

ISTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY
MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COMMUNICATION AND
ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN TURKEY: SURVIVING THE
WHIRLPOOL

Yağmur ÇENBERLİ
116674005

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Can CEMGİL

ISTANBUL

2019

Political Economy of Communication and Alternative Media in Turkey: Surviving the Whirlpool

İletişimin Ekonomi Politiki ve Türkiye’de Alternatif Medya: Girdapta Hayatta Kalmak

Yağmur Çenberli

116674005

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Can Cemgil (İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi)

Jüri Üyesi: Doç. Dr. Burak Özçetin (İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi)

Jüri Üyesi: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Defne Karaosmanoğlu (Kadir Has Üniversitesi)

Tezin Onaylandığı Tarih: 17.06.2019

Toplam Sayfa Sayısı: 107

Anahtar Kelimeler

- 1) Alternatif Medya
- 2) Ekonomi Politik
- 3) Dijital Emek
- 4) İş Güvencesizliği
- 5) Sansür

Keywords

- 1) Alternative Media
- 2) Political Economy
- 3) Digital Labour
- 4) Precarity
- 5) Censorship

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to my advisor Dr. Can Cemgil for his guidance and constructive suggestions in every step of this dissertation thesis.

I would also like to thank my parents, Nesrin and Halit Çenberli, for their endless support and encouragement throughout this journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	vi
ÖZET.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1 POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COMMUNICATION AND ALTERNATIVE MEDIA: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	13
1.1. A CRITICAL THEORY PERSPECTIVE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COMMUNICATION.....	13
1.2. THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION AND THE PRODUCTION RELATIONS.....	19
1.3. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ALTERNATIVE MEDIA: A CRITICAL APPROACH.....	21
CHAPTER 2 ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN TURKEY: IS IT A NEW BEGINNING?.....	30
2.1. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH.....	30
2.2. THE PANORAMA OF ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN TURKEY.....	32
2.3. THE REASON WHY ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IS ON THE RISE IN TURKEY.....	37
2.4. THE PATH TO ALTERNATIVE MEDIA: 'IN'S AND 'OUT'S OF THE NEW FAVOURITE.....	41
2.5. ESTABLISHING AN ALTERNATIVE MEDIA ORGANIZATION, THE STRUCTURE OF THE MANAGEMENT TYPE AND THE EDITORIAL PROCESS.....	44
2.6. SHOULD JOURNALISM BE FREE FROM ADJECTIVES?.....	47
CHAPTER 3 THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN.....	50
3.1. ON THE BALANCE OF PRECARITY AND AUTONOMY.....	50
3.2. ON UNIONIZATION AND SOLIDARITY.....	54
3.3. ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN SEARCH FOR A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC MODEL.....	58

3.4. DEALING WITH BLOCKING: ALTERNATIVE TO THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA.....	66
3.5. ON THE POLITICAL PRESSURE IN THE SHAPE OF REGULATION AND THE CHANGE IN OWNERSHIP.....	68
3.6. ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF NEWS AND CITIZEN JOURNALISM.....	75
3.7. IS ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN TURKEY THE NEW FOURTH ESTATE?.....	76
3.8. ALL THEY HAVE IS HOPE.....	78
CONCLUSION.....	80
REFERENCES.....	90

ABSTRACT

The ways in which alternative media is situated within the capitalist and hegemonic mass media structure from the political economic perspective are examined throughout this dissertation thesis. The curiosity whether alternative media provide the ideal media system for both its employees and the audience has become the triggering motive of this research. The fight for survival of alternative media, the structure of its organizations, their management types, economic models; unionization, collectivity and occupational solidarity; political and economic struggles that emerged out of the concerns regarding to censorship, copyright issues, working conditions and precarity are some of the main problems to have been dealt with.

The semi-structured interviews that were conducted with the prominent figures in the sector as the methodology of the research have provided essential input. Starting from the reasons behind the rise of alternative media, the operational structure of the alternative media organizations, editorial independence, and censorship; to the quest for a sustainable economic model, the digital labour issue and the continual hierarchic relationship with the audience are the outlines of this research. It is comprehended that the immutable adherence to the practices of the traditional mainstream media such as the ownership style, one-way communication and commodification appear as the source of the problems of alternative media. In brief, the troubles of the traditional mainstream media seem to reproduce themselves in the alternative media organizations in Turkey.

Consequently, this dissertation thesis demonstrates that the alternative media in Turkey is not alternative and it is a long way off establishing a new media system that is founded on the base of labour, dialogue, equality and anti-capitalism.

ÖZET

Alternatif medyanın egemen ve kapitalist kitle medya yapısı içerisindeki pozisyonu ekonomi politik disiplini bağlamında bu araştırma boyunca ele alınmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, alternatif medyanın hem gazeteciler ve medya emekçileri hem de okurlar/izleyiciler için arzulanan ideal koşulları sağlayıp sağlamadığını sorgulama merakı, alternatif medyanın ekonomi politiği temalı bu araştırmanın itici motivasyonu olmuştur. Araştırma, alternatif medyanın hayatta kalma savaşı, alternatif medya kurumlarının yapısı, yönetim biçimi, benimsedikleri ekonomik modeller; sendikalaşma, kolektif hareket ve mesleki dayanışma hakkındaki düşünceler; sansür, telif hakları, çalışma koşulları ve iş güvencesizliği gibi endişelerden doğan siyasi ve ekonomik mücadeleler gibi meseleleri sorunsallaştırmaktadır.

Önde gelen alternatif medya kurumlarında genel yayın yönetmenliği, editörlük, yazarlık veya yapımcılık gibi farklı rollerde görev alan kişiler ile bu araştırma için yarı-yapılandırılmış birebir görüşmeler yapıldı. Alternatif medyanın yükselişinin ardında yatan nedenlerden, kurumların işleyiş biçimine, editoryal bağımsızlık ve sansüre kadar, iş güvencesizliğini, sürdürülebilir ekonomik model arayışlarını, sendikalaşmayı ve çalışma koşullarını kapsayan dijital emek sorunundan, okur/izler kitle ile aradaki hiyerarşik ilişkiye değin pek çok sorun görüşmelerde ele alındı. Alternatif medyanın problemlerinin kaynağının, medya sahipliği, tek yönlü iletişim ve metalaşma gibi geleneksel ana akım medyanın pratiklerine duyulan değişmez bağlılık olduğu araştırma boyunca anlaşılmıştır. Kısacası, geleneksel ana akım medyanın sorunları Türkiye'deki alternatif medya kuruluşlarında kendini yeniden üretmektedir.

Bütün bunlardan hareketle bu araştırma, Türkiye'deki alternatif medyanın anti-kapitalizm odaklı, emeğe, diyaloga ve eşitliğe dayalı yeni bir medya sistemi oluşturmaktan oldukça uzak olduğu ve bir alternatif yaratamadığı sonucuna varmaktadır.

INTRODUCTION

“What is going on at dokuz8HABER on the news of protecting the perpetrator of an assault and of labour exploitation?”, “Hayko Bagdat quit Ozguruz.org that he started with Can Dundar: Reason labour exploitation,” “Exploitation is everywhere: Young workers of a news website are speaking,” “Unemployed woman journalists: Alternative media is no alternative” ... These are some titles that came up when I googled “online media and labour exploitation.” The motivation to start this dissertation thesis was to exhibit that non-capitalist, pluralist, interactive alternative media exists in Turkey, or at least that it is very close to exist. However, the more I look into it, the more I realized that alternative media is another version of the traditional mainstream media. They report news of injustice, but injustice itself is a daily routine for them. They complain about not receiving enough donations, but they do not make enough efforts to engage with their audience. They claim that they are the defender of independent journalism, but they strive for selling ad space to earn profit. Only a few clicks on the links listed on Google are sufficient to worry about the present and the future of alternative media in Turkey.

What happened a short time after *Ozguruz.org*'s foundation is one of the worrying examples regarding to the sector. Hayko Bagdat announced that he quit his job at *Ozguruz.org* that he co-founded with Can Dundar. Bagdat explained on social media his reason for leaving as labour exploitation. He reveals his conversation with Can Dundar after an employee of the organization hospitalized because of an accident at the workplace. Bagdat shared his claims on Twitter in detail with his followers. He told Dundar that before asking how the employee's health is, the German partner wanted to make sure that the employee was recorded as freelancer in the hospital documents for the insurance purposes, even though the employee had been working 24/7 for the past six months (@haykobagdat, June 13, 2017). Bagdat also claims that Dundar fails to protect the employees' rights in front of the German partner CORRECT!V. According to him, Dundar also ignores the fact that the organization tried to register an employee as a freelancer even though the person was a full-time employee (Bianet 2017). As *Bianet* noted, the publication principles of *Ozguruz.org* include that they fight against the misuse of power and corruption and also that they

side with the unprotected oppressed people (Bianet 2017). It is upsetting to read about the journalists who have gone through tragic times of the misuse of power, censorship and even imprisonment connive at unfair practices at their workplace in order to keep the business.

Bagdat's disconcerting resignation is not the only incident. Another exclusive news story reveals how young employees are exploited at a news website called *Glokal*. The statements of the employees probably are no different than the stories of the sweatshop workers in Bangladesh. One of the employees alleged that she/he received the paycheck for the first two months after getting hired and for the following six months she/he worked without any payments as the managers gave false promises for the day they would make the payments (Ozoktay 2018). The former employees of *Glokal* also claimed that some colleagues had to borrow money from their friends in order to come to work (Ozoktay 2018). They stress that after a certain point they care more about the humane solution of the problem than the long-due payments they deserve to receive (Ozoktay 2018). "The exploitation of the young labour, playing with people's dreams, the greed, the power" determines the steps they take (Ozoktay 2018).

