public resources. While these newspapers continue to be supported through official advertisements, they could also be supported through some public resources. For example, through an additional article to the Local Administrations Law, a small portion of the Municipality revenues could be allocated for local newspapers, radios and TVs. This "subsidy" would help the local newspapers, radios and television channels to be independent from the local power circles and capital groups and enable them to do objective reporting. Such a subsidy would be a logical way to help local journalism, which should really be a public service.

One of the most important shortcomings of the local media in Turkey is the fact that local media organizations are not institutionalized and completely depend on the self-sacrifice of the employees. Today, with the increasing needs, developments in communications and printing techniques and rising expenses, we need to become more institutionalized. And this is only possible through the subsidies that I mentioned before. Otherwise, local media, in the near future, will become dominated by the local power and capital circles. At that point, it would be impossible to talk about a local media, exactly the way it is now impossible, except a few, to talk about the national media, which has become monopolized and distanced itself from journalism principles.

But this needs to be underlined: It is not possible to wipe out the degeneration and contamination of the local media only through the measures I mentioned. It is not possible to solve the problems of the local media independent from the economy, cultural policies, political attitude,

foreign and social policies of our country. It would be impossible to provide the means necessary for a free press through corrupt policies. There is no need to daydream...

A clean and effective local media in one particular country is like the chicken-egg relationship. We will continue to work both for the mentioned opportunities for the local media, and for our country to set out on the right track.

This is my approach. Thank you...

## **Local journalists vis-a-vis local and mainstream media: The human capital of independence**

**Dogan Sonmez\***

At this International Independent Media Forum, I greet with respect all the representatives of institutions from my country and all over the world, the members of the media and the members of BIA. As I begin my speech, I would like to say this: On a rainy day in Antalya a couple of local journalists and I, believed in and joined the BIA crowd and set out for a long and tiring journey. Looking at the picture in front of me today, I am proud to see that I set out on the road at the right time with the right people.

### **Local reporters and independence**

I hope there is no problem in saying that local reporters are indispensable for journalism. It would only be a dream to talk about the success of national media in a society where there are no local reporters. Such a formation would resemble an apartment without any foundation. Thus, its safety would always be controversial. Local reporters are always the ones, who are the closest to and most in control of the position of the places they are at. One needs to comprehend the fact that a national media without local reporters cannot exist. It is important that local reporters are formed of independent people, who are committed to the principles of the journalism profession. This would enhance the trustworthiness of the media. The freedom of people to have access to information would be improved and news prepared with the principle of impartiality would play an important role in raising awareness among the people.

### **The Information network of the local reporter**

Local reporters are able to reach the source of the news much faster than reporters of the national media. This is because of the information network they have in that particular place. Before the national media even comprehends what the case is, the local reporters usually already reach the source of the news. In fact, local reporters send the news to the news services long before the national reporters understand what is going on. We should be able to carry this success from the local media to the national media. However, if the members of the national media think that the local reporters should only be called up when there is something going on in that particular place, they are bound to lose.

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\* Venus Radio-Dogan News Agency, Manavgat branch.

### **The explosion at the waterfall**

I would like to give an example. The national media began to report that the recent explosion at the Manavgat Waterfalls was a gas canister explosion. However, the local reporters had already found out that the incident was actually a bomb explosion. They did not explain this to the national media because they were worried about the damage such news could cause on the tourism and economy.

### **The uprising of the Sirtkoy women**

The importance of local reporters should never be denied. I would like to give you another example from my region to draw your attention to the importance of the local media. The concerted action of the Sirtkoy women of Manavgat, which was reflected in all newspapers and national televisions as the "Salvar (baggy trousers) Case," is another success of the local media. It should not be forgotten that the news, which transcended the local media and the national media, and reached the international media, was prepared by the local reporters of the region. It should also not be forgotten that the action by Sirtkoy women later became an issue of discussion at different levels. And here is the example:

### **Columbian women take the Sirtkoy women as example**

The Columbian women, who refused to have "sexual relations with men" in protest of armament and domestic violence, said they got this idea from Turkish women. Five years ago, the women of Sirtkoy, Manavgat, had refused to "take men in their beds" because they failed at bringing water to the village. This protest had become an inspiration for the women in the poor South American country of Columbia. The Columbian women, who decided "not to have sex" with men unless they gave up their arms and stopped domestic violence, said "Turkish women were an inspiration to us." The women, who spoke to the Columbian Cambio Magazine said: "By not having sex with our men, we will put an end to the violence in the country and within the families, just like Turkish women succeeded in having water brought to their village by not having sex with the men."

The story titled "Sex Strike by Women Against Violence," published in the Cambio Magazine, said that the protest initiated by the Columbian women in the slum quarters of the capital Bogota, had started to yield results and added that the strike had begun to spread to other parts of the country. This was a rightful success of the local reporters.

### **The success of the national media increases as the local circle widens**

As the circle from local journalism towards national journalism widens, it incorporates new local reporters. The circle begins to grow. The news that are delivered to the national media by the local media are thus very important in the success of the national media. The more local news there are in a national newspaper, television or radio, the more successful that

newspaper, television or radio is. For the reader and the viewer has the chance to follow general news in every media organ. But it should not be forgotten that the television viewer, the newspaper reader, or the radio audience is first attracted to news about his/her own region.

### **Local reporter is the chief of national media**

When we evaluate the situation from such a perspective, we can clearly see that the local reporter is the chief in the kitchen of the national media. But for this chief to be able to carry out his/her duty comfortably, he/she should be provided with the necessary equipment, funds and training. Through this, the local reporter would feel more valuable and important and would put more time and effort in his/her job.

### **Risk factors**

It should not be forgotten that local reporters are also at risk because of the news they prepare. Since most of the time, the local reporter is a well-known and respected person in that particular region, it is inescapable that some circles would try to put pressure on that person. Within the circle that grows from the local to the national media, the local reporters are the ones who are most under risk and so those reporters should be rendered strong in every way. In short, when all these are taken into consideration, it would be wrong to ignore the presence and success of the local reporter.

### **Training is as important as financial support**

The local media, in other words, all the local newspapers, televisions and radios should have economic independence. The local media should also be able to take advantage of all the advertisement sources that the national media has. All the public institutions should place advertisements with the local media as well as official announcements. Local media is the most effective means of communications. Training is another important issue for the local media. However, although the local media is fulfilling all its responsibilities, it has not ever had a contribution from the state in the field of training. Despite this fact, the local media is spending efforts to train itself and its employees under very difficult conditions. The Independent Communications Network (BIA) has, in the last 10 years, done more than the state has ever done, and provided pronunciation and reporting education, legal support and training on human rights, women's rights, and children's rights to local newspaper, televisions and radios. Steps in providing training and legal and financial support should be taken at once. We have a lot to learn, and a lot of news stories to prepare. As the local media, I hope you will hear our silent scream and hold our hand in support. With all my love and respect...

## **Broadcasting in the mother tongue: "why did we insist so much?"**

**Cemal Dogan**\*

Broadcasts in the mother tongue is an issue related to Turkey's recent past and especially the Kurdish Problem. In order to better understand the issue, some of the important turning points of the recent history have to be discussed.

On 15 February 1999, PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan was brought to Turkey. Ocalan, during his defense in court, proposed some strategic changes and improvements about the Kurdish Problem. Some of these proposals were to constitutionally guarantee the language and cultural rights of ethnic Kurds without altering the borders of the unitary state structure, instead of a separate state; and discussions of "Constitutional citizenship." During this period, Turkey, which had lived through many years of clashes due to the Kurdish Problem, was having a period of normalization and discussion after the PKK, in 1998, declared a cease fire that lasted for about six years. Issues on Kurds, Kurdish and some basic rights of Kurds, which were denied and disowned once, began to be more openly discussed among the Turkish public. On the other hand, Turkey officially became a candidate for membership in the European Union in 1999. With these two important developments, some of the basic rights of Kurds began to be discussed in the beginning of the year 2000. Broadcasting Kurdish music and video clips on radio and televisions was allowed, provided that their content did not violate the laws. However, those who wanted to put this into practice, continuously faced difficulties. Radios and televisions, like ours, that broadcasted Kurdish music were sued. Their broadcasts were suspended.

With the Education in Mother tongue Campaign by thousands of university students in the beginning of the year 2001, discussions on Kurdish education and Kurdish broadcasts gained an important momentum. Discussions on broadcasts in the mother tongue were always reflected by the media as Kurdish broadcasts and education. On the one hand there was the chance and transformation in the Kurdish Problem, and on the other hand, Turkey, in its bid to join the EU, prepared a series of harmonization laws and passed a democratization package with the aim of bringing its legislation in line with the EU *acquis communautaire*. Especially with the passage of the sixth and seventh harmonization packages in the year 2002, the 26th and 28th articles of the Constitution were amended and it became

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\* *Gün TV*, Diyarbakir.

possible to broadcast in different languages and dialects used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives.

However, this amendment was flouted by Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK), which passed the "Regulation on Radio and Television Broadcasts in Different Languages and Dialects Used Traditionally by Turkish Citizens in their Daily Lives." The regulation went into effect on 18 December 2002. The rights granted by the narrow law were taken back through the regulation. This first regulation allowed for 30 minutes of television and 45 minutes of radio broadcasts per day and this right was only granted to TRT. But the TRT, in the year that followed, argued that its own regulation prevented it from broadcasting programmes in different languages and dialects and did not go ahead with such broadcasts. Eyes were turned to the RTUK once again. With the insistence of some media organizations and the EU process, some amendments were made to the regulation and the new regulation went into effect on 25 January 2004. The regulation is still in effect and all broadcasts have to be in line with it.

### **What does the current Regulation bring?**

The application sections of the regulation are by themselves a web of procedures. When the regulation is closely studied, it can be said that the second clause of article five of the reads, "*News, music and programmes about traditional culture in these languages and dialects shall only target adults.*" This clause, besides categorizing the viewers, is narrowing down the functions of broadcasting and decreasing viewer numbers. The principal clause that the programmes can only target adults aims to prevent the broadcasting of films, children's songs and cartoons that can be watched by children with interest. This approach is clearly against the freedom of broadcasting and universal standards of broadcasting.

The third clause of this article reads, "*no educational broadcasts can be made aimed at teaching these languages and dialects.*" This article brings limitations to those to benefit from these broadcasts which were not envisaged by the law on the content of the broadcast. This regulation is against article 13 of the Constitution (rights and freedoms can only be limited by law). It also constitutes discrimination with regards those who benefit from this right. Thus, it is also against article 10 of the Constitution, which guarantees the "principle of equality."