The power struggle or the exploitation is not specific to young journalists. Woman journalists suffer from the same inequality and terrible work conditions. The editor of *BirGun* newspaper Sevgim Denizalti states that alternative media is not alternative for women in terms of working conditions (Journos 2018). She stated that majority of the management positions were held by men and woman journalists still continue to deal with discrimination and violence in these media organizations (Journos 2018). She ends her speech asking, "then what alternative are they for?" (Journos 2018)

The reasons why we still continue to read news stories about the same problems in alternative media could be understood through examining the background of the mass media in Turkey. Since the ownership of the media organizations and their production that we are exposed to are influenced by the relationship between the state and the owners who have businesses in other sectors, the ambition to increase the profits through currying favor with the government and/or the ruling elite is the main ground for those organizations to be media giants. This process started especially after World

War II. During the second half of the 20th century mass media has got closer and closer with the main sectors of the industry and the finance each day. The ownership of a newspaper has become a key strategy in order to get ahead of the rivals and to influence the market (Keane 2015, 79). In regards to this strategy, the global concentration of the property and control of the media systems results in transformation of the economic power into a political and cultural power. For example the impact of the media conglomerates in Europe is a serious warning about the prevention of the media monopolies in terms of their effects on radio and television (Stevenson 2015, 123). This transformation of the media has helped shape the society suitable for the needs of the market. According to Guy Debord, the fragmentation and reification of the social serves benefits of the multi-national capitalism (Stevenson 2015, 248).

For Turkey the process started in 1980 with the decisions of January 24, which means "Turkey shifted its economic policy from an autarchic import-substitution model to an export-oriented one and opened its economy to the operation of market forces (Cook 2001, 1270). The economic stability measures of January 24 1980 expedited the Turkey's transition process from the welfare state to the liberal state. Before 1980 media organizations could establish and survive with the help of the government subventions. However, the decisions of January 24 projected the removal of the subventions, which led to the destruction of the small-budgeted media organizations that had no ties with the other businesses and opened the period of media holdings in which the new owners have other investments in different sectors (Kuyucu 2012, 674).

Within this neoliberal market policy the communication markets restrict the freedom of communication by laying barriers for the newcomers, allowing monopolies, limiting the alternatives and embracing a commodity-attitude towards information. The capitalist market's way of understanding censorship is only limited to the censorship from the state. According to the market censorship is the monopoly power of the state being used to control the exchange of the ideas among citizens (Keane 2015, 93). This poor definition of censorship allows capitalism to shape the communication industry for its own needs and benefits. This understanding of censorship is one of the starting points of this dissertation thesis. Because of the

political pressures and the longtime downfall of the mainstream media, quality journalism in Turkey moved to digital platforms to survive in which laid the foundation for alternative media. However, the market censorship is about to lay its hands on the alternative media organizations unless they come up with a solution independent from the capitalist market structure, which I discuss exhaustively throughout this research.

Nonetheless, they are relatively independent and their editorial policy is to report what is not represented in the mainstream media. As Servet Yanatma also stated, those alternative organizations have been struggling to set up a sustainable financial model and been struggling to have full-time journalists and reporters (Digital News Report 2018). The populace of their audience is mostly among those who are educated and urbanite; the rest reaches through social media platforms (Digital News Report 2018). 39 per cent of the participants of the Reuters Institute Digital News Report research confirm that their source of news is online media (including social media) whilst this number goes up to 45 per cent for the participants who define themselves as leftist (Diken 2018).

In the wake of this background, this dissertation thesis demonstrates that alternative media in Turkey is not an alternative and addresses to the reasons why it is not. Regarding to the fact that mass media is centralist, standardized and reinforces the class domination of the hegemony, alternative media emerged out of the promise to overcome the problems that mass media created. In order to examine whether or not alternative media succeeds in delivering its promise, the interpretation of the critical theory by Christian Fuchs sets the benchmark for this research. However, the literature on alternative/digital media is rather narrow and limited in Turkey, even though the literature is quite vast on political economy of traditional mass media. Most of the research and scholarly articles are comparative studies of traditional mainstream media and digital alternative media and about the representations of certain subjects or groups, the role of alternative media within social movements, its analysis through a case study and the various journalism practices. Other than exhibiting a few most popular online news websites, alternative media is mostly studied through social media. In spite of the limited literature background, it will be

beneficial to examine the literature in Turkey in order to place this research in the field of political economy of communication and alternative media.

One of the earliest theoretical descriptions of alternative media was put forward by Erol Mutlu. He describes alternative media as the mass communication means that reject or challenge the established and institutionalized politics in terms of the defense of the change in society or at least the criticism of the traditional values (Mutlu 1998, 35). Mutlu's framework is adopted by many scholars. They identify alternative media by comparing it with traditional media and by putting forward its differences, which mostly brings them to perceive alternative media as a tool for social movements to be announced and heard. For instance, Tekvar states that alternative media is an important arena for the feminist movement, and also works in order to give voice to women, to improve their social status and to change the existing media structures or to create a new media system (Tekvar 2017, 538). Another approach sees the Internet as a chance for the local media to be heard beyond their boundaries. Benefitting from Alankus's work on *Bianet*, this approach defines alternative media as a mean for the civic society to express itself and thus to improve the local media which will eventually break the monopolistic structure in the mass media (Gurcan and Bekiroglu 2007, 25). According to Alankus (as quoted in Tugla 2014), alternative media has the role of questioning the unequal relations of the daily life in order to diversify the political spheres for the enhancement of democracy (Tugla 2014, 314).

The urgent need for diverse public spheres prepares the environment for alternative media organizations to rise. Karlidag's and Bulut's article "Alternative Media in Turkey: The Political Economy of News" (2017) points out the fact that alternative media organizations such as *Bianet*, *Diken*, *T24* or *Medyascope.tv* emerged out of the current political and economic circumstance of Turkey (Karlidag and Bulut 2017, 80). Even though they briefly touch upon the opportunities laid by the Internet in front of journalism and the inclusion of the audience during the news production, they do not extend the subject on how those organizations use the opportunities or how they include their audience. The title includes "the political economy of news", but the content of the article doesn't give enough insights and examine the existing practices. Unfortunately they do not offer a deep analysis of political economy of news in their case studies.

On the other hand, the critical approach based on the works of Christian Fuchs and Marisol Sandoval paints a broader picture on the transformations and stages that the alternative media have gone through since the late Ottoman period (Gurleyen 2017). This approach embraces a historical perspective in which Coban and Ataman's three turning points were marked for the alternative media: the 1908 revolution, the 1974-1980 period of the social movements and the Gezi protests as the final point (Gurleyen 2017, 56).

[I]t was seen clearly that alternative media play a vital role in creating a public sphere and informing people as well as organizing and mobilizing them in a way that would shake the very foundations of the dominant societal system. (as quoted from Coban and Ataman 2015 in Gurleyen 2017, 56)

Due to the fact that the term of alternative media is perceived as the oppositional media against the power regardless of the platform the journalism is performed, she uses the adjectives of oppositional and alternative interchangeably, which might be considered as problematic for the literature in Turkey. According to Gurleyen (2017), the oppositional media have moved to the digital platforms because of the political conditions. However, this perception restricts alternative media among the walls of politics that ascribes the role of being dissident against governments and the role of being a defender of ethnic minorities or the feminism issue etc. This description refers to the current position of the alternative media organizations, but fails to make emphasis on what it really is and what its ambitions are/should be.

Additionally, the approach on the democratic effects of the digital communication technologies also considers new media technologies as a platform that has emerged out of the need to represent the actors that are invisible and misrepresented or underrepresented in the mainstream media. In terms of its discourse and the problems that alternative media deal with Turk describes alternative media as the counter-public sphere of the mainstream media (Turk 2013, 55). Turk is not alone in her argument. Zeynep Atikkan and Asli Tunc also make a similar point in their book "Blogdan Al Haberi".

Especially one of the important developments that have come out with the Internet is the diversification of the public sphere; thanks to the Internet radical views started to be heard, opposite views started to clash. The opportunities of new democratic methods presented by the Internet provide a daily citizen activity that monitors the politicians (Atikkan and Tunc 2011, 99).

In addition to the arguments above, another similar approach identifies alternative media as the compensation of the corrupt traditional mainstream media and supports its claim with a labour movement as well as strengthening it with the counter-public sphere argument. A comparative study by Burak Dogu under the title of “Comparing Online Alternative and Mainstream Media in Turkey: Coverage of the TEKEL Workers Protest Against Privatization” (2015) touches on the benefits of alternative media in the lack of the mainstream media through the representation of one of the most powerful labour protests in Turkey and he also states that alternative media is a tool to bring together the different groups of the society. Dogu, unlike Gurleyen, Karlidag and Bulut, bases his approach on the rhizomatic theory.

Because the political foundation of the mainstream media in Turkey is unbalanced, there is a substantial need for an alternative media to compensate. As a rule, the alternative media in Turkey perpetuate rather than unify the scattered political environment of the left. This picture coincides with the rhizomatic nature of alternative media, yet elicits the risk of marginalization, which, according to Ryan (1991), is a fundamental problem for alternative and opposing media. (Dogu 2015, 646)

Surely, alternative media have all those roles but are not limited to the political issues. This mere political understanding causes us to ignore the effects and consequences of digital revolution, management and financial structures of alternative media organizations, the audience as the digital labour and the struggle of online journalists etc.

A more comprehensive perception of alternative media comes from Baris Coban and Bora Ataman. Despite the fact that their article (2016) handles alternative media from

the angle of counter-surveillance, their explanation and understanding draw the lines of alternative media beyond the practices in Turkey. They describe one of the core arguments of alternative media as the destruction of hierarchy between the media producer and consumer as much as possible so that the people could have the means to change the world as Freire stated (Coban and Ataman 2016, 37).

A Freireian perspective is prerequisite for the establishment of a more equitable world, for reading and writing the world, changing the world. That's why alternative media is not just an organization that produces critical and opposing content. It is an oxygen tent that shapes, reproduces and tests the alternative life. (Coban and Ataman 2016, 37)

For the writers, alternative media is the reflection of "another world". Even though at times of acting as the replacement of the fourth estate as the fifth one, Coban and Ataman (2016) see it as a protest against the neoliberalism. They summarize the alternative media organizations as the space that embraces the direct democracy, the grassroots movements, the heterarchy, equity, production of needs, the sharing and the solidarity (Coban and Ataman 2016, 44).

For the economic dimension of alternative media Cevikel's article (2004) on the limitations in front of the Internet journalism lays out the financial troubles of the sector in detail. Even though the article dates back to 2004, it is sad to see that many factors have remained unchanged for the economy of alternative media in Turkey. Cevikel described news websites as the Internet journalism as an alternative to the traditional media and categorized the news websites into two: the first group consists of the online branches of the mass media giants that already exists in the traditional mainstream media and the ones that only exist online (Cevikel 2004, 150). Cevikel (2004) claims that the online branches of the media holdings were the biggest obstacles in front of the small enterprises that aim to grow online since those holdings have huge investments in the sector and acquire the biggest slice of the advertising cake. In 2001 50 per cent and in 2002 60 per cent of the online advertising revenue was earned by Medya-Net, an advertising marketing company owned by Dogan Media Group (Cevikel 2004, 158).

All of the news websites presents their content for free. Thus, advertising is the main source of income to afford the free content. Due to this feature Internet journalism could be considered as resembling the television sector. The advertising model of source of income is the sole way of earning money, in particular for the news websites that are the only products of the companies they are owned by (Cevikel 2004, 158).

Comparing data above to today's economic situation we see that only 1 in 5 people pay for the online news and 1 in 3 use ad-blocker, which is a huge barrier for the most alternative media organizations since advertising is still one of the most important sources of income for them (Digital News Report 2018).

Most of the time news websites have been trying to stand on their feet without further profit, and even sometimes they end the month with a negative budget. Online journalists stated that at times of difficulty they make personal sacrifices (Cevikel 2004, 158). Cevikel asserts that the lack of public policies to support online journalism is another obstacle in front of the online alternative media to grow and develop.

Another study on the Internet journalism in Turkey found out that alleged alternative media organizations use the exact same source of news with the traditional mainstream media (Tugla 2014, 311). Hence it is intriguing that news production and distribution in alternative media follow the footsteps of the mainstream media, which they claim to challenge. Tugla (2014) pays attention to the contradiction of the nature of alternative media and its practices in Turkey since most of the organizations desperately need the advertising revenue to survive. She explains the situation with the case of T24.

For the first three years of their foundation [T24], there was no effort to sell ad space considering the effect and influence in attracting the audience traffic and the ability to attract the buyers. After this process, *T24* made the decision on receiving advertising. Even though they make emphasis on being independent in terms of financial resources, when we examine the *T24* case, it is feasible to

determine that alternative media's feature of the rejection of advertising revenue is contradictory to the financial practice of *T24*. (Tugla 2014, 315)

The exemplary case in the literature was published by Funda Basaran. In her article "New Communications Technologies, Alternative Communications Resources" Basaran (2010) takes *Sendika.org* as the ideal alternative media organization in Turkey. She points out the fact that the content producers consist of intelligentsia outside of academy, journalists, unemployed journalists, university students, teachers, public service workers, engineers, union experts, union managers and labour leaders (Basaran 2010, 265).

The non-profit organization keeps itself outside of the market relations and preserves the quality of not being a commodity. In addition to that, *Sendika.org* is a part of the struggle for commodification of information and the communication process. The organization does not demand any copyright for the content it creates and welcomes the reproduction and distribution for anyone who wishes to do so (Basaran 2010, 266).

Alternative media is the social space that provides the possibilities to live the ideal alternative life in micro scales, but this is only possible when the people are actively involved with the struggle for the information, which signifies that its production means the reproduction of life for alternative media (Ataman and Coban 2016, 45). Even though new media technologies may serve the capitalist aims and ambitions, with a persistent and deliberately collective effort it is achievable to strip away the capitalist and oppressive surface of the new technologies (Basaran 2010, 269).

With the above purpose of looking for ways for an alternative system, which is neither the rebuilding the neoliberal media system nor the public broadcasting, in this dissertation thesis I have investigated the alternative media in Turkey that is specifically refers to the online, independent and outcast from the mainstream mass media organizations. Thus I problematize why alternative media in Turkey struggles to survive in order to understand the source of its political economy and what makes it alternative. This perception allows me to dig into the questions of the structure of the alternative media organizations, their management structure, financial models that

they currently embrace, working conditions, the workers' perspective on unions, collectivity and occupational cooperation, censorship, the relationship with the audience, and the political and economic struggles they are facing etc. I believe that this dissertation thesis will be a significant contribution for the field of political economy of alternative media in particular and for the political economy of communication in general.

The first chapter consists of the theoretical framework that is based on Marxist ideology and Critical Theory, which put forward the commercialization of media, the exploitation of the audience, the reproduction of the labour power and thus the importance of the cooperation of the labour power and lastly the influence of capital accumulation. In the light of this essential theoretical perspective, I studied the application of those ideas about political economy of communication onto the digital revolution and alternative media. How the Internet turned into a social factory – as Mario Tronti defines (quoted from Fuchs 2014) – as well as being a space for political opposition among civilians, how the audience transformed into being a produser from its passive role in the traditional mass media, and the opportunities provided by the network economy are some of the issues I did research on the digital revolution. In the alternative media section of the literature review, I laid out all the different descriptions on what could be called as alternative media, what it is and what it is not. My aim here was to settle the understanding of alternative media. The relationship of alternative media with the hegemony and the capitalist system formed the frame of this literature review.

The second and third chapters are completely dedicated to the research under the titles of “Alternative Media in Turkey: Is It a New Beginning?” and “The Other Side of the Coin.” At the beginning of my research I have tried to paint the picture of the media industry and of the path that opens to alternative media in Turkey. The interviews I conducted with seven journalists from various alternative media organizations tell their stories on why they prefer to work at an alternative media organization, the management structures of the organizations they work for, the levels of precarity and censorship, which almost always goes hand in hand in our country, the desperate pursuit of sustainable economic model to survive in the long run, their opinions on

unionization and solidarity, and their perspective on building an active relationship with the audience.

The expected outcome was to layout a totally innovative alternative system for the mass media against the capitalist neoliberal mass media, however the outcome of the interviews was on the contrary, which I discussed thoroughly in the second and third chapters and summarized in Conclusion.

For now, alternative media in Turkey is far from building a new media structure based on the anti-capitalist opportunities the Internet offers that could be achieved by participatory financial models including the media workers and the audience.

CHAPTER 1

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COMMUNICATION AND ALTERNATIVE MEDIA: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. A CRITICAL THEORY PERSPECTIVE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COMMUNICATION

The political economy of communication, as Mosco defines substantially, is an intrinsic component of social, cultural, political and economic processes that concentrates on social, historical, political and economic elements of the communications sector (Van Couvering 2004, 5). With Gutenberg's invention of printing machine and the Industrial Revolution what used to be merchant's bulletin transformed into newspaper, which emerged out of the need to advertise commodities to sell. The chain of the events of the development of mass media demonstrate both the capitalist interest in communication as a mean of advertising and the capitalist interest in understanding media as a profitable investment (Fuchs 2017, 711). When the newspapers played an active role in shaping the popular public opinion in the 17th century, the press was recognized as the fourth estate (Briggs and Burke 2004, 114).

The type of political system of the world in general and of the any country in particular determines the way that media functions. Today global media companies function in a market structure that is dominated by the neoliberal policies based on capitalism (Baytar 2013, 130). As liberalism claims that mass media is sine qua non in terms of protecting the freedom of expression, Marxism argues that mass media provides support to shape the unequal social relations, the ideological images and representations of society. Therefore, Marxism takes its strength from the asserted connection between the private property issue and the cultural content of the media product (Stevenson 2015, 25). Stuart Hall alleges that mass media is one of the primary institutions of the modern capitalism, thus the mass media functions through the reproduction of the hegemonic codes that hold society together (Stevenson 2015, 70). Golding and Murdock's argument (as quoted in Stevenson 2015) strengthens the allegation of Hall. They claim that the distribution of the economic resources determines the ideological variety of the journalism industry. According to Golding

(as quoted in Stevenson 2015), there is an absolute connection between the discursive construction of the media content and the transnational economic relations. In addition to that, there are strong evidences of that there is a relationship between the forms of property and organization, the media content and the hegemony of the right-wing political parties (Stevenson 2015, 79).

The essence of the political economy of communication is the hegemony of the state and the ruling class in a society whose structure is based on socio-economic classes. Althusser explains this phenomenon in his renowned essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." According to the French philosopher the state encourages the capitalist exploitation with the help of two apparatuses: repressive state apparatus which consists of the state's monopoly to preserve the capitalist social structure and ideological state apparatus which occurs through the family, religious institutions, schools and the mass media (Wolff 2004, 3-4). The state establishes the hegemony of the ruling capitalist class over middle and lower classes for its own benefits by using capitalist mass media. An Austrian journalist Karl Kraus's opinions (Kang 2015) based on the Vienna news media scene is a practical example for Althusser's argument. Criticizing the Austrian press, Kraus states that the Vienna newspapers are nothing but a tool to manufacture the consent and opinion of the public in which during the process they have to obey the wishes of the state and work in accordance with financial and economic benefits of the private companies (Kang 2015, 58). Therefore means of communication is a form of relations of production, which refers to social relations that regulate production and reproduction of material conditions of human life (Henning and Hebblewhite 2012, 198). This lineage of thinking considers means of communication as the socio-economic relations that build the social structure, which consists of cooperation of labour power and communication as social relations of production (Henning and Hebblewhite 2014, 198). Since Marx referred to communication when he writes Capital Volume I that the Industrial Revolution made a simultaneous revolution in the conditions of social production process an obligation, so the means of communication became a form of relations of production which leads us to social relations of production and the socio-economic relations that build the social structure (Henning and Hebblewhite 2012, 198). Thus Dallas Smythe (as quoted in Fuchs 2012) states the need for a "Marxist or quasi-Marxist political

economy of communications.” (Fuchs 2012, 694) Smythe listed eight elements of the Marxist political economy of communications:

- 1) materiality, 2) monopoly capitalism, 3) audience commodification and advertising, 4) media communication as part of the base of capitalism, 5) labour power, 6) critique of technological determinism, 7) the dialectic of consciousness, ideology and hegemony on the one side and material practices on the other side, 8) the dialectics of arts and science. (Fuchs 2012, 694)

Taking Smythe’s approach as the base for political economy of communication Herman and Chomsky’s (1994) propaganda model presents a practical set of list to us for a more clear understanding. Herman and Chomsky define five types of filter for the tactics of propaganda:

- 1) [T]he size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; 2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; 3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and ‘experts’ funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; 4) ‘flak’ as a means of disciplining the media; and 5) ‘anticommunism’ as a national religion and control mechanism. (Herman and Chomsky 1994, 2)

With this propaganda model the authors frame the function of the mass media which works as infotainer and imposes the certain values and behaviours for the benefit of the interests groups (Herman and Chomsky 1994, 1). Mass media have a centralized structure that allows a hierarchical one-way flow of information in which the audience is inactive and the producers are active, and the content is prepared for a standardized audience, which is scarce in variety (Fisher 2014, 129). Highlighting the position of the audience the Blindspot Debate that is triggered by Dallas Smythe (as quoted in Fuchs 2012) draws attention to the danger of neglecting the economic aspect of the field which ended up in positioning media in only superstructure level in regards to the issue of audience commodity which claims that our time on earth is being sold to advertisers every single day. Due to the exploitation of the audience as labour, Smythe highlighted the importance of studying surplus value and exploitation

of capitalist mass media rather than manipulation and propaganda (Fuchs 2012, 695). Although Smythe puts forward the audience commodity issue, it is of great importance that we should evaluate and analyze the political economy of communication with all aspects whether it is the commodification, manipulation or information. Also with the rising digitalization of media the structure has become more horizontal, decentralized and varied in content with a more active and participant audience (Fisher 2014, 129). Yet, more interactivity does not provide a space free from exploitation. Since it creates a product with the help of algorithms based on our personal information and the advertisers use our personal information in order to make a certain product to appear more attractive, mass communications can be considered as economic means of production (Henning and Hebblewhite 2014, 212). Even only by organizing the free time of its users mass communications become a mean of production (Henning and Hebblewhite 2014, 211).

The commodification of communication and thus of culture turns into a culture industry as Adorno (2003) diagnosed the situation. The “commercial character of culture” and attribution of meanings to the products perfectly aligns with the objectives of advertising (Adorn 2003, 61). Adorno continues his argument as the following;

In a highly industrialized society, so it is argued by the new realists in the name of mass culture, the intellectual and cultural needs of the consumer adapt themselves to material needs. (Adorno 2003, 79)

At this point Vincent Mosco warns us against trapping communication only in the areas of culture, meaning and subjectivity and political economy in structure, institution and materialism. He points out the fact that “both political economy and communication are mutually constituted out of social and cultural practices [and] ... refer to processes of exchange which differ, but which are also multiply determined by shared social and cultural practices.” (Mosco 2009, 68) In order to prove his point Mosco gives the example of New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). After the World War II, the U.S. led the way in the communications industry particularly through transnationalization. Yet, the transnationalization triggered by the U.S. provided the information flow from the West to the East, which

left the North and the South out of the equation. The NWICO activists from Asia, Latin America and Africa called for “global communication democracy, including universal access to communication media, control over decisions about the production and distribution of communication and the basic human right to communicate, gave a political purpose to a dynamic new research agenda for the political economy of communication.” (Mosco 2009, 72).

In this matter as most critical political economists of communication professors Mosco (2009) also agrees on the following observation of Garnham;

[U]nder monopoly capitalism the superstructure becomes precisely industrialized; it is invaded by the base and the base/superstructure distinction breaks down via a collapse into the base. (Kim 2009, 129)

Adorno (2003) clarifies the collapse with his one of the stimulating arguments which was that the mass culture led people to be well-informed buyers to keep up with the rest of the society. This situation caused the advertising, or the advertising business caused the situation, to be an information center in the market where there is no other option than the ones commercial brands offer. Therefore if one wishes to survive, (s)he has to go along with the capitalist structure (Adorno 2003, 85). The culture is under the heavy influence of capital accumulation which ends up in commodification and standardization (Kim 2009, 127). For Adorno mass culture was a ‘fall from grace’ of the culture and it consisted of industrial commodities from the assembly line (Kim 2009, 129). In this sense the media have the role of glue for “political and economic power in the modern industrial state.” (Petryszak 1977, 34) The goal here is to preserve the dominant political and economic interests which is preserved by the false consciousness of the society, especially the proletariat (Petryszak 1977, 34).

Walter Benjamin carries the debate onto the next level by drawing attention to the class struggle. He considered the mass media, especially journalism, as the indicator of the rising capitalist middle class (Kang 2015). According to Benjamin with the newspapers the information industry has risen as well as the middle class and the press is one of the most important tools of the middle class in the advanced capitalist system (Kang 2015, 46). Benjamin (as quoted in Kang 2015) draws a picture of

journalist-flaneur. It is inevitable for a journalist to become a salesman of information at the age of capitalism. A journalist places herself/himself between being a writer and being an advertiser (Kang 2015, 56). His views on the commodification of news media became sharper with the technological innovations of the time such as radio and television after it. Benjamin sees these innovations as a space that allows politicians to create one-to-one communication with public (Kang 2015). Thus the politics turns into a commodity in the age of culture and entertainment industry where everything is a marketable product (Kang 2015, 145).

In their article "For a Political Economy of Mass Communication" Murdock and Golding stress the fact that "mass media are first and foremost industrial and commercial organizations which produce and distribute commodities." (Murdock and Golding 1973, 205) They even took the matter even further by stating, "information is a commodity to be packaged, distributed and sold in whatever guise and context guarantee commercial survival." (Murdock and Golding 1973, 227) In order to survive in the market news media have to entertain the audience to attract the advertisers and thus to work as a tool to protect the capitalist order (Murdock and Golding 1973, 230). The basic reason of this situation of the media lies under the fact that when the advertising became the primary financial dynamic, mass media lost its very first ambition of informing society. Thus the mass media have become a commercial activity (Briggs and Burke 2004, 182).

In a more systematic way in terms of political economy of communication Horst Holzer defines the media in capitalism as the space for communication and advertising commodities that legitimizes the capitalist ideology and assists the reproduction of labour power (Fuchs 2017, 692). Holzer and his colleague Schmid looked for alternative solutions to replace the capitalist media. They acknowledged the fact that it is almost impossible to eliminate the capitalist media without a political public sphere (Fuchs 2017). Therefore their suggestion was to create a not-for-profit newspaper funded by trade unions, active participation of journalist and audience collectives in the decision-making process, the political control of the media concentration, the media advertising cooperatives in order to prevent the monopoly capital to have privileges so that media organizations could deal collectively with the advertising clients and lastly the embracement of public service media (Fuchs 2017,

694). Holzer did not project this new alternative system for only newspapers, he was a strong defender of the need for television to transform into a “proletarian public sphere” (as quoted in Fuchs 2017) which would be achieved if the viewers become producers (Fuchs 2017, 694). He frames the relationship among media, economy and the state in five political and economic functions: “the capital-economic function (production and sales of media products), the function of commodity circulation, the function of domination, the function of regeneration and reproduction of labor power and the media sales and media market function.” (Fuchs 2017, 715) This political economic structure of the media increases the importance of the use-value demand of the audience. The very reason why media exist is the vital relationship between what media have to offer and what the audience demands (Fuchs 2017, 717). This is the crucial point in order to comprehend how media have the power to shape daily lives of societies.

1.2. THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION AND THE PRODUCTION RELATIONS

In order to fully comprehend the transition from traditional mass media to digital alternative media, it would be beneficial to briefly touch upon on the function of the Internet in the capitalist system, which is significantly linked to the commodification of media. As Fuchs (2014) reaches the conclusion that accumulation and ideology act together and thus proves his point about the process of the emergence of social media as an industry, the commercialization of the mass media and the exploitation of the audience are two problematic features of communications. After the dotcom crisis in 2000, the capitalist Internet economy needed new strategies for the capital accumulation and since the investors were reluctant to invest in finance capital, the cure was found in social media in which no one knew for sure if the public would be interested in such organizations (Fuchs 2014). The rise of social media as a new strategy of capital accumulation has brought a new way of thinking: social media, web 2.0, is a new platform full of opportunities for new ways of political resistance and participatory democracy (Fuchs 2014, 125).

The Internet is a production factory that is able to exist anywhere and everywhere through mobility which turns the whole planet into a capitalist factory (Fuchs 2014, 168). Mario Tronti created the term ‘social factory’ to describe how the elements of

the society have become a part of the production system in the highest level of the capitalist development (Fuchs 2014, 168). Therefore even the free time of the individuals that seems like non-wage labour portion of the day becomes productive consumption for the benefit of capitalism (Fuchs 2014, 169).

The very first reason why the social factory exists is that most of the alternative news websites are dependent on advertising revenues, which appropriates the free time of the audience. In fact what is appropriated is the labour of the web 2.0 users. Each activity the producers do online is a commodity for the capitalist (Ekman 2014, 109). The promise of 'the longer you are online the more connected and informed you are' is the foundational motivation of the users. This is a strategic way to overcome the alienation in the land of consumerism (Fisher 2014, 142). Smythe's audience commodity becomes the audience labour in the Internet era. In his article "Audience Labour on Social Media" Eran Fisher claims that social media sites bring together three processes of political economy: production, distribution and consumption (Fisher 2014, 143). It would be deficient to consider this fact only for social media, digital media with all its might bring those three processes together. The audience is a commodity that is sold to advertisers, labour power that produces communication and a medium in which commercial messages are distributed (Fisher 2014, 144).

These three processes create an Internet network within communication network as the best known and the most powerful network of our age. For Dijk (2014) the most eligible example in this context is Wikipedia. They are horizontal, open and unofficial to motivate as many people as possible. Another open and unofficial communication network is peer network whose members do nothing but to exchange information and resource (Dijk 2014, 114-115). At this point it is important to recognize that information comes in as an economic force and works with network economy. Information economy has the ability for high innovation and low production prices, sells experience and is related to the network economy which means that the pieces come together and form a network system that desires to reach enough people to motivate everyone to connect, i.e. the merges in media such as Facebook buying Instagram or Google being the parent company of YouTube (Dijk 2016, 116-117). The most notable characteristic of the network economy is that unlike traditional types of economy demand is the dominant side of this business. Demand is able to

affect the producers and capital owners from designing to marketing (Dijk 2016, 137). For instance, in early 2018 The Guardian went to rebranding, downsizing to tabloid format in print and simplifying its logo and font both in print and online, for two purposes: to answer the readers' demand for an easier style to read and to save a several million pounds (Dezeen 2018).