The fourth clause of the Article reads, "*The radio and television companies that have a public or private national broadcasting license, including those broadcasts about the anew transmission in these languages and dialects; radio stations are allowed to broadcast programmes not exceeding 60 minutes a day, and for a total of five hours a week, television stations are allowed to broadcast programmes not exceeding 45 minutes and for a total of four hours per week.*" This clause is clearly in violation of article 13 of the Constitution and the principles of freedom of expression and communication. It also makes discrimination among broadcasting companies a rule. The regulation is against freedom of expression: because;

freedom of expression, besides guaranteeing that an individual can freely state his/her thoughts, also includes the right to freely reach information and ideas. It is also against the freedom of communication because; primarily news, signifies the freedom to disseminate information and ideas. The regulation is also against the broadcasting technique because both local and regional broadcasters have openly been discriminated against and also, the lengths of their programmes have been limited.

The fifth clause of the article reads: *"Including broadcasts about the anew transmission in these languages and dialects, such programmes on television stations must have Turkish subtitles and must immediately be followed by the same programme in Turkish. Such programmes on radio stations must immediately be followed by the same programme in Turkish."* This article is primarily against the Constitution since it envisages limitations not present in the Law. It also aims at hurting broadcasting dynamism and viewer numbers by making live broadcasts almost impossible and complicating it through subtitles and translations.

Following are the clauses of article 6 under the side title "Application":

- a) The public and private radio and television corporations shall apply to the Supreme Board indicating the language and/or dialect they want to broadcast programmes in, the types of programmes to be broadcasted in these languages and dialects, the allocation of these programmes in the daily broadcasts, and the decision by the corporation's board of directors that specifies the monthly and annual broadcasting plans,
- b) The corporation must also present to the Supreme Board documents certifying that members of the supervisory board to be established specifically for these broadcasts, the director in charge, the staff of the news department and news presenters satisfy the criteria specified in Law no. 3984 and related regulations.
- c) The Supreme Board must also be presented with a copy of the Letter of Undertaking signed by the authorized representative of the corporation in the presence of noter.

The requirement to present to the Supreme Board, blocks the broadcasting rights. An approach, which requires the scheduling of broadcasts one year ahead, altogether abates broadcasting rights and results in outdated broadcasts.

Under the title, "Miscellaneous Clauses" the regulation reads: "Until the viewer-listener profiles of programmes in languages and dialects traditionally used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives, such programmes shall only be broadcasted by public and private national broadcasting corporations." The regulation excludes and disregards local and regional broadcasting corporations. The fact that the condition to determine the viewer-listener profiles of such programmes envisaged under a temporary article proves that the regulation was prepared under the shadow of some

concerns and worries. This article clearly violates the article 2 of the Constitution, on the principles of rule of law, democratic and social state.

### **Broadcasting applications and what has been done against the regulation?**

We, as the local *Gün* (Day) TV in Diyarbakir, applied to RTUK to broadcast a Culture-Arts programme called *Dergusa Cande* (Cradle of Culture) in the Kirmanchi dialect of Kurdish on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9:00 p.m. for 45 minutes. Our application was based on the "*Until the viewer-listener profiles of programmes in languages and dialects traditionally used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives, such programmes shall only be broadcasted by public and private national broadcasting corporation,*" clause of the "Regulation on Radio and Television Broadcasts in Different Languages and Dialects Used Traditionally by Turkish Citizens in their Daily Lives," which went into effect in January 2004 by being published in the Official Gazette no: 25357.

We also applied to the Council of State with the demand that the clauses of articles 4, 5, 6 and temporary article 1, are lifted because they are against the Law on the Establishment and Broadcasts of Radio and Televisions no: 3984 and articles 2., 7., 10., 13., 124., and 133. of the Constitution. We demanded that the execution is halted since the articles of the regulation are openly against law and because they could result in irreversible damage. On 31 January 2006 the Council of State turned down our request. We have appealed the decision.

With this first official application in Turkey, a legal struggle began which would last for two years. For exactly a year, RTUK did not give any official responses to *Gün TV's* application. We only had the oral response stating "We have your application; it will be viewed by the Supreme Board."

RTUK's attitude was also criticized in the EU progress report. With that Turkey took some steps on the issue which was one of the negotiating chapters, in a bid to get a date to start negotiations. For the first time in Turkey on 7 June 2004, TRT 3 started broadcasting symbolic programmes in different languages and dialects. TRT 3 and Radio 1 broadcasted Bosnian programmes at 10:30 a.m. The broadcasts were in Bosnian on Mondays, Arabic on Tuesdays, Kirmanchi dialect of Kurdish on Wednesdays, Circassian on Thursdays, and in the Zaza dialect of Kurdish on Friday. All programmes lasted 30 minutes. The fact that these programmes were broadcast on TRT 3 and in the mornings caused low number of audience. The programmes were symbolic, composed of one week-old news, a short documentary and some music clips. For example, someone who wanted to watch these broadcasts in the Kirmanchi dialect of Kurdish, would have to wait for a week.

On 12 August 2005, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Diyarbakir and made some important statements on the Kurdish Problem. With this, RTUK, for the first time, officially responded to *GünTV's* application and said that the application had been presented to the Supreme Board to be

reviewed against the content of the Regulation. The seven months that followed were filled with tragic-comical procedures. RTUK continuously argued that there were some missing documents and did not respond to our application positively. We, as the *Gün TV*, kept presenting RTUK with the same documents that we had presented it in our first application, over and over again and tried to get a positive response. The issue was once again reflected in the Progress Report. Although 12 local broadcasting corporations filed applications during this period, only 4 remained after two years. Some could not meet the conditions, and some withdrew their application as they thought the conditions on the letter of undertaking were too heavy.

The countdown for Kurdish broadcasts began. The managers of Diyarbakir *Gün Radio-TV*, which had applied for Kurdish broadcasts 2 years earlier, *Soz* (Word) TV and Sanliurfa Media FM, went to RTUK on 17 March 2006 and signed a letter of undertaking. RTUK stated that it is anticipating that local and regional channels will start broadcasting programmes in local languages and dialects within the month of March. And finally on 23 March 2006, exactly two years after the first application was made, *Gün TV* and *Söz TV* in Diyarbakir, and *Medya* (Media) FM in Urfa began limited Kurdish broadcasts in accordance with the permission they got from RTUK.

The limited Kurdish broadcasts were met with huge interest from the public. Local, national and international media corporations reported greatly on this development. Especially, the people of the region, who had not been able to watch news or programmes in their own languages for many years, saw believed that the development was positive and wanted further steps to be taken. When we prepared the *Dergusa Cande* programme which was about the history, and cultural and artistic texture of Diyarbakir and the region, we had to meet such expectations and demands of the people and keep the interest alive. In the news programmes and interviews we prepared during our limited broadcasts, which were also cited by the national media, the people of the region voiced their desire that the restrictions on such broadcasts are lifted and said that they want free, unrestricted broadcasts in their own languages. Eighty percent of the people of the region said the broadcasts in Kurdish were "positive but limited" and added that more steps should be taken. Today, to be able to meet this expectation, we are striving to prepare dynamic, up-to-date programmes with a rich content. We know especially from the phone calls we get during our Kurdish music programmes that the people of the region have a serious interest in Kurdish broadcasts. However, it is very difficult for us to meet these expectations with a regulation which seriously binds our hands and feet.

### **Proposals to overcome the current difficulties**

We have been arguing from the very beginning that this regulation should be changed. Because the regulation, due to its content, causes the restrictions to begin at the application stage, and is filled with limitations in terms of length and content. As long as the regulation remains as it is, it will be impossible to overcome these problems.

Moreover, we are facing a serious difficulty because of the requirement to translate. We have made a formal application to the RTUK Higher Board on 16 June 2006 and explained the difficulties we are going through because of article 5 of the regulation. In our application, we explained that the requirement to write Turkish subtitles for the *Dergusa Cande* (Cradle of Culture) programme broadcasted twice a week for 45 minutes in the Kirmanchi dialect of Kurdish leads to a waste of time and effort. We said: "Editing and translating all the speeches in Turkish and writing subtitles that would match the image during the montage costs us 2 to 3 days." We highlighted that instead of focusing on a powerful programming, we waste time in translations and montage. As a proposal in our application, we wrote: "We believe that it would be healthier if, our Kurdish broadcasts, just like our normal broadcasts, which are completely under RTUK's supervision, were monitored by RTUK's personnel, instead of us having to translate. We demand that the requirement to translate in this article is changed." RTUK, which evaluated our application, gave a response in a month. In its response, it rejected *Gün Radio and Television's* demand to change article 5 of the regulation. RTUK's Legal Consultancy stated that there is a requirement to broadcast in line with the said regulation and if not, this would be a violation of clause 1 of article 33 of Law No: 3984.

### **Turkey's situation**

As Diyarbakir *Gün Radio-TV*, why did we insist on such limited and minimal broadcasts? We could have said: "This step is only for show; we are not doing this." We didn't. Because we thought that even a small step would contribute to the democratization process and to crash prejudices. We did not look at the issue from just the broadcaster's point of view. When the issue's close relation with the Kurdish Problem is taken into consideration, it had to be shown that broadcasts are now possible in a language which was once rejected and denied. Moreover, there was a prejudice and phobia of separation knitted with the understanding of "terrorism" and "security" surrounding the Kurdish Problem. We believed that these broadcasts would help crash this prejudice. And in fact, I believe we have been successful in doing this. Now there is a concrete broadcast even though it's minimal and there is discussion on how it can be improved. The problem arose from discussions on Kurdish, the Turkish public understood the existence of this language and the fact that there can be broadcasts in this language, and now we are carrying out discussions on the scope and content of these broadcasts.

Of course, Turkey is quite behind when compared with other examples in the world. Right now there are around 10 satellite channels on the satellite broadcasting completely in Kurdish and in its dialects (*Roj TV, Mezopotamya TV, MMC, Kurdistan TV, Kursat TV, Zagros TV, Botan TV, Rojhilat TV, Herem TV*).

The most important step Turkey must take at this stage is to change the Regulation and to annul current limitations on content and length. Because the national media corporations, which focus on increasing advertising

revenue on the platform of the media-politics-industry relations have not taken any steps, these programmes by TRT which is a public television not targeting profit, should be screened at a more convenient time and for a longer period. And more importantly, when Turkey takes steps for the democratic and peaceful solution of the Kurdish Problem, and makes the necessary legal arrangements to allow many televisions that broadcast abroad to broadcast in Turkey too, the basis for a more democratic, pluralistic and multi-cultural broadcasting will have been laid down.

## **Local radio at the metropolis: Which locality?**

### **Democrat Radio Experience**

#### **Nadiye Gurbuz\***

Dear friends, today I would like to tell you how a local radio has become the most listened to radio station in its province despite all the difficulties, and what kinds of processes it went through. The *Demokrat Radyo* (Democratic Radio) has been serving as an alternative radio station in Izmir on the 107.3 frequency for the last 14 years. We are different from many other radio stations, which air popular music to increase the number of their audience. Our radio station, which is not merely a music box, is the most listened to local radio station in Izmir with its news programmes, commentary programmes, and informative and cultural programmes. We are not basing this claim on abstract data. Concrete data reveals that our radio station is the most listened to radio station in Izmir. Last August, the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) asked the universities in the Aegean region to conduct a research to find out which radio stations have the highest number of audience in the Aegean region. The research results showed that *Demokrat Radyo* was the fifth most listened to radio in the whole Aegean region. According to the results of the research, our radio has the highest number of audience in Izmir. By conveying you the research results, I am not trying to boast. The results prove that the people appreciate a broadcasting policy which makes the local radio much more than just a music box. This result shows that those, whom we helped get their voices heard, are embracing *Demokrat Radyo*. This result shows us we have been successful despite all the legal, financial, technical and human resources problems we are facing. This result also proves that our mission of becoming the means, by which people can reach the truth, is the right mission. Below, there is a list of important factors that played a part in our success:

- First of all, not losing the amateur spirit and not having commercial worries,
- Enabling the people to listen to their own problems on the radio, in line with the rights reporting principle,
- Enabling the audience to see examples of their own culture,
- Having an extensive music archive,
- Having relations with democratic organizations,

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\* General Broadcast Coordinator of *Demokrat Radyo*

- Believing that a different world is possible and making the audience feel this too,
- Taking sides, instead of embracing the vague idea of impartiality,
- Commitment to universal broadcasting principles,
- And most importantly, being an independent local radio.

Local radio reporting in a metropolis is becoming more and more important as the problems of the metropolis city are growing. Metropolis cities have quite different characteristics than other cities or districts. The metropolis is daily faced with the problems of traffic, settlement, pollution etc. Izmir, which is also a metropolis, is faced with all these problems. Izmir also is a metropolis that receives a high number of immigrants, from especially the provinces in the region. The immigrants are also daily faced with the aforementioned problems. The immigrants, as they struggle with the problems of the metropolis, where they came involuntarily, miss the place they were born in. Communities, which define their own living spaces and rules, are formed in metropolises. These residential areas, which are the living spaces of the oppressed, differ in their interests and needs. They demand broadcasts that reflect their own identities and culture.

As a local radio in a metropolis, we take all these into consideration when we prepare our programmes. We try to create links between the local and the general. We try to comply with this principle in all our programmes; from news programmes, to contemporary, humour and music. As well as broadcasting programmes about the reactions against the dam to be built in Munzur, we air programmes about the demolition of slums in Istanbul. We even air news on environmental problems in other countries. In our music programmes, we air "Haydar Haydar" by Ali Ekber Cicek, as well as "Four Seasons" by Vivaldi. Our audience can listen to the song "ah bir atas ver," as well as the Hebrew folk song "Havva Nagila." We are trying to prevent individuals from becoming alienated from themselves, and helping them to unite with the outside world. As well as trying to tell the audience that the cyanide gold mine in Bergama is not just their problem, we are also trying to convey to our audience the fact that the dam to be built at the *Firtina* Valley is also a problem of theirs.

While we cannot act like a classical Aegean radio, we are also avoiding becoming the radio station for those who immigrated to Izmir. Without a doubt, both these circles would like to see us as their own radio station. They make serious suggestions and criticisms to that end. However, our understanding of broadcasting aims at bringing together the locals and the immigrants. I don't think there are many local radios that air music from every region. In our music programmes, we try to play music from all the regions in Turkey. We try to create this balance through other programmes too. For example, during the "*Turku Diyari*" (Folk Song

Land) programme, we air music and songs from just one particular region for a whole hour.

Being an alternative local radio station, you can imagine the pressures you would be faced with. We can group these pressures under two main topics: Financial pressures and legal pressures. There isn't much to say about legal pressures. *Demokrat Radyo* remained off the air for a total of 1,150 days in 14 years, due to the suspension penalties by the Radio and Television Higher Board (RTUK)... But I will have to say a few things about the financial pressures. We made a deal with a well-known milk-products company through an agency. Following agreements on technical and financial issues, we were getting prepared to air the advertisement when an official from the agency called and asked whether or not we air Kurdish music. When we said that we do, the agency official told us that the milk-products company is very sensitive about the issue and that it withdrew its advertisement. I believe this example can give you an idea of the financial pressures we face. One also needs to mention the frequency allocation fee we pay to RTUK, which is as high as the fee paid by the national media, and the share given to the higher board.

Despite all these, we have been carrying out alternative broadcasting for the last 14 years and we are proudly standing on our feet. Instead of being a music box, we are broadcasting programmes that are informative, enlightening and that present an alternative perspective. We are rescuing individuals, who are surrounded by paparazzi programmes, or estranged news programmes, and drawing their attention to their own problems. We are creating unmatched alternatives in music, humour, law, health, environment and sports programmes. We are seeing things that are not seen by the national and local media, which are under the monopoly of capital groups. While we are seeing things that the media monopoly does not want to see, we are presenting the things they see from a different perspective.

We have a news center in our radio. Through this center, we first of all, try to follow the local problems. By taking advantage of the radios, televisions, news services and agencies over the internet, we convey news about our country and the world to our audience within the framework of rights reporting. Our reporters convey local developments to our audience through live broadcasts. Although not yet at the desired level, our audiences call us up with developments in their neighborhood or district and act as reporters for us. Even if the development is a local one, we try to analyze the issue with both local experts and experts from elsewhere. We try to take advantage of technology as much as we can and invest in enriching our news and other programmes. Both the oppressed and the intellectuals on Izmir view/point to us as the source of correct news. We are reaching more and more people each day with our slogan: "The Best Music and the Most Truthful and Fastest News."

Local media, as Sevda Alankuş said, "should be a 'place' for individuals/communities, whose sense of location and time has become upside down in today's global world, where they can take refuge at, join forces with a feeling of solidarity, and resist against the dominant powers." It should serve as the microphone, pen, or desk of the individuals or the groups. Local media organizations should convey the feeling that they can change some things; that they can step in. I would like to tell you about an experience we have had. You probably all remember the Otopan ship with asbestos. The ship which was not allowed in The Netherlands and was invited to Turkey, Izmir/Aliaga Port. We had been closely following Otopan since it first set out from The Netherlands, and planning how we would cover the story as the ship entered Turkish waters. We were also in cooperation with environmentalist associations in Izmir and Greenpeace. As the ship with asbestos approached Izmir, we increased our coverage. We conducted interviews with the people, and we conveyed opinions by environmentalists and experts. Thus, we raised awareness in the public. We supported the activities and demonstrations against the ship. As a result, the Otopan ship returned without anchoring at the Aliaga Harbour. We received calls from our audience, the Greenpeace and *Ege-Cep*. They all thanked us for our coverage. Even this event had made the people in Izmir to believe that they could change some things. And the local media had a direct contribution to this.

One of the most important problems of the local media is the competition with broadcasting monopolies. These monopolies, with their great facilities, are destroying the principle of public broadcasts. Some administrative measures should be taken to reverse this situation. What the government understands from "measures" is ordering radios or television off the air. This is not what we are suggesting. Neither are we suggesting that the local media is financially supported by the state. Unless there is a democratic state, state aid would destroy the independence of the media. Instead of these, we are suggesting, for example, that taxes are not collected, the annual frequency allocation fee and the advertisement shares to RTUK are removed.

On the other hand, the state should abolish legal pressures. The new anti-terrorism law, which is referred to as the anti-society law, and article 301 should be done away with.

Valued guests, in the last part of my speech, I would like to make a citation from Beybin Kejanlioglu's article which is in one of the Bianet books called *Media and Society*. Kejanlioglu, says the following, as he gives some information on opposition radios; "The relationship of radios, which are defined as opposition, alternative, or free, with the central authorities, is a struggle encapsulating baseless accusations, arrests, house or studio raids, courtrooms, confiscation of technical equipment".... This is unfortunately still the case in our country. The *Anadolu'nun Sesi* (Anatolia's Voice) Radio of Istanbul has been ordered

off the air for a month, starting from September 17. The general broadcasting coordinator and an employee of *Özgür Radyo* (Free Radio) Radio, again in Istanbul, were arrested in September with baseless claims. The computers and archives of the radio were confiscated. Its broadcasts were effectively obstructed for six hours. The radio employees were threatened and were faced with psychological torture. These two radio stations are known for their opposition identities. Editor-in-Chief İbrahim Çiçek and General Publication Coordinator Sedat Şenoglu of the opposition, socialist *Atılım* (Progress) Newspaper, and many of its writers and employees, were arrested. The newspaper was closed down for 15 days.

These all happened recently. However, the majority of the media organs did not cover these pressures against these media organizations. This censorship shows us how monopolized the media has become. Hoping for those days when radios, televisions and newspapers will be freed from the pressures of the ruling, and will be able to cover stories of the oppressed without implementing self-censorship, good luck...

## **Local radio at the metropolis: Which locality?**

### **Radio Ses Experience from Mersin**

#### **Mehmet Can Toprak\***

Before I begin to talk about local journalism in a metropolis, I think it would be better to go with the suggestions of the society and media theorists, and look at Mersin, which is accepted as a metropolis. I will evaluate the media in Mersin and try to explain to you local journalism through the media in Mersin. Mersin is a small Mediterranean city with the Toros Mountains on one side, and the sea on the other. It could be defined as a city sandwiched between the mountains and the sea. Fifty percent of the city's population is made up of immigrants. The people of the city work in agriculture, industry, commerce and tourism sectors. None of these sectors have grown enough to become a trademark for the city. We can actually call Mersin a city without an identity, or a city which is seeking an identity. Those who migrated to Mersin have settled in the outskirts and changed the texture of the city. They became the cheap labour of the city, but failed to gain the consciousness of the labour class. In this city, where the social democrats are a majority, social democracy failed to dominate. In the political arena, the Republican People's Party (CHP) is the most popular. It is followed by the Nationalist Action Party (MHP). The Justice and Development Party (AKP) is the third most popular and the party supported by Kurds, and which changes its name during every election period, is the fourth most popular. In terms of ethnic identities, Mersin is a real mosaic. Kurds, Arabs, Turks, Circassians, Greeks live all together in the city. The same thing goes for religions. Along with Muslims, Nusayris (Arab Alevites), Turkmen Alevites, those of the Tahtaci sect and Kurdish Alevites, Orthodox and Catholics make up the cultural texture of the city.

Although those, who attempt to take advantage of the chauvinistic wave which arises from time to time, stage some provocative behavior (such as the flag provocation), the people of Mersin know that it is possible to live together, and that is how they live.

If we are to take a look at the Mersin media: there are a total of 16 radio stations, 5 television channels and although their number changes constantly, some 20 daily and weekly newspapers in Mersin. It could be said that all the actors of the cultural structure of the city have their own media organs.