In spite of the some fundamental changes in the Internet economy, concentration in the hands of few is still a problem. In a study by Matthew Hindman in 2008 shows that the media concentration is higher on the Internet when compared to the traditional media (Dijk 2016, 321). Hindman used the data of receivers, in other words the audience who makes the choice. As a result Hindman found that in spite of the tremendous amount of choices the audience has, people still choose the multi-million dollar companies which are also all American to read, watch or listen to such as Google, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Microsoft, Apple, eBay, Amazon, etc. (Dijk 2016, 322). In another study shows that the size of the online companies is either small or big, there is no company in middle size, which means the same old story survives on the Internet, the poor gets poorer, the rich gets richer (Dijk 2016, 322).

1.3. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ALTERNATIVE MEDIA: A CRITICAL APPROACH

There is not a consensus in the academic field about what alternative media is or what conditions a media organization has to have in order to be considered as alternative. A few scholars claim that right-wing media could also be considered as alternative, however a big majority of interdisciplinary professors agree that alternative media have to have a social justice and an anti-capitalist agenda (Jespersen 2016, 55). In terms of the structure of alternative media, some scholars like Chris Atton think that an alternative media organization should be a small one in which managers or producers should be amateurs, individuals from minority or marginalized groups, but Christian Fuchs draws attention to the fact that alternative media need to be large in order to have a strong voice in society (Jeppesen 2016, 55).

At the very beginning of "Alternative Media" Atton states the three aspects of democratic communication developed by Raymond Williams in 1980:

“decapitalization, deprofessionalization, and deinstitutionalization.” (Atton 2002, 4) Even though those three principles can be considered as the common ground for alternative media, Atton sets himself apart from the Marxist political economic approach. He believes in the power of small-scale grassroots organizations and supports his ideas with references to Enzensberger and McQuail. According to Enzensberger the features such as “interactivity between audiences and creators, collective production and a concern with everyday life and the ordinary needs of people” are what will save the media (Atton 2002, 8). McQuail follows Enzensberger with his democratic-participant model, which “is founded on the use of communications media for interaction and communication in small-scale settings of community, interest group and subculture that favour horizontal patterns of interaction where participation and interaction are key concepts.” (As quoted in Atton 2002).

Other than the requirements of economic and journalistic freedom for alternative media, independence from all political parties and institutions is as much of importance (Atton 2002, 17). For Michael Traber the objective of alternative media is to lead a change for “a more equitable social, cultural and economic whole in which the individual is not reduced to an object (of the media or political powers) but is able to find fulfillment as a total human being.” (As quoted in Atton 2002, 16). According to Traber there are two types of alternative media: advocacy media and grassroots media (Atton 2002). The alternative advocacy media represent the social groups such as the lower class, women, youth and minorities whereas alternative grassroots media are produced by the people who use that media (Atton 2002). There is very little room for professional journalists and media workers in grassroots media (Atton 2002, 16). However, as Mark Deuze warns us, grassroots media or citizen journalism are not necessarily anti-capitalist or anti-commercialist, they may willingly stay in the boundaries of the structure of the corporatist mainstream media (Atton 2007, 22).

Even one area of alternative media (in a manner of style, contribution, approach) harbours rich diversities within itself. (Atton 2002 as quoted in Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 25)

As many scholars have done, Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2015) also took Atton's theory of alternative media as the base for the literature. In their comprehensive book "Understanding Alternative Media" Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2015) put forward four approaches for alternative media: community service, an alternative to mainstream media, alternative media's engagement with civic society and rhizomatic alternative media.

In the first approach the authors (2015) state the importance of two-way communication of alternative media and draw attention to participating in the decision-making process. The participation in media means that amateurs actively play role in the production of the content and they are involved in the process of decision-making, which helps them internalize democracy and the democratic practices (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 37). This approach also named as autonomous media, which not only encourages participation but also encourages activism (Langlois and Dubois 2015, 26). This model of alternative media is relatively independent from the dominance of the state and companies and seeks new ways to find more democratic communication channels to establish aside from being a zone for antagonistic views (Langlois and Dubois 2015, 26). According to Langlois and Dubois, an alternative media organization becomes autonomous the moment it makes efforts to find horizontal ways to include people in the process of media production (Langlois and Dubois 2015, 83). One of the challenges that autonomous media activists face with is the one-way information flow (Langlois and Dubois 2015, 84). A well-designed and well-applied network aims to decrease the isolation and increase the autonomy and at the same time it aims to create a community sense and support system among the similar media organizations (Lang Lois and Dubois 2015, 146). In order to strengthen the position of the first approach the authors remind the readers the aim of New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) which advocated for free and fair information flow as a human right in terms of communication. That was the first initiative to put this issue in the international arena (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 39-40). In this first approach ordinary people has a platform to speak up and also they take responsibility to spread the word for what they believe in and stand for (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 42). On the other hand the Comedia, a research group, stated (as quoted in Sandoval 2009) their disagreement on the idea that alternative media should embrace the participatory

amateur model. The reason why was the lack of professionalism leads to marginalize the alternative media and thus to create an "alternative ghetto" (as quoted in Sandoval 2009).

The scholars such as Rodriguez, Mattoni and Bailey suggest that alternative media serve a certain community depending on their standpoint, advocate for social, political and economic issues such as human rights, mass protests, etc. and work closely with NGOs (Jeppesen 2016, 56). On the other hand Downing claims that grassroots organizations are the big game changers as alternative media, which may have an anti-state agenda (Jeppesen 2016, 56).

The second approach, understanding alternative media as an alternative to mainstream media, focuses on the idea of being alternative (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 43). The purpose of existence here is to give a voice to the ideas or events that underrepresented or misrepresented in the mainstream media (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 44). At this point alternative media steps in as a platform for those who are excluded and marginalized from the society and supports them to reproduce non-conformist and counter-hegemonic discourses (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 47).

The third approach to alternative media is about its engagement with the civil society as apart from the state and the market (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 51). Gramsci understands civil society as a space that produces and reproduces hegemony with the consent of the public but also a space that functions as a counter-hegemonic field, which allows alternative political and economic systems to flourish (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 52). Being a part of the civil society alternative media could be considered as the third voice between the state media and the commercial media (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 55). The author of "the Media and Democracy" John Keane claims that the search for freedom of the media is an infinite ongoing project and thus alternative media is the gatekeeper of the gatekeepers that offers another common ground (as quoted in Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 56).

The last approach of alternative media is rhizome. Downing and other scholars agree on that the term 'radical alternative media' should be embraced particularly for two reasons: the reference to its horizontal complex structure and the distinction of what is alternative since just using the term 'alternative' is too generic and can refer to anything (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 58). The literal meaning of rhizome is an underground stem that grows horizontally and spreads through shoots from its nodes (Britannica). That's why the metaphor rhizome in alternative media stands for complex changing structures that are connected to each other (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 60). There are three aspects of the rhizomatic approach: its role in the intersection of civil society, its ambiguity and its crossroads with the state and the market (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 61). Rhizomatic approach does not entirely separate alternative media from the market and the state; it builds a relationship with the hegemony in order to survive and stay relevant to achieve its purpose as the game changer (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 62). Especially the plurality of alternative media, whether it is community radio stations or news websites, plays a big role in producing a battlefield against hegemony (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 136).

Christian Fuchs's (as quoted in Jeppesen 2016) offer for alternative media with a counter-public sphere could be perceived as the combination of the second and third approaches. Fuchs argues that alternative media need a counter-public sphere that consists of anti-capitalist proletarian masses (Jeppesen 2016, 62). And he is not alone in his opinion. John D.H. Downing (as quoted in Atton 2002) also puts an emphasis on an alternative public sphere. He sees alternative public sphere and counter-hegemonic resistance as the essence of radical and alternative media (Atton 2002, 21). The advantages of an alternative public sphere would be both economic and political. It would create the sense of community in which a direct dialogue would occur between the audience and the producer and thus the content would be consumed more (Atton 2002, 50). According to Fuchs (2011) and Jeppesen (2016) an alternative media organization can be managed by either professional journalists or amateurs but has to address and speak to proletarian masses, the decision-making process has to include the audience and has to be collective and participatory (Jeppesen 2016, 62). A critical media theory based on a Marxist political economy approach could be an

answer for the issues alternative media is facing nowadays such as precarity of unpaid media workers or exploitation of activists (Jeppesen 2016, 63).

Critical media engages civil society at the level of counter-hegemonic anti-capitalist ideas and develops content that critically analyses the current neoliberal regime. (Jeppesen 2016, 67)

There are main differences between critical media and autonomous media. Jeppesen states "critical media provides a political economy approach to alternative media that considers producers as workers within a global anti-capitalist movement which might offer serious challenges to neoliberal capital from the EuroAmerican perspective." (Jeppesen 2016, 74) On the other hand autonomous media puts emphasize not only on the content but also on the horizontal management type of the media organization. Autonomous media also deals with gender issues, racism and indigenous perspectives as well as class issues (Jespersen 2016, 74).

The crossroad characteristic of the radical alternative media in the capitalist system and its relationship with the hegemony reflect itself as the critical alternative media in the article of Marisol Sandoval and Christian Fuchs (2010). Sandoval and Fuchs embrace a dialectical approach towards media. In their article "Towards a Critical Media Theory of Alternative Media" the authors build their dialectical media approach on "the relationship between media actors (producers and recipients) and media structures (economic product form, media content, media technologies, media institutions, etc.)" (Sandoval and Fuchs 2010, 145). The relationship of these two elements of media causes an historical impact on societies and thus the authors bring out the ideal alternative media model as the opposite of the capitalist mass media. On both level of media actors and structure ideal alternative media distinguishes itself from its capitalist opponent.