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\* *Radyo Ses, Mersin.*

### **The Advantages of the Metropolis Raises Responsibilities:**

The advantages of being a broadcaster in such a city lays many duties and responsibilities on your shoulders. In your news and programmes, you need to talk about local problems as well as Turkey's general problems and take part in their solution. Our editorial policy also requires us to do so. You are responsible for producing programmes that are in line with the social and cultural structure of the city and to reflect the liveliness of the city. You have the responsibility to serve as a means of communications; to keep your door open to the farmers with no social security, labourers, youth, students, women, environmentalists, businesspeople and everyone "who has something to say." You have the responsibility to make their voices heard in your news stories, and to help them convey their messages. Doing this, you need to determine the needs of your target audience and position yourself according to those needs. We also have the responsibility to provide the immigrants, whom our teacher Sevda ALANKUS calls "those who are out of place and without roots", news from the places they come from. We also have the responsibility to help those immigrants adopt to life in the city through our news stories and programmes. When we also add in this list meeting the demands of the disabled, children, women, human rights advocates, those who are not represented in the mass media unless they become the subjects of a problem or an "offence" (!), the fellow townsmen associations and the political parties, the list of our responsibilities and duties grows infinitely.

### **Responsible Reporting is Problematic ...**

Being involved in the problem and the solution always brings you face to face with the political, administrative and economic actors. This is the case with the local media as it is with the national media.

In a city where the Kurds are in majority, it is very problematic to broadcast and discuss demands to solve the Kurdish problem without joining a side. Although we have some criteria, in line with our editorial policy, for choosing the music we air, we still check them before airing. It has not been long since our broadcasts were suspended for a year because of a song. The Radio and Television Higher Board (RTUK) had handed us this penalty because of an anonymous Kurdish song we aired in Radio Karacadag of the province of Urfa. It said that a sentence in the song was against general morals. As a radio broadcaster, we unfortunately are obliged to implement self-censorship. At RTUK, self-censorship is defined as "self-control" and it is recommended to us at "local media training seminars."

As we all know, opposition, free or alternative radios that go beyond commercial broadcasts have been handed huge penalties. RTUK expert Cihangir Gener, in 2002, during a speech at the Local Media Training seminar in Tunceli, said that broadcasts of local radios have been suspended for over a total of 19,500 days, which adds up to 52 years from 1994 when RTUK was first set up until 2002. I have not been able to find out whether the total days of suspension has reached 100 years until now,

but Gener had stated that "94 percent of penalties were handed out to broadcasts with an ideological character."

As the general manager of Radio Karacadag, whose broadcasts were suspended for a total of 2 years, 7 months and 7 days, and Radio Ses (Voice), whose broadcasts were suspended for 30 days because of programmes on death fasts, and another 21 days for airing Kurdish songs, I regret to say that each punishment distances us further from our demands.

Urfa's Radio Karacadag, Adana's Radio Dunya (World), and Balçova FM, which aired Kurdish songs for the first time in Turkey, Adana's Arkadas (Friend) Radio, and Imaj (Image) in Ankara, which can all be examples of local, civilian and/or alternative media, have all been closed down. We all know the legal struggle of Istanbul's Ozgur (Free) radio, which is the radio with the highest rate of suspension of broadcasts, and Diyarbakir's Gun (Day) Radio and Television. The ownership of some of these radios have been transferred. For example, the Adana Arkadas radio is continuing its broadcasts under the name of Ask (Love) FM. We could extend the list.

In responsible reporting, there are problems not only in political or legal arena but also in the economic arena. You have to get advertisements for your radio to survive. You have to pay the salaries and social security for your employees (if you can, that is), and pay the electricity and phone bills. For example, airing a news story on the damage the petrol companies in the Karaduvar neighborhood of Mersin would mean that you from now on, have no chance of getting an advertisement from them.

In many places in the world, radios of public broadcasts are supported by the local administrations. But in our country, the legislation is not suitable for such a support. Besides, it is out of question for a radio, which criticizes the local administrations or which supports a different political line than the local administration, to get any support.

In addition, the officials at the local radio have to negotiate with the advertiser, write the advertisement text, to record the sound for the advertisement, and to fully prepare it to be aired. This means that you have to also act as an advertiser and producer.

While on the one hand you prepare programmes that advocate labour, on the other hand, you are forced to exploit your employees because you don't have enough financial means. You constantly live with this dilemma.

### **How are the local radios defined?**

Local radios are not defined over their own productions. They are defined over the songs they air. They are characterized as, for example, those which air pop music, those which air folk or contemporary folk music, those which air protest music, those which air foreign music, those which air mixed music, etc...

The programmes, under the name of sponsorship programmes, cannot go beyond being solely advertisement programmes or music programmes. So there are virtually no local news radios or local radios that air news

programmes. Although the number of news radios have increased, very few of them can really employ reporters. Those radios which air news programmes usually just copy and paste the news from the Internet. The format of those news are far from a radio news format. They reflect the language of the Web site or source they were taken from. So the news aired on the radios are problematic in terms of language, in terms of content, and in terms of style. Almost no radio station is a subscriber of a news service.

The legislation is the reason why radios cannot be defined over their own productions. Although public broadcasts are mentioned in the legislation, the RTUK law imposes the "commercial broadcast." The current situation has been left to the market. Communications in this field is seen as a commercial market and the communications arena is regulated by the market. This situation leads radio stations to keep away from news and news programmes, which are more costly.

### **What should be done?**

- The term "public broadcasts" in the RTUK law should be redefined. The requirement for radio stations to be corporations should be lifted and the legal obstacles in front of the non-governmental organizations to own radios should be removed.
- The local administrations should be obliged to financially support the local radios that do not get advertisements, as it is the case in Europe.
- The local radios and televisions should be able to benefit from the official announcements, which are currently only placed in newspapers.
- RTUK should cease to act just as a means of supervision and punishment, and should produce and implement policies to improve the technical facilities and human resources of local radios, like other higher boards in the rest of the world.
- The political wardship on RTUK should be removed. RTUK members should be chosen among media representatives.
- The Police Directorate Radio and Television Monitoring Desk Authority, which operates as the local organization of RTUK, should be replaced by the representatives of media organizations.
- The media organizations should support the efforts to join, share and reproduce local broadcasting experiences.
- The students of communication schools and faculties should be encouraged to intern at local media companies. Those who have learned the job on the field and those who have received formal education should be encouraged to share experiences and knowledge.
- The fee paid by radio and television channels to RTUK should be brought down to a minimum. The surplus of the revenue should not

be given to the state, but should be spent in solving the problems of the media organizations.

- Efforts should be made to take the Frequency Tender, which will inevitably lead to the elimination of any criticism in the media-state relationship, off the agenda through preserving the present situation.
- Obstacles in front of opening new local radios and television stations should be lifted. In frequency allocation, local radio and television channels should be allowed to be established in line with the social needs and interests, aside from the tender option. For example, radio and television stations should be established and supported, to enable different ethnic and cultural identities to freely express themselves.
- The time limitations and the requirement of Turkish reruns as stated in the regulation on broadcasting programmes in traditional languages and dialects, should be eliminated.
- The requirement to get a "National Security Document" which is a condition of setting up a radio or television station, and which is against the constitution, should be lifted.

It is for now out of question to talk about an organization for the employees of local radios and televisions. The lack of organizations leads to the local radio employees to alienate themselves from their jobs. The employees should be able to organize among themselves and have social security.

## **Independent Media for Peace**

## **Independent Media and Peace Journalism**

**Dov Shinar\***

Discussions on alternative and independent media in totalitarian societies have never been surprising. They have been widely explored since the American and French revolutions up to the transitions that in Eastern Europe, Latin America and elsewhere since end of WWII. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, particularly since the 1980s, there has been a shift of interest and a tendency to look at media structures and media democratization in countries tagged democratic, such as in North America, Europe, and elsewhere—particularly in times when democratic norms and media performance are critically tested, such as in war and outside threats.

The Malvinas, Grenada, Panama, and Afghanistan are such cases in and since the 1980s; the Gulf War and the first *Intifada* in the 1990s; 9/11, Iraq, the second *Intifada*, and the second Lebanon War in the early 2000s. By-and-large, most of these cases, show the outstanding loyalty of the mainstream media to their governments, to hegemonic corporations and to the “ratings culture”, and their willful agreement to be mobilized, dined, wined, embedded, controlled and manipulated by generals, government officials, and politicians.

A strong connection, and sometimes a personal union and political identification have developed in many Western democratic countries between media owners and some top journalists with their governments and economic tycoons. These tendencies lean on the centralized and, thanks to globalization, increasingly centralizing character of Western media structures, in order to guarantee growing circulations, ratings, and profits.

Efforts to change this situation, mainly through decentralizing the media scene, have been made so as to reduce the domination of the media by the few and the vocal, and to increase the involvement of the many. Experiments have been conducted to encourage the local press, community radio, TV, regional news agencies and the like, through local and international initiatives, such as the Unesco sponsored McBride commission, later to become a movement.

Their goal to challenge established structures, however, never achieved much success, as their economic, organizational, and political weakness turned the challenge to be no more than symbolic and self-deluding efforts, without really achieving effective results.

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The advent of the Internet and other digital technologies since the mid-1990s, promised to beat the centralistic structure, or at least to provide some alternative channels. It is true that their appearance gave birth to a probably exaggerated mythology of decentralization and freedom around alternative functions. It is also true that the Internet and other digital technologies have been steered to the entertainment path, following the prevailing structure. But at least some alternative channels have been almost perfectly adapted for democratic societies directly and through the use of digital radio and television, developing online journalism, blogs, zines, that at least at the present allow for larger rates of participatory independent communications, relative to the mainstream media.

### **The Case for Peace Journalism**

Peace Journalism is a normative mode of responsible and conscientious media coverage of conflict, which aims at contributing to peacemaking, peacekeeping and changing attitudes of media owners, advertisers, professionals, and audiences towards war and peace. This is sought through (a) critical evaluations of the current state of conflict coverage and (b) efforts to conceptualize and to operationalize professional values and practices both in the mainstream, and particularly in the independent media.

Evaluations of the current conflict coverage criticize the mainstream media preferences:

- a. For violence, sensationalism, personalization, patriotism and exclusion-inclusion biases toward certain countries, groups, and persons (Lynch, 2007; Neiger and Zandberg, 2004; Roeh and Ashley, 1986; Shinar 2003, Zandberg and Neiger, 2005);
- b. For simple descriptions rather than analyses of complex conflict origins, causes, and contexts (Lynch, forthcoming in 2007, Roeh & Ashley, 1986);
- c. For fighting parties rather than broader human and other conflict dimensions (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005, Peleg, 2006);
- d. For coverage of conflict only when manifest violence occurs or is about to occur (Hanitzsch, 2004a, b);
- e. For "sports-like", "us-versus-them" situations that seek visible events and results, damage and victims, winners and losers rather than longer processes of conflict resolution or transformation (Shinar, 2003, Wolfsfeld, 2004);
- f. For the relatively lower news value of peace-related stories (Shinar, 2003).