At the structural level, [it] differ[s] ... in regard to the economic form of media products: ... non-commercial media products instead of commodities [and] ... in regard to media content and form: ... critical content and/or complex form instead of ideological content in a standardized form. At the actor level, ... all consumers of alternative media products can also actively

engage in the production process. The presume has to be critical in the sense that (s)he critically interprets existing media content and is able to produce new critical media content. (Sandoval and Fuchs 2010, 145)

In the definition of alternative media by Sandoval and Fuchs critical content is the most crucial necessity (Fuchs and Sandoval 2010, 146). Regarding to the critical aspect of the structure and production and the capitalist aspect of distribution as other critical political economy scholars like Smythe, Garnham and Knoche, Fuchs and Sandoval agree on the opinion that commercial and critical alternative media can exist (Sandoval and Fuchs 2010, 147).

We propose a model of alternative media as critical media that pursue radical criticisms at the level of content, but are not necessarily alternative at the level of economic product form and production processes... The success of alternative media depends on their ability to gain public visibility for their critical media content. (Sandoval and Fuchs 2010, 148).

What completes its success along with the political aspect of the issues is economic wellbeing of the organization. Nigel Fountain (as quoted in Atton 2002) stated this matter in one sentence;

[F]inance and distribution ... [are] two great rocks of the underground. (Atton 2002, 34).

In addition to using capitalist methods to survive and influence the society, rhizomatic approach offers glocalization as an economic solution with the purpose of keeping the alternative media outside of the dichotomy of global and local. For example, at the beginning of 2000s Indymedia had a clever strategy that was built upon shaping its websites according to the necessities of its audience (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 191). They addressed the global audience with the global websites and the local audience with the local websites, however they never lost connection between each other. In this way they were able to quickly help activists to organize and keep everyone in the network informed (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 191). However, considering the fact that Indymedia lost its influence over the

years probably following the approach of embracing capitalist strategies into alternative media's advantage such as marketing and promotion in order to achieve its political and economic aims will be more beneficial to gain a stronger position (Sandoval and Fuchs 2010, 143). As Herbert Marcuse (1972) asserted "working against the established institutions, while working in them" (as quoted in Sandoval and Fuchs 2010) if alternative media wants to gain political effectiveness, it has to reach large audience which is possible through the capitalist mechanisms of public relations and marketing (Sandoval and Fuchs 2010, 146).

Political economy of communication deals with the relations of power between social groups, capitalist markets and the state, corporations and political institutions that structure them (Wilkin 2001, 31). Mosco and Fuchs claim that in a capitalist society the use-value of the media becomes commodity which makes it noteworthy only under the circumstance of the exchange-value which is determined by the capital accumulation in the hands of capitalists (Mosco and Fuchs 2012, 34). The authors see the commodification in capitalism as the foundational process for media and technology. Therefore the alternative media is the battle sphere to fight the commodification (Mosco and Fuchs 2012, 34).

In spite of the fact that digital revolution supports alternative media and social movement as no other mean had been able to before, yet the problem of infrastructure and access to technologies and even the problem of fragmentation of ideas still remain (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 155). Mouffe (as quoted in Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015) warns against a kind of introversion that the Internet might cause. New media can cause people to live in their own world with other like-minded people where the contradictory ideas are left out (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 155). Therefore the Internet is not an immediate solution for democracy and its practices. The alternative movements and organizations have to carry their online activities to the offline world (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 156). Since losing strength for small groups in their own little circle is a lot easier in the environment of the endless possibilities than for the capitalist, hegemonic and mainstream organizations, getting together and creating a larger counter-public sphere that are in the access of marginalized and exploited groups and individuals would help alternative media organizations become a lot more

successful in achieving the political and economic changes (Sandoval and Fuchs, 2010, 143).

The outcome of this thorough theoretical framework for this research is that in spite of the trend on supporting the grassroots media as the alternative media, we should not miss the significance of taking a stance against the capitalist mass media structure. Since the movements as the grassroots or the engagement of civil society do not necessarily concern about having an anti-capitalist agenda and lack the critical approach, that trend in the literature puts alternative media in a vulnerable situation in terms of labour exploitation and commodification of the audience. Academy is obliged to offer systematic steps in order to protect the alternative media from the capitalist forces, in short in order to protect it from running towards to the same finish line as the traditional mainstream media. Our main concern should be to build an alternative media system as Fuchs, Sandoval, Holzer and many others suggest as well as giving voice to the misrepresented/underrepresented groups and individuals. Only this critical theory approach helps us meet just, egalitarian and independent alternative media.

CHAPTER 2

ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN TURKEY: IS IT A NEW BEGINNING?

2.1. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

Throughout my research I looked for answers to the questions about the political economic structure of alternative media, the unionization (or deunionization as a matter of fact), the pursuit of a new sustainable economic model and the reasons why alternative media is on the rise, whether or not the journalists feel more secure and independent, the levels of precarity, how they cope with economic problems, how they differ from the traditional mainstream media, the relationship with the audience and if they are hopeful for the future of free press in Turkey. I conducted semi-structured interviews consisting of 26 questions with seven journalists who work in different alternative media organizations between April and May 2018. Three of the interviewees hold the titles of the management positions, the other three are regular staff and one freelance writer.

Snowball effect was the way I arranged the interviews for my research. I reached the next interviewee through the referral of the journalist I had interviewed. In total I contacted 15 journalists and only seven of them agreed on supporting an academic research. I never received any positive or negative response from the other eight journalists. Hence, interviewing with only seven journalists was the limitation for this research, however I managed to pick those seven journalists amongst the reputable managers, professional reporters to freelance writers in the sector, which provided a deep analysis of the field. Before I had started recording the interviews, I declared that I would not reveal their names and the names of the organizations they work at. Each interview lasted approximately an hour and a half.

In the following sections and chapters that include the statements and comments of the interviewees' all of the names of the journalists are the names made up by me and the media organizations they work for are confidential. I asked the questions about the establishment process of an alternative media organization, the management type and the source of income to only the interviewees that hold the management positions.

The questions about labour rights, wages, working conditions were asked to the writers. The remaining questions as the censorship, solidarity, and the future of media in Turkey etc. were asked to all of the interviewees. Through the interviews my aim was to analyze and evaluate the structure of alternative media in Turkey for the purposes of demonstrating the transformation towards an anti-capitalist media system. On the other hand, lack of information on funding is the weakness of the research since I could not gather enough data and the interviewees were not willing to reveal much about funding. This part of the political economy of alternative media could be a further research question for the future studies.

How the interviewees have begun their professional life in alternative media and from what perspective they perceive the issues of political economy of alternative media vary according to the demographic of the journalists. As far as I observed with my interviewees during the research the reason why younger journalists work in alternative media is mostly by choice. In spite of the disadvantages of online journalism as precarity and instability, the advantages of flexibility, the feeling of connected to the rest of the world and a relatively independent environment attract the younger professionals. They highly believe that the Internet is the future and especially the outdated structure of mass media and its being a 'state apparatus' make them feel distant towards the traditional mass media.

On the other hand the older interviewees have moved to alternative media from the traditional mass media mostly due to the political pressures and/or shut downs of their workplace. There seems to be quite a few ways of leaving a mass media organization for these interviewees. The first option is the force of a decree law as for instance, what happened to *IMC TV*, the second one is the slow phase of shrinking down to closing doors for good as what happened with *Radikal* and the third option is that reaching to a point for the journalist that she/he finds almost impossible to do journalism in that mass media organization or they have forced the limits so the owners let them go. There is indeed a forth way that is the hand over of a mass media organization to more obedient business people. The selling of Dogan Media Group to the Demiroren Group happened at the very beginning of my research and I felt the urge to include the case to the research since in my opinion it was the recent biggest media incident that sat at the heart of the political economy of media. The opinions of

the interviewees about the possible effects of the sell on alternative media have widened my research.

In the following pages of this dissertation thesis you will find a thorough examination of the alternative media field in Turkey and the interviewees' answers and interpretations to the questions categorized according to the past, current and future matters of political economy of alternative media as well as my own analysis.

2.2. THE PANORAMA OF ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN TURKEY

34 per cent stated that they trust online news sources. 37 per cent stated that they think online news sources are reputable (the reputation rates are 24 per cent for television, 28 per cent for newspapers and 12 per cent for radio) and 17 per cent stated that they feel deficiency of news when they cannot access to the Internet. These results are taken from the research of "the Tendencies of the New Media Usage in Turkey" studied by the professors of Kadir Has University in 2017. Since early 2000s alternative media scene in Turkey has been developing with the serious efforts of the organizations such as *Bianet* and *Sendika.org*. These two pioneers of alternative media in Turkey have become the counter-public sphere for those who are underrepresented or misrepresented in the traditional mainstream media and paved the way for those that have come after them. *Bianet* holds its position as the strong pillar for the struggle to establish and protect the rights of the independent media while *Sendika.org* continues to be the voice of the proletariat as it has been fighting to eliminate the government's attempts to censor the website. In addition to *Bianet* and *Sendika.org* another independent alternative media organization *T24* positions itself to address to the masses without discriminating anyone, any group, class or ethnicity. Describing itself as "independent internet newspaper" *T24* has 1.8 million followers on Twitter, placing the organization as one of the most influential alternative media organizations in Turkey.

In particular unethical and unprofessional journalistic attitude of the traditional mainstream media during the Gezi protests in the summer of 2013 brought out the importance of the freedom of expression and the freedom of the press one more time.

The need to access to information and news led the society to turn their faces to social media and follow the news online. By June 10th, 2013 active users of Twitter in Turkey rose to 10 million from the number of 1,8 million in May 29th, 2013 (Yukse 2015, 68). Thus the Gezi protests became an historical milestone for alternative media that have gained more strength with the new media practices (Coban and Ataman 2015, 38). According to the research done by Bilgic and Kafkasli (2013) 84.2 per cent of the participants asserted that the silence of the mainstream media has influenced the reason why they supported the protests. Regarding to the fact that the protests set the stage for more democratic communication and demonstrated that the people could find tools to express themselves, alternative media have risen as never before (Coban and Ataman 2015, 39). Already existing organizations such as *140 Journos* and *T24* gained more popularity during the process and the alternative media organizations like *Diken*, *Dokuz8 Haber* and *Medyascope.tv* found space to emerge after the protests.