In the absence of systematic empirical evidence, it seems that at least on the impressionistic level, the independent media are better equipped to deal with such problems and thus to promote peace journalism.

Efforts to conceptualize and operationalize Peace Journalism focus on:

- a. Exploring backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation, and presenting causes and options on every side so as to portray conflict in realistic terms, transparent to the audience;
- b. Giving voice to the views of all rival parties;
- c. Offering creative ideas for conflict resolution, peace-making and peace-keeping;
- d. Exposing lies, cover-up attempts and culprits on all sides, and revealing excesses committed by, and suffering inflicted on people of all parties; and
- e. Paying attention to peace stories and post-war developments more than the regular coverage of conflict.

Again, in the absence of systematic empirical evidence on the achievement of positive results in these efforts, it seems that at least on the impressionistic level, the independent media are better equipped to conceptualize and operationalize peace journalism.

Peace Journalism does not mean necessarily "good news". Instead, it is conceived as a fairer way to cover conflict, in comparison with the usual coverage, and suggests it can improve professional attitudes and performance; strengthen human, moral and ethical values in the media; widen scholarly and professional media horizons; and provide better public service by the media. These and other goals of peace journalism are not too distant from most declared goals of the independent media.

### **Problems and Dilemmas**

Peace Journalism belongs to a well-known list of problematic titles that enjoy low levels of popularity, such as "journalism of attachment" (Bell, 1996), "victim journalism" (Hume, 1997), "justice journalism" (Messman, 2001), and "engaged journalism" (Lynch, 2003). Two types of reasons can help to explain the mixed feelings and the lack of popularity attached to the "peace journalism" construct. The first type includes professional reasons that refer, first, to the mythology of media objectivity. Also these reasons refer to the function of war as a source of mainstream media inspiration and exploitation of audience feelings: "War provides visuals and images of action. It is associated with heroism and conflict, focuses on the emotional rather than on the rational, and satisfies news-value demands: the present, the unusual, the dramatic, simplicity, action, personalization, and results. This preference is magnified in the vivid colors, clear-cut polarities, unexpected features, and primordial sentiments typical of cultural conflict; and in its variety of images and voices exceeds that of plain conventional war..." (Shinar, 2003, 5-6).

The second type includes historical reasons, such as the political discourse inherited from the Cold War and developed in later armed conflicts, particularly since the 1990s, which have led the media to usually adopt governmental discourses of power and violence as their official rhetoric. In the Western world, "peace talk" was tagged Communist in the 1950s and

1960s, and “challenger discourse” until the late 1980s, with low popularity and entry into the general audience media (Shinar, 2003). The patriotic stance of media celebrities in the Iraq war follows previous demonstrations of loyalty to ruling powers, as showed in the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon (Roeh and Ashley, 1986), the first Gulf War, the wars in former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and the second Lebanon War.

Both types of reasons have helped to criticize Peace Journalism so as to fuel the debate that goes far beyond orthodox demands of objectivity and normative “deviations” thereof. In their focus on the dilemma of universalistic professionalism versus particularistic allegiances, Neiger and Zandberg (2004), and Zandberg and Neiger (2005) develop Baudrillard’s explanation that structural limitations of style and discourse make mainstream capitalist mass media unidirectional, intransitive, “speech without response”, rather than “a reciprocal space of speech and response” (1981, 164-184).

Such instances of controversy emphasize the need for clearer formulations and applications of peace journalism concepts, expectations, and procedures.

### **The need for a clearer formulation of professional expectations**

First, one should consider a) the newer roles of the media in international relations, as active participants, catalysts, mediators, and messengers, in addition to their traditional roles as observers-reporters (Shinar, 2003, 2004); and b) the new possibilities provided by newer technologies. Contrary to the clearer professional expectations of earlier times, when journalists were expected to be just impartial observers-reporters, the newer roles have never been clearly translated into clear expectations or norms. In addition, the roles and professional requirements of the newer media, particularly the independent media have yet to be defined in clearer terms. There is an urgent need to clarify in better terms questions such as what roles are the media and media professionals expected to play in the mechanics of peace processes, and a need to overcome practical difficulties, such as:

- How to reconcile apparent contradictions of Peace Journalism with roles, expectations from and definitions of journalism, such as community versus industry, loyal citizens versus professionals, and corporate versus independent;
- How to produce persuasive evidence of Peace Journalism importance, news value, and feasibility in both the mainstream and the independent media, such as research efforts; media monitoring projects; courses taught in universities and professional institutions; publication of scholarly texts, teaching manuals, and trade oriented materials; meetings of scholars and professionals in conferences, working groups and workshops.

- How to overcome the rejection by mainstream and independent journalists and to stimulate the popularity of Peace Journalism.
- How to reduce self-manipulation in the relations between field staff and their editors, mostly in the corporate media. Shinar & Stoiciu (1992) showed that the absence of well-defined operative policies in the mainstream media might enhance manipulation, and “self-manipulation”—the priority given by international news-editors (more than their field reporters) to incoming war items that fit their own state-of-mind, psychological pre-dispositions and news-value expectations.
- The difficulty to develop a peace discourse in the mainstream media: Even when there is a peace process, at least the corporate media are constrained by structure and culture, and by the lack of a media peace discourse.

### **Principles of a Strategy to Improve the Performance of Peace Journalism in the mainstream and in the independent media.**

The following principles and courses of action can be derived from the previous discussion:

- 1. Beware of pitfalls** of two types at least: mainstream traps, such as excessive loyalty to governments and establishments (Hackett, 2006), and independent media traps, such as “guruism ” and excessive loyalty to “causes”, absolute truths, and one-sided concepts of justice;
- 2. Study and disseminate research findings**, such as on de-escalation techniques; increasing media detachment, transparency, reflexivity, and self-criticism; structural, economic, professional, normative constraints in the media, and the development of a media peace discourse.
- 3. Use relevant guiding questions**, that might refer to structural aspects of the media, conflict situation on-site, personal features of the individual journalist, the political climate, lobbies, and the audience. Examples include a) **journalists as individuals**: How do they define their communication goals? How do they deal with structural constraints? What is the impact of gender, age, education, class, ethnic and religious affiliation, etc. on war and peace coverage? To what extent do territorial circumstances or limitations imposed by military and civilian authorities prevent or even deter reporters from applying peace journalism strategies to their daily work? b) **journalism as organized news production**: how the structures of editorial work and quality control, influence the news? To what extent do textual constraints pre-structure news reporting? How do rhetorical and narrative forms used by the media facilitate certain frames of viewing a set of events? To what extent does the availability of resources (staff, time, budget, etc.) restrict

crisis and war journalism? c) **social dimensions of journalism:** how do economic imperatives of mainstream and independent media companies interfere with news making? How independent are war and peace journalism from interests within the political system? To what extent do expectations of the audience affect the coverage of war and peace? To what extent are these expectations and their anticipation by journalists compatible with peace journalism?

- 4. Encourage the development of a media peace discourse**
- 5. Adapt media values and practices to current realities,** in which the newly acquired stronger status of both the mainstream and the independent media in international relations can be used to overcome negative media peace-related attitudes and peace-coverage techniques inherited from the past;
- 6. Increase the news-value of peace coverage** in the media frame contest, rather than conduct missionary attempts to change war-oriented media structures and professional codes of conduct;
- 7. Devise well-defined professional policies,** whose proper execution and training might reduce media self-manipulation and external pressures.

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## **Armenian Media: Pluralism versus Objectivity**

**Alexander Iskandaryan\***

The news media of independent Armenia are now sixteen years old, a long enough history to allow an evaluation of their overall development. This article will look at the political media only, leaving aside Armenia's now rapidly developing entertainment media. My special focus will be the print press, since its situation very accurately reflects the general problems now experienced by the country, and very sharply represents some tendencies present in Armenian media in general, whether broadcast or online.

The problem of the current debate around Armenian media development is that discussion, though rather intensive, is carried on chiefly amongst journalists, and as a result lacks an external aspect and a comparative perspective. Criticism usually concerns, first, the low quality and consequent low print runs of the print press, making its impact on society marginal, and second, political pressure on the news media that prevents them from reporting the true concerns of the society. It is natural, of course, that journalists should focus on issues that directly impact their everyday activities, and wish for their working environment to be free from political or technical restraints. Yet such criticism disregards a number of issues that stem from the general context in which evolve the post-Soviet news media in general and Armenian media in particular.

*First*, the mere fact that the history of Armenian media covers a period of just sixteen years accounts for many of their shortcomings. Although the Soviet Union did have its own mass media, those were completely distinct in terms of both content and process from what is usually meant by 'media' in the Western world; hence journalism as a profession represented something sharply different. With the breakup of the USSR, post-Soviet journalists and media managers had to start from scratch, learning the job as they did it, without any professional education or experience to help them on the way. To be fair in our evaluations of media quality, we must bear in mind that, whereas sixteen years is by any count a very short interval for the emergence and progress of an important and complex institution like mass media, those sixteen years included the turbulent first decade of political independence, over half of which was a time of war and economic collapse. To illustrate the point, Armenian businesses and households only started to get a more or less stable supply of electricity

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starting from 1998; before that, broadcast media could hardly develop at all, and printing of the press was quite irregular.

*Second*, it is by no means fair to regard the Armenian media per se, without putting them in context. Whether we are speaking about print runs, or quality of media products, we must have a point for comparison, such as the size of the population or per capita incomes.

Talking about the media market in Armenia, it is important to point out the fact that broadcast media in Armenia are freely available to all – neither public nor private stations charge a subscription fee, all one needs is to make a one-time investment in a TV or radio set and a connection. This means that almost 100% of households watch television, whereas a newspaper or magazine has to be bought before it reaches its reader, and therefore the press is much more directly dependent on the market for its survival.

Yet, put in perspective, the print runs of Armenian press are not as tiny as they may seem at first glance. The largest entertainment weekly, “Yeter” (*Air*), sells 56.000 copies. The largest political weekly, “Iravunk” (*Law*) sells at least 11.000 copies, whereas the average sales of most political newspapers vary somewhere between 5000 and 6000. These print runs look quite small, yet in a country the size Armenia, they are far from negligible. Armenia has a population of three million people, roughly a hundred times smaller than that of the United States. In a comparative aspect, if we multiply the number of copies by 100, *Iravunk* will get a print run of 1.1 million, putting it on the same standing with the largest American newspapers such as *USA Today*. Should we surmise that the situation is far less hopeless than it is usually described?

In fact, Armenian print media do experience very grave pressures and face serious challenges that stem from the general situation of the country, namely, from its poverty and small population, and consequently, a very small market for everything including print media. This situation impacts the structure of the press: it is impossible to make profit from sales –even if 5000 copies may be a relatively large number compared to the size of the market, it is not sufficient to keep a publication going from sales alone. The market for advertising in print press is also very limited since advertisers prefer television for its greater outreach. Consequently, the print press is not a business and almost entirely relies on sponsors for its survival. This happens in many countries, Armenia is not unique in this sense, especially in a time when the print press is going through a decline worldwide. The problem with sponsorship in Armenia is the source from which the finances come. When the press is sponsored by businesses, as often happens in other countries of the world, this inevitably incurs certain problems and limitations. However, in Armenia the economic situation is such that major businesspeople are involved in public policy; business and politics are amalgamated, creating a situation when commercial sponsorship automatically involves a political agenda. The motive for a businessperson

to support a publication is to promote a certain political trend, not to make profit or to increase visibility.

This has its very specific consequences. First, the press is heavily politicized. Used as a tool in political games, newspapers reflect a wide variety of opinions and views, depending on the political agenda of individual sponsors. Even the severest critics agree that political censorship allegedly prevailing in the Armenian media does not concern the print press. Indeed, the landscape of print media in Armenia is highly pluralistic: it includes liberal, conservative and nationalist, totally pro-government and extreme anti-government publications. Overall pluralism and objectivity are, of course, very different things in this context. By reading a dozen newspapers every morning, one can, with some skill and experience, get a rather complete picture of current events, but there is no single publication that endeavors to present an objective view.

Yet one can hardly expect anybody except media analysts to read a dozen newspapers every day, especially bearing in mind the high price of newspapers in Armenia. An average daily or weekly costs 100 drams, the equivalent of about 30 cents. With its average size of 8 pages, this price makes Armenian publications quite expensive compared to Western newspapers that cost a dollar or two but often have over a hundred pages. The surprisingly high price of Armenian press has its reasons, primarily the high cost of paper which has to be imported and, once again, the small size of the Armenian market. Considering that the average salary in Armenia is around 150 US dollars, it's a wonder that people buy newspapers at all, let alone a dozen at a time.

As a result, although some publications do sell a relatively large number of copies, the overall print runs of the Armenian press are rather low, estimated at around 150.000 copies, which is a small figure for a population of three million. The field of print press is very discrete, driven by the political will of individual actors and not by demand. Since every newspaper depends on a sponsor, it does not care very much about its readers. Editors see no reason to invest in the quality of a newspaper and make it more suited to the readers' demands, believing that this would have no direct impact of the welfare of the publication. Unless living standards in Armenia increase substantially, media managers do not expect people to start buying more political newspapers, whatever the quality.

With such policies, the market of political press lacks unity; it does not satisfy the needs of people in general, and each newspaper has its narrow circle of readers who select it because they support the political agenda that it represents. This is very probably the reason why the government leaves the press alone: the press is not perceived by the ruling powers as an important tool for influencing the public opinion. In most cases, political views are the reason for buying a certain newspaper, not the result of reading it. With their constant limited readerships, the newspapers preach to the converted most of the time. Therefore, political pressure is exerted

almost entirely on broadcast media, chiefly on national television channels that reach a wide audience irrespective of its political views.

Another consequence of political sponsorship is the self-censorship widely prevailing in the press, a phenomenon that seriously affects the journalistic profession in Armenia. The editorial staff of newspapers usually consists of journalists who share the political views of the owner; even if they do not, they have a clear vision of what should be reported and what should not. In most cases, the media owner has no need to interfere with editorial policies, because the journalists censor themselves very efficiently anyway. This has a negative impact on journalism as a whole: too often journalists see their role in broadcasting political views, not in informing the society.

Plus, there are a number of taboos that prevail in the society as a result of a national consensus concerning certain political and social issues. One of these issues is the Armenian genocide, on which all publications regardless of political agenda voice the same views; the Karabakh conflict is another.

This said, it remains to point out that the situation in broadcast media generally shows the same tendencies, slightly reduced by the fact that television and radio accesses a wider and more varied audience, enabling them to make profits from advertising. Consequently, TV and radio stations are, to a much larger extent than the press, business—and demand—oriented. This accounts for a large amount of air time devoted to entertainment. It also accounts for government efforts to control the political content of TV programmes. All in all, the broadcast media in Armenia display, on one hand, a smaller degree of pluralism than the print press, due to political pressure, on the other, more efforts towards objectivity as they compete to reach a wider audience so as to increase advertising incomes.

Of course, thus described, the situation appears static; in reality it is much more diverse. There are, for example, a number of private news agencies that do not quite fit into this general description; some news media display very specific trends. New entertainment media, including print publications, are constantly appearing on the market; efforts are made to launch political magazines as businesses, not political projects. A lot will depend on the economic development of Armenia in the coming years, although of course some restrictions, such as the market size, will always apply.

## **We are stronger together!**

### **Erol Onderoglu\***

I monitor the developments in Turkey, and—to the best of my ability—in the world in terms of media and freedom of expression, and prepare news reports for Bianet. Besides these news, this monitoring activity materializes in the freedom of expression reports that we pass on to the media periodically.

Alongside actual assaults, inquiries, and the flood of trials, which are now as mainstream as assaults; and monopolization, sectoral concentration and globalization, which all have increasing effects on the freedom of expression, are included in these news and reports.

### **Politics delude rights struggles**

We have began running into the concept and experience of “rights reporting” in the Turkish national media only recently, in the last one or two years. Bianet had highlighted this concept and experience in the fields of women’s issues, children’s issues and human rights, right from the beginning. While at the beginning we heard complaints that such reports do not find a place in the media, now complaints are more about the way such reports are reflected in the media.

I believe that the visibility of violations of media freedom and freedom of expression, and our reports on these issues, is higher in the media than news within the scope of rights reporting. This may be due to the fact that the issue of media freedom and freedom of expression directly affects reporters.

However, as in other rights issues, it would be possible to say that politics intervene with the acknowledgement of the right of freedom of expression in Turkey. For this reason, it is of utmost importance to continue with the struggle without any exceptions and without permitting this notion to be torn into pieces.

### **Our news is local, so why can’t our source be local?**

This meeting, which took place thanks to intense efforts, solidifies our hopes that independent journalism can be brought about through international solidarity. By rendering regional communications continual, efficiency is

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\* Journalist, BIANET.

achieved, not only in terms of our reporting but in terms of rights reporting in a geography, where wars are frequent.

News on our region and the Middle East are conveyed to the world by global international news agencies which are all based in the West. And unfortunately, either because we are not able to improve our relations, or because we find it easier, we seldom get the news on an incident in Iraq from a journalist who lives in Iraq, or a development in Iran from a source there.

Similarly, news reports on the rights struggles of communities in Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Afghanistan and other communities that live in conflicts, reach us not through the local human rights organizations, but through their international counterparts.

### **The Forum will make us question our reporting habits**

Thus, our new acquaintanceships at this Forum will most probably lead us to review our habits at our desk. As we listen to you telling us about the situation in your region, we will seek a place there for ourselves. And this will bring us a step closer to correct journalism.

The media corporations of Turkey, which have high sales rates and are part of globalization, invite hundreds of CEOs with world-wide reputations to glorious places. The main menu of the sessions becomes diffusion of capital with freedom of expression being the side dish.

### **Why should they read us anyway...**

Currently in Turkey, where 75 million people live, only 5 million readers prefer to go to newspaper stalls to buy newspapers. And I don't think this has anything to do with failure to discovering the market. In my opinion, this situation arises from the fact that the dominant Turkish media has not been able to adequately diversify its reporting in terms of content and ethics in accordance with the people on the street.

Consequently, this situation points to a serious question, not only for the dominant media but also for the independent media: **"Why should the people on the street read us?"** Is it because we make their opinions a part of our daily broadcasts or publications? Because we carry the issues they see as problems to the microphone or to our pages skillfully and with all the variety? There is a lot to do. I think it is very early to criticize the readers at least until these needs are met.

### **It is very important that we came together**

In my opinion, this activity by BIA is very valuable in terms of bringing together media representatives by highlighting the independent identity of their broadcasts or publications. The importance of this activity arises from the fact that it created the right conditions to bring together the

independent actors of media, who had no economic dealings among themselves, and who could not interact not only on a global scale but even if they are in the same country. It was obvious right from the beginning of the meeting that this is a huge need.

Let's think about it; even the declaration to be published after the sessions will one day definitely intrigue an independent radio representative in another part of the world whether or not he/she is following our activity today. He/she will take up the messages of the Forum as a reference; he/she will have even more faith in the basis of existence of the radio he/she wants to keep alive. There is no doubt that the messages at the Independent Media Forum will form the basis of another independent initiative in Turkey or in another part of the world.

### **Strong messages from the Forum to the whole world**

The independent media should take advantage of and strengthen cooperation opportunities so that it can help render mainstream the best reporting examples on people's right to have access to news or people reporting.

We can make progress by developing a lasting and phased cooperation, not by setting huge targets and expecting an intensive activity right away. We can have a good start with the opportunities provided by this Forum. If we can exist independently, we can do even better together!

## **The Name of the Conflict: Journalists in information struggle**

***Marina Muskhelishvili\****

Dissolution of the USSR was followed with the violent conflicts in South Caucasus. It was also followed with the dissolution of the monolithic, Moscow-based public informational space. The new post-Soviet states and territories developed their own public informational spaces, based on local languages of communication that are producing specific codes, knowledge, agenda and meanings. Gradually each of the political units has developed its own dominant system of stereotypes that are almost unquestionable and radically different on the opposite sides of the conflict divisions.

From the Georgian perspective, the two conflicts on the territory of Georgia from the very beginning were perceived as territorial conflicts between Georgia and Russia, rather than ethnic conflicts among Georgians, Abkhazians and Ossetians. However, international informational coverage of the conflicts was mostly influenced with the Russian media, positioning Russia as an external referee of the internal Georgian problem. This approach has been challenged recently. Close political attention from the side of US towards Georgia has opened such media as CNN and others for the Tbilisi-centered vision of the problem. This transformation increased aggressive informational propaganda from the side of Russian media that is heating political tensions between Georgia and Russia to the degree of war conflict.

On the background of heated political tensions between the governments, journalists on both sides found themselves facing difficult dilemmas. Their professional, political and patriotic loyalties are not easily reconciled. By following dominant propaganda they may provoke escalation of conflict; by opposing it—sacrifice state interests, by looking for alternatives—lose public interest. Their freedom of choice is restricted. Russian TV is especially heavily censored, but Georgian TV is under pressure too. Nevertheless, many of them on both sides are looking for options for the peace.