The president of Journalists Union of Turkey at the time Ugur Guc declared that only in the first eight months of 2014 981 journalists were laid off (Durdag and Basaran 2019). At these dark times of media, many alternative media organizations were established with the purpose of resisting against the political pressures and creating occupational solidarity in order to keep doing journalism (Durdag and Basaran 2019). *Punto24 (P24)* Independent Journalism Platform and *Journos* are two of the most popular examples that aim to support the unemployed journalists, to create solidarity and to educate aspiring and professional journalists for the needs of the current and future journalistic practices. For example, *P24* created an online platform called "Expression Interrupted!". The platform's objective is to attract the public's attention to the violation of freedom of expression and to follow the legal investigations and lawsuits against the journalists. Besides *Journos* and *P24*, the newcomers of the alternative media scene in Turkey like *Diken*, *Medyascope.tv*, *Gazete Duvar*, *Haberdar*, *Arti Gercek*, *Gazete Karınca* etc. intend to fight against the censorship applied by the government and support the unemployed journalists by providing them space on their website, though it is hard to mention this support as a professional employment process since almost all of those alternative media organizations heavily depend on voluntary work due to the serious financial struggles.

It would be helpful to take a closer look at some of the relatively popular alternative media organizations in order to comprehend the general view of the field. After *T24*, the second most popular organization of alternative media is *Diken*. *Diken* was founded in 2014 by Harun Simavi with a small group of professional journalists. With their slogan “Thorns the naughty ones a little bit”, a small budget and a small team, today *Diken* reaches almost one million followers on Twitter, which makes it one of the most influential alternative media organizations in Turkey. However, those high numbers in reach do not necessarily provide them any significant profits, especially in terms of advertising revenue, which is not hard to analyze since a quick glance at their website demonstrates that they only have one or two Google ads. Nonetheless, their financial difficulties do not hold them back in the fight for free journalism. Moreover, they have a section on their website under the title of “VPN Haber.” In this section they list all the news stories that have been blocked in accordance with the code 5651/article 9 and could only be read by a VPN service. This tactic of theirs is another way to bypass the government’s efforts to censor alternative media.

Medyascope.tv is also an example to the collective efforts of professional journalists. The chaotic election term in 2015 drove Rusen Cakir to broadcast on Periscope. After a short period of time broadcasting on social media, he founded the initiative of *Medyascope.tv*, which opens its doors to any journalists who would like to contribute and broadcast online in order to prove that a “civic, independent, free, pluralist” platform is possible in Turkey. The visual stories are dominant at *Medyascope.tv* and they reach thousands of people every day on YouTube. Rusen Cakir also asks for the audience support and donations through Patreon and the platform receives funding from the independent non-profit organizations. Until now, *Medyascope.tv* has achieved to be one of the very few alternative media organizations that manage to interview political party leaders and attend the press conferences of the prominent political figures in Turkey.

On the other hand, there are some other organizations that started based on citizen journalism rather than based on solely professional journalism. *Dokuz8 Haber* is one of those places that emerged out of the citizen journalism efforts rather than being founded by a group of professional journalists reporting from the field or writing news articles as happened with *Diken*, *T24* or *Medyascope.tv*. *Dokuz8 Haber* became

popular on Twitter with their capsule reports fitted into a tweet. As the numbers of followers grew, they transformed into a news website organization harbouring professional journalists. Even though they still support citizen journalism, as they have grown, the management and working style has turned into completely professional journalism. But Twitter remains as their strongest platform with 170,000 followers.

Considering the increased authoritarianism, another burst happened in alternative media in 2016, particularly during the period of the July 15 coup attempt. The shutdowns of dozens of media organizations by the decree laws, rising political pressures in the name of national security, increasing censorship and consequently high numbers of unemployment among journalists called the need for new platforms to do journalism. *Gazete Duvar*, *Ozguruz.org*, *Gazete Karınca* and *Artı Gerçek* are just a few alternative media organizations to name that are founded during this period.

Gazete Duvar was founded in 2016 under the And Gazetecilik company with the principles based on “ethical, independent, objective news.” *Duvar* is the most resembling news website to a traditional newspaper among the current alternative media organizations. They pursue text-based online journalism and have a few reporters in Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir and Diyarbakir. They have space for Google ads on their website, but it is obvious that they do not earn much from that source of income. Since they are text-based, the strongest platform for them is Twitter, which has brought them 295,000 followers so far. In addition to the sections like daily news, economy and domestic politics, they have science, arts, sports, health, cinema, technology and travel sections on their website as well.

Other than these alternative media organizations based in Turkey, there are two prominent news websites for Turkey based in outside of Turkey. *Ozguruz.org* and *Artı Gerçek* are founded by two different professional journalists that have been prosecuted for doing journalism in Turkey and consequently left the country to resume their profession.

During the increased tension on the national security due to the terrorist organizations and the Syrian Civil War, publishing the top-secret documents about the national

intelligence agency cost Can Dunder imprisonment and later political asylum to Germany. After having forced to leave the position of editor-in-chief at *Cumhuriyet*, Dunder settled in Germany and founded *Ozguruz.org* with the journalist Hayko Bagdat. The government of Turkey answered to their opposing editorial line abroad by blocking the website for the audience in Turkey. In spite of the ban and ongoing trials, 127,000 people follow *Ozguruz* on Twitter. Also, as *Sendika.org* has been following the same unstoppable tactic for years, the organization is now on their 20th website, *Ozguruz20.org*, accessible to the people in Turkey. Additionally, *Ozguruz* has a mobile radio application and asks for the audience support.

With the claim of establishing the lines between the news stories and commentary without the lack of analysis *Arti Gercek* is another alternative media organization that was founded abroad because of the direct political pressures. The organization is based in Germany and the Netherlands and founded by Celal Baslangic. Besides having an online news website, *Arti Gercek* has also a television channel called *Arti TV* broadcasting on Hot Bird. They reach 168,000 followers on Twitter and 20,810 subscribers on YouTube. Furthermore, in different cities of Europe *Arti Gercek* and *Arti TV* organize panels called “Arti Bulusmalar” on the freedom of the press and human rights in Turkey.

Recently, many people might think that there cannot be more significant indicator for the downfall of the traditional mainstream media than soaring alternative media organizations and the increasing audience demand for alternative media. However, the gravity of the situation is more visible regarding to the fact that international state and public news organizations embrace the role of alternative media organizations in Turkey. Especially the Turkish branch of the Russian news organization *Sputnik* and German public news organization *Deutsche Welle* are two popular cases. Due to the rising demand of the audience for objective and ethical news in the lack of the mainstream media, the society turned to *Sputnik Turkey* and *Deutsche Welle Turkish* to follow what is happening in the country. *Sputnik Turkey* has 755,000 followers only on Twitter which is higher than its followers on the *Sputnik International* account (256,000 followers) and *Deutsche Welle Turkish* has 361,000 followers, which is higher than their followers of the German account (111,000 followers). The need for objective and fair reporting is so high in Turkey that even the state

propaganda organizations are able to act as the defender of the free press in our country. *Deutsche Welle Turkish* even hired an unemployed dissident journalist Nevsin Mengü after she was fired from one of the biggest television channels in Turkey because of her live commentary about the meeting between Trump and Erdogan. The editor-in-chief of *Sputnik Turkey* Mahir Boztepe claims that they are one of the top 10 news websites in Turkey according to the click-based calculation. (Marketing Turkiye 2019). Boztepe states that *Sputnik* broadcasts in 32 languages and the Turkey branch carries the best operation (Marketing Turkiye 2019).

Although it is rather difficult to collect enough data about the field since the proper registration processes are not followed and the academic studies are not enough, it is quite easy to observe that alternative media scene in Turkey is quite dynamic particularly in the last six years in spite of all the political and economic troubles and struggles that the free press has been dealing with every day. Despite that the lack of data and academic studies, in this short section I have tried to draw a picture of alternative media in Turkey before moving onto the research that deals with structural and political economic problems of the alternative media organizations in Turkey.

2.3. THE REASON WHY ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IS ON THE RISE IN TURKEY

When asked the reason why alternative media is getting more popular each day, five of the interviewees think that the reason is the mixture of global digital trends and the current political economic situation in Turkey. They all stated the same claim: yes, the rise of alternative media is highly connected to the digital revolution in the world and we closely follow the global trends trying to catch up. However there is one more important reason, which is the political and economic pressure on media and journalism. Since the mainstream media could not fulfill its responsibility and especially failed in doing its job during the Gezi protests the public lost its trust in the Turkish media. Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018 confirms the interviewees' statements. According to the Report, "trust in news overall has declined (-7 over the last three years) as government control over the media has increased." (Digital News Report 2018, 109) It was a year of firsts for Turkey: the media has been classified as

“not free” by Freedom House and distrust for news reached 40 per cent which means higher than trust for news – 38 percent (Digital News Report 2018, 108-109).

The editor-in-chief of an alternative media organization Adnan stated the fact that people have filled the void of accurate, independent and real-time information flow that has been caused by the mainstream media with online journalism organizations. Another editor-in-chief Hakan explained the situation underlining that this global transformation in technology is one of the biggest four or five transformations in the history of media (as the invention of the printing press, radio, television etc.). As Eran Fisher points out, this transformation has assembled the three aspects of political economy, which are production, distribution and consumption (Fisher 2014, 143). In other words the audience has found the liberty of content production, distribution of that content with their network and consumption of the content produced by others, even though this translates as the exploitation of the audience. Anyhow, this new milestone in communication gives breathe to the ones who are fed up with oppressed, racist, unethical, nationalist, discriminative mainstream media in Turkey. Hakan tells that the motivation behind why they founded their online news organization is to make a strong and effective criticism of the existing system and to produce the content that a media organization is obliged to produce.