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## **Agos: Peace and Dialogue**

**Nuran Agan\***

AGOS newspaper, which embraces the idea of defending oneself in THE country in which one lives, explaining oneself through one's own voice, and sharing one's own story, has been using a peaceful language since the very first day. The request and call for "DIALOGUE" aimed at overcoming the historical disunity between Turks and Armenians has been one of the most basic editorial policies of AGOS. AGOS has been, and will continue to be a publication that serves "PEACE"...

AGOS, while reporting on activities that serve the brotherhood of the people of Turkey, also covered the injustices faced by the people.

At this point, it also pursued a policy of serving "PEACE"...

AGOS served as a vehicle to help the Armenians, who had to live as a closed society, to overcome their isolation. The newspaper was effective as the voice of Armenians. It voiced their problems and, by putting forward the existence of Armenians, it contributed to the development of a sense of citizenship. Now, many more people know that an Armenian community lives in this territory and many more people talk about the problems of Armenians.

I believe AGOS, through this, has served "PEACE"...

AGOS has helped the Anatolian Armenians, who did not speak Armenian, to learn their own language, and served as a means of communications between them and the Istanbul Armenians. Thus, it enabled Armenians, who were not in contact with their own communities to meet.

Through this, AGOS served "PEACE."

AGOS also helped Diaspora Armenians, who had to settle outside of Turkey for reasons we all know, to meet with Turkish Armenians. AGOS, which did not make any concessions on its peaceful attitude, also influenced the public speech and attitude of the Diaspora Armenians.

AGOS, by this way, served "PEACE" and it will continue to do so.

AGOS encouraged many Armenians, who had to to hide their identities due to the historic tragedy they lived through, to reveal their identities. Many people reconciled with their own identities and began living with their own

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\* Internet page editor, AGOS.

identities, rather than the identities requested by their neighbors. AGOS at this point served "PEACE."

There is a community that prefers to ignore its forgotten history rather than to face it. A community that refuses to take on this fact. And as a member of that community, when I came to AGOS, I realized that I was faced with a community with a very lively history. And that was also my history. Facing such a fact of course, stupefied me. But it also led me to meet with a great community. AGOS made me meet a community that I ignored; a community whose existence, I refused. That, for me, is serving Peace.

AGOS, while reporting on the injustices of the Armenian community in the territory they live, it embraced an editorial policy against all injustices against all the people. The attacks, court cases, threats, did not change AGOS' editorial policy.

Its determination for "PEACE" and "DIALOGUE" and its determination against injustices also lead AGOS today to have a huge influence, far beyond its caliber, both nationally and internationally.

## Deconstructing Stereotypes, Fighting for Peace

Tasos Kostopoulos\*

How Independent Media can contribute to the upholding of peace in our neighborhood? Is it possible for the non war-mongering journalists to resist to the tide, when politics get an ugly turn leading our peoples towards confrontation? I shall try here to present some lessons acquired from our experience in Greece during the last two decades.

To begin with the conclusions: when the situation gets out of hand, and the mechanisms of a possible bloody confrontation are put in motion, "independent", "alternative" or even mainstream Media are more or less incapable to do anything to change the course of events. Due to modalities inherent not only in the Media but also in human societies in general, from the moment war is imminent everybody and everything tries to adjust to new situation's exigencies. Anti-war journalist agitation gets all the more difficult to be practiced or politically ineffective as far as the society at large is concerned. The only reliable way out of such a deadlock would be the emergence of a mass movement fighting against the slide towards war. But for such a movement to exist, or even to be possible, a necessary prerogative should have been the earlier "education" of a considerable segment of the public (and the organized forces of civil society). The later should be *already* able to challenge the official nationalist discourse and question the reasoning projected by the war-mongering State (or "deep-State") propaganda apparatus. Because the development and consolidation of a hawkish political mood usually rests not on the actual circumstances of the immediate pre-war developments, but in the cultivation of long-standing nationalist prejudices and stereotypes, centered on the idealized dichotomy of "our rights" vs. "their pretensions".

It is the duty of alternative and progressive Media to give a hand to the deconstruction of these nationalist stereotypes and warlike reasoning, so that the bellicose propaganda inside their own country will be deprived of its main weapon. Such a deconstruction is impossible during a "national crisis" situation, due to the imbalance of forces between the official or semi-official propaganda apparatus on the one hand and the dissenting voices on the other (sheer repression of dissent being another possibility), but also because all relevant attempts may be rejected by the public as "enemy propaganda" or "objective help to the enemy". For this reason, the demystification of nationalist stereotypes *must have been put into practice*

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\**Eleftheropia* Newspaper, Greece.

*in advance*, during times of less tension, when the citizens are usually far more receptive to the non-conformist, non-nationalist (or even anti-nationalist) arguments.

Coming to the actual situation in Greece, I must emphasize here that, as far as the ability of a journalist to deconstruct the dominant nationalist stereotypes is concerned, the main cleavage is not between "alternative" and "mainstream", but rather between "print" and "electronic" Media. The "independent" and "alternative" Media that flourished during the 1980s and early 1990s belong mostly to the past, a considerable part of their personnel having been absorbed by the most "liberal" faction of the mainstream Press. If numbers have any meaning, the most popular "alternative" editions today in Greece are not progressive, anti-racist and pro-peace journals but its opposite: heavy illustrated magazines (usually linked to far-Right circles) openly or covertly propagating various conspiracy theories of a more or less nationalist, militaristic and anti-Semitic nature. Even more serious is the reproduction of this same kind of extreme nationalist pseudo journalism by the main private TV Channels, an expanding phenomenon during the last half-decade.

The different approach of the so-called "national issues" (i.e. the foreign relations and defense politics) by the electronic and print Media is due to structural reasons. Since private Channels strive to attract the biggest possible attendance rates, TV anchormen tend to substitute rational exchange of opinions by either one-sided "bombasting" or semi-staged "screen-fights" between hosts selected neither for their representative position nor for the worth of their ideas, but for their capacity to imitate the dogfights of the ostensibly "non-political" trash TV. Under such circumstances, any serious political debate has therefore been completely impossible. In order to constantly capture the public's attention, a permanent climate of tension must be created; every story has to be presented as a semi-war situation. At the same time, strict political control of what constitutes "publishable" TV news is always enforced. Perhaps the most blatant case of such censorship took place on February 15, 2003, when all major Private TV Channels completely suppressed the biggest peace demonstration ever held in Athens (on the eve of the US-British invasion of Iraq), dedicating the totality of their "news" bulletins to an ordinary visit of ex-King Constantine in Greece! As top anchorman Nikos Hadjinikolaou put it bluntly afterwards, "*their professional judgment*" was that the ex-King was a far more interesting topic for the public than any demonstration.

The print Press, on the other hand, has responded to the TV domination of the Media industry by emphasizing its commitment on public dialogue and the exchange of conflicting arguments. Although the spectrum of opinions allowed in each newspaper varies according the Medium's own strategy and physiognomic peculiarities, the final result is infinitely more pluralistic than what was the norm for the same Media ten years ago. The problem is that this "opening" of the print Press to dissenting or alternative voices goes

hand in hand with its relative marginalization, as a whole, by the private TV onslaught.

Let's return, however, to our topic: How a journalist (be he/she an individual or a group) or an alternative Media can deconstruct nationalist stereotypes, deflate tension and contribute to Peace? Of course, there is no uniform solution to be applied in all cases. What follows is a brief description of the responses put forward by our collective group ("Ios") in *Eleftherotypia*.

### **1. The dark sides of National History**

One of the main pillars of modern nationalism has been the construction and dissemination of an image of the national past, wherein "we" have always behaved well, only to suffer persecution on the hands of the ungracious "others".

A typical example of this is provided by the spontaneous answers given to the question "*who burned down Kilkis and Izmir*". In Greece, official history—and school textbooks—insist that the town of Kilkis was destroyed in 1913 by the fleeing Bulgarians, although until then its inhabitants had been exclusively pro-Bulgarian Macedonian Slavs. In Turkey, too, it is officially claimed (and widely believed) that Smyrna was destroyed in September 1922 by the fleeing Greek army—although, again, the neighborhoods that were burned down belonged mostly to the Greeks and Armenians of "Giaour Izmir". In both cases, neutral observers have convincingly testified that the arsonists belonged to the camp of winners—Greeks and Turks, respectively—and amounted to what today is called "ethnic cleansing": deliberate destruction of places inhabited by alien minorities (or majorities), in order to compel the later to leave<sup>48</sup>.

This version of history can survive (and even undermine) any attempt of the official ideological apparatuses to rid the school curriculum of earlier versions of national hate speech ; the Yugoslav experience of official (and superficial) "brotherhood and unity" subverted by unofficial nationalist "oral history" until the latter's state-sponsored resurrection during the 1980s, is very instructive.

What we must do, in this point, is not to self-censor any references to the persecutions that our co-nationals (or immediate ancestors) suffered in the past, but to show to our public the other side of national history: what "our" side has done to others, too: deprivation of elementary human rights, ethnic cleansing or even (in some extreme cases) genocide. Then, the "national sufferings" of the past, already well known, because they have

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<sup>48</sup> For the burning of Kilkis: Dotation Carnegie pour la Paix Internationale, *Enquête dans les Balkans*, Paris 1914, p.78-9; for Smyrna: Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian vision. Greece in Asia Minor, 1919-1922*, Hurst, London 1973, p.308-11.

been constantly "reminded" to the people by the ideological apparatuses of the national state, shall be put in their real context.

For example, in the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the burning of Smyrna /Izmir by Turkish Kemalist forces, we published an article under the title "The other 1922", presented the aspects of the Asia Minor War (what in Turkey is today called "the national liberation war" and in Greece "the Asia Minor Disaster") that are left over by the official discourses –and are virtually unknown to the average Greek public: the (mostly Communist-inspired) ant-war movement, the big rates of desertion from the Greek Army during the last year of the conflict and, last but not least, the war crimes perpetrated by the Greek Army against Anatolian peasants during its counter-guerilla operations.

In a 1999 piece entitled "*How Nicosia was turned into Sarajevo*", we also exposed the ostensibly rival but in fact complementary strategies promoted by Greek and Turkish right-wing nationalists ("the Organization" and TMT) to divide their respective communities and provoke the intercommunal fighting that ravaged the island between 1963 and 1967. Our report was based mainly on Greek or Greek-Cypriot documents that have been published since 1983 but have never been taken into account by mainstream media or had any influence upon the formation of the Greek public's collective historical knowledge on the Cyprus Issue.

As far as minorities in Greece are concerned, we published reports on the Slav-speaking Macedonian ethnic minority of Northern Greece as well as about the repression suffered by Turks and other Moslems in Thrace between 1966 and 1990. In these reports, we explained that the emergence during the late '80s and early '90s of a strongly nationalist minority movement in Greek Thrace was not simply an "act of aggression" by irredentist apparatuses of Turkey (as most Greek Media alleged) but also a byproduct of repressive state policies that deliberately attempted to force the Moslem minority out of our country.

As far as Turkey is concerned, a similar approach is (or would have been) the investigation of past evil-doings like the Armenian genocide, the ethnic cleansing of Greek and other minorities (*Varlık Vergisi*<sup>49</sup>, September 1955 events) and the long-standing repression of Kurds.

## 2. The other side of the coin

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<sup>49</sup> "Varlık Vergisi"(Prosperity Tax) was applied in 1942. According to the tax law, the citizens were divided into three parts: (a) Muslims (b) Non-Muslims (c) Donmeler (muslims, formerly Christian or Jew). Each fraction was made to pay different amount of taxes. Of course, the Non-Muslim fraction was forced to pay incredibly high amounts of money, while the muslims pay reasonable amounts. Those, who couldn't pay the money were captured in the working camps of the deserted South-eastern Parts of Turkey. Many fled away from Turkey. Nearly half of the non-muslim population of the country immigrated to other countries. (<http://www.geocities.com/capitolhill/5503/PRBLMS.htm>) access: 12.06.2007. (e.n.)

The perceptions of a neighbor's "aggressiveness" is many times the product of official misinformation or (more frequently) half-truths, as well as playing with fears created by past horrors.

While in Turkey, I was astonished to hear by a rather sympathetic guy from Doğu Perinçek's party that the mere presence of Greek soldiers on the (inhabited) Greek Aegean islands constitutes an immediate threat to Turkish national security.

In Greece, on the other hand, the image of a permanent Turkish aggressiveness is usually fed by what is described as massive violation of Greek airspace by Turkish fighter airplanes. Very rarely—and by the lines—we are informed however what exactly was violated by these "intruders"—the internationally accepted Greek air-space of 6 miles (equal to our territorial waters) or the unilaterally self-proclaimed (but not recognized internationally) Greek airspace of 10 miles. So, the Greek public is unable to distinguish (and usually ignores the difference) between a really provocative show of force (which has taken place sometimes) and an actual practice with no legal or other consequences but the underlining of an internationally accepted reality.

### **3. Exposing the link**

Another thing to be done is to publicly expose how concrete cases of misinformation have been created and who launched them into circulation.

In Greece, a very popular nationalist and reactionary myth is a false declaration attributed to the ex- National Security Advisor and boss the U.S. State Department, Henry Kissinger (the man who, according to the dominant perception in Greece, "gave [Northern] Cyprus to Turkey" in 1974). According to the myth in question, the main problem of all US administrations has been the rebellious Greek people, who is "difficult to be governed" and therefore—according to Kissinger's alleged recipe—must be weakened through the subversion of his "cultural roots" and the destruction of the umbilical cord connecting him with the glory of his ancient ancestors. As Kissinger supposedly told, "in order to have our hands free, we [the US] must hit at his [the Greek people's] language, religion, spiritual and historical reserves". Tens of Greek nationalists, Orthodox religious fundamentalists and even mainstream right-wing opinion leaders have made use of this false statement, in order to denounce any progressive measure taken in the cultural field and to demand an educational system more in line with the traditional nationalist rhetoric of the past. For the myth to be even more convincing, Kissinger's declaration was allegedly made in Washington in 1994 but the text of his speech was published in Istanbul (in a supposedly "vanished" issue of *Turkish Daily News*) three years later!

Of course, one doesn't need to be an admirer of Henry Kissinger, in order to realize that this "revelation" has nothing to do with the actual US imperialist policies, nor with Greece's problems with Turkey. When approached by Greek journalists asking him about the matter, Kissinger himself felt obliged to issue a clear disclaimer; but as the fans of the myth pointed out, such denials are a rather common practice of the politicians.

In a special 2001 report on the modern "conspiracy theories" running wild in today's Greece, we decided to look for the roots of the so-called "Kissinger's statement". We discovered that this same "declaration", supposedly made in 1994, was used as an argument by some nationalists during at least the mid-1980s (its date, of course, been transferred to 1973, "*just after the suppression of the student revolt against the Colonels' dictatorship*"). Most possibly, the roots of the myth lie in extreme right-wingers disappointed by the Cyprus events of 1974, the fall of the military junta, the cultural dominance of the Left and the total discreditation of Greek fascism till today. The story survived for two decades at the margins of Greek political life, until it was "discovered" by Liana Kaneli, a right wing journalist elected since 1998 as a Communist Party MP (and personifying the Greek equivalent of "Red-Brown Coalition"); reproduced in her magazine ("Nemesis") in 1997, Kissinger's "statement" infiltrated thus the mainstream political discourse, providing a dubious legitimacy to various nationalist and reactionary agendas, until it was finally exposed as a myth.

#### **4. The Other is not Homogeneous**

A crucial component of nationalism is the perception of the other as a homogeneous entity, with no internal contradictions, class or ideological cleavages –in another world, as an "army" rather than an actual national community. It is a too common stereotype to hear all over our region that "all neighboring countries" have always had one solid and unified foreign policy, while "we" are just spoilt in disagreements between ourselves.

This stereotype can be broken, or at least subverted, by rendering public how diverse (politically, socially, culturally, etc) are our neighbours –exactly as we are.

In this framework, we have published stories on the Turkish New Left and, what was far more original for the Greek standards, the Turkish-Cypriot Left and internal opposition to Denktash and the Occupation authorities –in year 2000, long before this movement took massively to the streets.

Of course, a crucial precondition for such Counter-Information is for the segments of internal dissidence in different neighbouring countries to know each other. It is for this reason that I consider meetings like the present one very useful.

## **The Media Scene in Serbia Six Years after Regime Change**

**Zlata Kures\***

Six years after the democratic removal of the country's previous authoritarian regime, the media scene in Serbia still possesses the characteristics of delayed transition and the intent of political authorities to retain their control over the media.

Political tensions, ambiguity about the state's future status, avoiding facing the past and the fragility of democratic institutions dominate public life in the country.

The media scene resembles that state-of-affairs: the professional level of Serbia's press is significantly reduced, while the media themselves, similar to the political elite, are mostly trying to appeal to an imaginary, populist-oriented citizenry.

Once a month, Media Centre Belgrade's Media Watch Serbia research group presents the results of its monitoring of the country's major print media, and every analysis shows that the basic principles of media ethics are massively being violated.

The overall conclusion is that the situation in Serbian journalism is close to the degradation that marked the end of the 1980's and beginning of the 1990's, during the crisis in the former Yugoslav federation and preparations for war.

### **Why are these reports so dramatic?**

The daily newspapers with the highest circulation are also the ones that the top of the list for their violations of ethical standards. Characteristic examples include publishing pictures of mutilated victims and maltreated children, publishing the names of victims, raped women and underage persons, and occasionally even publishing their full addresses. Some tabloids are actually mixtures of pornography and completely imaginary political scandals. Mentioning the fact that a man caught in the commission of a crime is of Roma ethnicity goes almost unnoticed as being incorrect in this tidal wave of distaste and vulgarity. Even less noticed are occurrences of hidden marketing, favouring one product over another, or publishing unchecked facts which violate the norms of journalistic ethics. And examples of that kind are many.

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\* BETA, Serbia.

Those are, of course, the most drastic examples that naturally do not have anything to do with the fact that journalism in Serbia today is free and that the Draconian punishments that once hung over journalists' heads thanks to the former regime's Information Act no longer exist. Something else is in question: the overall degradation of public speech in an unstable political climate, the slow pace of expected media transformation, the desire to retain control over media and the lack of journalistic self-regulation. Freedom without respect for rules of the game has shown itself to be anarchy.

The authorities still do not think twice about replacing top people in media, even in those outlets that are partly privately owned, in cases where they do not like a certain outlet's editorial policy. Although there were no new trials against journalists this year, there are still 340 on-going cases against journalists waiting for a court decision. The murderers of two Serbian journalists, Slavko Curuvija and Milan Pantic, are still not known.

The degradation of the overall level of public speech in Serbia was heralded by a political struggle for prestige that began shortly after the overthrow of the previous regime. Disunity occurred within the democratic bloc, and one part of the political elite resorted to fraternizing with the widest segments of the population, in order to secure as favourable a position as possible and collect as many political points as it could. Media served in that process as a launching pad, and only a small number of them resisted this, at the cost of both circulation and profit.

For the past three years, the media in Serbia have been overwhelmed by unconfirmed accusations and announcements of large political scandals. In general, these stories are not followed by court proceedings that would verify or disprove the crimes they allege. The most drastic example of this is the trial against those accused of murdering Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic. Namely, the highly circulated tabloids created an atmosphere in which the public could conclude that Djindjic paid with his life because of alleged ties that he had with the criminal underworld, while the main actor accused of the assassination, Milorad Ulemek, has been celebrated as the hero of the day.

In an unstable political and economic situation, the greater part of the media has, as its primary goal, survival on the market. There is significant overcrowding on the media market: in a state with 7.5 million inhabitants, approximately 755 radio and television stations and ten daily newspapers with nationwide circulation vie for the public's attention. However, the total circulation of all daily newspapers in Serbia is just 700,000, among the smallest in Europe, and the advertising market, worth an estimated 80 million euros, falls among the weakest in the region, and is inadequately strong to support such a large number of media.

Many key media laws were adopted as a precondition for entry into the Council of Europe, or with the key advisory assistance of the Council of

Europe, as well as the help of the OSCE. That was crucial for improving the quality of legislation and its adoption, but independent media and civil society still needed to pressure the authorities for these laws to be implemented. That was particularly true in the case of the Public Broadcasting Act and Freedom of Access to Information Act. The major issue involved is the full implementation of these laws, which, although adopted, remain mostly as a dead letter on paper.

The state is still the owner of about 200 media, both national and local, and the in-depth transformation of these media is going at a slow pace and the deadline for its completion is constantly being delayed. The Serbian authorities ignored the recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (No. 1397), in which the Council called on the government to not utilize the state budget so as to retain influence over state media at the expense of independent media.

The Beta news agency works in this kind of political and media scene today. In 1994, Beta was founded by eight Belgrade journalists with the intent of providing free flow of information between the warring sides in the conflict-stricken areas of the former Yugoslavia. During 12 years of work, Beta has attained an international reputation as a professional media outlet and reliable source of information on Serbia and the region.

Based on the research on attitudes of Agency news users in Serbia conducted by the Strategic Marketing Research Agency among the media houses in Serbia as of the beginning of 2005, 95% of respondents recognize Beta as the most important source of agency news. 75% of polled media use text services of Beta in editing their information programme, while less than 30 % mentioned the state agency Tanjug and private agency Fonet. Beta assumed this position through provision of objective information and its respect for the basic principles of the journalistic profession. We are of the opinion that this is the true path for media to contribute to the processes of democratization, integration and development of civil society.