Another point the most of the interviewees made was the ultimate triangle of politics, business and media. They make emphasis on the fact that since the media owners are businessmen before anything they want to build and preserve strong relationships with the government to win contracts and to keep their businesses, and this ambition results in using newspapers, television or radio channels as a mean to achieve their goals. The critical process of transformation of the media industry in Turkey executed by Savings Deposit Insurance Fund of Turkey (TMSF) in 2000s is the best example. For the media owners the 2001 economic crisis ended up in losing their media companies due to their business activities in the banking industry (Kuyucu 2012, 676). TMSF bought and sold those media organizations in return of the old owners' debts which provided a great opportunity for the new coming business people in order to build strong relations with the government (Kuyucu 2012, 676). Kuyucu summarized the journey of the media industry as the transition of the ownership and control over to the new type of media owners whose primary source of income relies

on different sectors other than media, which eliminated the middle and small size organizations and caused the oligopolistic structure in media (Kuyucu 2012, 676). In this new media structure, working conditions of the journalists got highly politicized. If there are any journalists within the organization who write or publish any news article that could disturb the government and thus hurt the relationships of the bosses, that journalist first gets warned. In case she/he continues writing the way she/he had been writing, the story eventually ends in jail or in unemployment, sometimes it could be both. Therefore, aside from the global digital revolution the destruction of the traditional mainstream media in Turkey paved the way for alternative media to sprout. Veteran journalist Merdan Yanardag states that media in Turkey has always been the reflection of power relations, class struggles, structural transformations, conflicts of interests, historical milestones and tensions in the society (Yanardag 2008, 11). One of the scandal cases about the power relations between the media and the government and the reflections on the journalists is the resignation process of the columnist Emin Colasan. After Colasan was forced to resign from *Hurriyet*, he published a book to reveal the process of resignation and the power relations in *Hurriyet*. In his book Colasan writes about how Aydin Dogan warned him against criticizing the current government at the time. Dogan says; "Look, listen to me. Economy is going well, I am pro-privatization. Yes, I have some worries, but even then why would I pick a fight with the government? I do not agree with you or the ones like you." (Yanardag 2008, 41) The unfortunate cases like this have pushed away both good journalists and the audience.

Since the existence of alternative media appears to be more out of necessity, not out of technological trends, the next question concerned about what the advantages of online journalism are and whether they would still like to work online if they had had the same freedom and benefits in the traditional mainstream media. At this point people who pretty much agree on the reason why alternative media in Turkey is popular gave different answers. Ezgi who is a producer of a weekly online program in one of the most popular alternative media organizations and Burak who is an editor in a new media organization said that they would choose online due to the flexibility, abundance of resources, interactivity and equality. For Adnan even though he would choose to work online he sees the platforms as only the tools to do journalism but he states that they benefit from the lower costs of production comparing to traditional

media and the ability to follow the news and publish instantly. The freelance writer Kerim and the editor-in-chief of a journalism news website Alper also do not mind which platform they work at. However, Hakan thinks that if the struggles in Turkey did not exist, he would have probably taken a part in the online divisions of the mainstream media company he used to work at. He says he would still have to go online but under different circumstances. The most interesting and maybe the outdated statement came from Leman. The writer says that she would stay in the traditional media because she believes that television still holds its position as the most influential medium to affect the public in spite of all the maladies it has. A research by The Global TV Group predicts that television reaches about 70 per cent of a country's population per day, 90 per cent per week and 100 per cent per month. This percentage falls to 73 for the millennial generation (Hebblethwaite 2017). These numbers seem to verify Leman's belief on television. However, the fall in numbers for the millennial generation indicates the fact that the younger generations are changing the media consumption towards the Internet (Hebblethwaite 2017). In addition to the future change in the media consumption, broadcast journalism could not quite succeed in adapting itself to online journalism. Television news is getting farther and farther away from the younger audience whose primary source for information and entertainment is digital media. According to the Digital News Report 2016, in order to stay relevant in the digital age broadcast journalism needs to come up with new strategies on online platforms (Nielsen and Sambrook 2016).

Considering all of the statements above, we could conclude that in addition to the undeniable effect of digital revolution, the reason of the rise of the alternative media cannot be interpreted without considering the political and economic conditions of the country. In particular milestones such as the Gezi protests and the economic crisis in 2001 function as determinants for the changes in mass media in terms of news production and consumption. The corrupt relations among the market, government and media are the primary factors for alternative media to flourish.

2.4. THE PATH TO ALTERNATIVE MEDIA: 'IN'S AND 'OUT'S OF THE NEW FAVOURITE

When I asked Hakan who started journalism in 1994 his story on the transition to the digital world he paints the picture of two decades of the Turkish media as well as his personal story. He takes his personal transition as a case for many journalists and as the reflection of the transformation of the Turkish mass media. He sees the mass media structure of Turkey, which drastically changed in 1990s with the establishment of the private television channels, as the dual-structured monopoly form and the state broadcast. Hakan was among the founding staff of once one of the most influential liberal newspapers in Turkey. However, he points out the fact that how this changed in time with the new government elected in 2002. He says,

This transformation is the transformation of the corrupt structure of that monopoly and the disagreement of the new government at the time with that media structure. On the sociocultural level media always criticized the government, but on the economic level they always supported the government's policies. There had never been a time in the mainstream media that criticized the economy policies of the Justice and Development Party.

During the process of the unchecked implementation of new neoliberal policies the mass media had to be controlled in order to gain the full support of the public. The journalists and columnists who dared to argue, evaluate and criticize the government were eliminated one by one. Moreover the government's increasing authoritarian attitude has caused even more serious pressure on the mainstream media in terms of full obedience to the ruling party. This situation also reflected itself as eliminating the publications that disturb the government, not only the writers or reporters or journalists. BIA Media Monitoring declared that 123 journalists were in jail by October 1st 2018 (Onderoglu 2018).

In the period of July-August-September 2018, at least 85 journalists, columnists or editorial personnel were either dismissed from their jobs or forced to leave their jobs after the media outlets, which they had been working for or affiliated with, changed hands (Onderoglu 2018).

Including the struggles on the professional rights many precious writers and journalists left this mass media structure during this process of transformation. This parting led to two different paths: either they moved to alternative media that care about the code of journalism ethics – this was the time of destruction of the mainstream media and the time of getting strong for *BirGün*, *Evrensel*, *Cumhuriyet* – or if they could not find a job in alternative media, they quit journalism completely. The third way was to try founding a new platform if you have the means. That is how many alternative news websites have been born recently.

Harsher example of closing down by the decree law comes from Leman. After the television channel she was working for were shut down on the charges of being a member of a terrorist organization and involving with the elements threatening the national security she got unemployed for a while. When the issue of the national security is on the table, many governments around the world act pretty much the same whether the country is located in the West or the East. CEO of Index on Censorship Jodie Ginsberg writes:

As security – rather than the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms – becomes the number one priority of governments worldwide, broadly written security laws have been twisted to silence journalists (Ginsberg 2017).

The project of Mapping Media Freedom reveals the magnitude of the censorship in Europe. When one searches the word of ‘terror’ on the website, more than 200 cases are listed for the journalists accused of public order offences in Catalonia or accused of “harming national interests in Ukraine” and the same accusations are on the table for the journalists in prison in Turkey after the July 15 coup attempt (Ginsberg 2017).

In spite of the political pressures, journalists do not give in. Leman says:

We have inverted our anger for the unemployment and the pressure coming from the ruling class into production. This has been the message from us to the ones in power indicating that we do not need your permit to do journalism.

Leman explains how her current workplace was established. She emphasizes that their organization was born out of the need for free flow of information and it is a collective effort of professional journalists. Even though the current alternative media organization that Leman works for does not have a collective type structure, the primary motivation of the foundation process resembles the collective media organizations. There are some media organizations that embrace the collective structure around the world. *West Highland Free Press* from Scotland is one of the examples. In 2009 the paper changed its ownership style from a private company with five partners to an employee-owned organization. The managing director of *West Highland Free Press* Paul Wood claims that giving the chance of being a shareholder to the journalists presents the motivation and stability they need (Bibby 2013). Working at an employee-owned media organization would mean to work at a trusted and an open to dialogue environment (Boyle 2012, 13).

For Burak and Kerim working at alternative media is the natural circumstance of the age we are living. It is digital, instant, flexible and connected. Even though for Kerim working at a traditional media organization means you have something to keep in your hands for generations, since you risk losing your work online completely after a certain period of time, alternative media give writers the freedom and flexibility they need. However, the major downside of alternative media is the financial insecurity. Burak asserts that he feels precarious not because of the organization he works for but because of the political and economic conditions of the country. Alper describes this side of alternative media as the dirty backstage. Although journalism was Alper's childhood dream after working for various media organizations including both the traditional mass media and alternative media he reached the conclusion that both sides have the same fundamental problems such as exploitation of workers and journalism ethics. Adnan shares the similar ideas with Alper as well. The seasoned journalist claims that alternative media also does not deal with the issue of ethical journalism. Most of the journalists in alternative media are comfortable with 'copy and paste' journalism without giving any credits to the original sources. Almost all of the interviewees agree on the fact that many online platforms do not hesitate to do whatever it takes to increase the clicks in order to gain more ad revenue. According to them those journalists carry the same sicknesses of the traditional mass media to the alternative media. Alper who left working at news organizations and became an active

member of a non-profit journalism organization took visible steps with his friends to fix the situation. Their online project for professional journalists aim to open discussions on journalism and to motivate people to do ethical journalism. Additionally, the non-profit journalism organization also organizes workshops and trainings on digital journalism. The reason why they do it as an online project is that “with all the talks of technology, it seemed outdated to have something only in print.”

In the end the interviewees agreed on that the journalists have to push the boundaries in order to protect and defend the right to information. When the recent situation of the capitalist mainstream media made difficult to survive for a certain kind of journalism and force journalism to become monotype it pushed them to look for other ways to do their job and thus to work at some other platforms, which has paved the way for alternative media in Turkey. On one hand they have to make a living and on the other hand they want to keep doing true journalism. As Dogu asserted that the compelling need for alternative media emerged as the consequence of the deterioration of the capitalist mainstream media (Dogu 2015, 646). For that purpose, the interviewees believe that if someone has a passion for what they do, they do find a way to keep doing it. This may not be the case always and they may not be as lucky all the time but if she/he sees any possibility, she/he tries to do whatever it takes to succeed.

2.5. ESTABLISHING AN ALTERNATIVE MEDIA ORGANIZATION, THE STRUCTURE OF THE MANAGEMENT TYPE AND THE EDITORIAL PROCESS

The process of establishing an alternative media organization is quite unclear since the Internet journalism in Turkey is not regulated by the government. Although the Presidency of Republic of Turkey Directorate of Communications published a new regulation on yellow press card last year, the digital news websites were left out which exposes the online journalists to exploitation (Aydinlik 2018). General secretary of Journalists Union of Turkey Ilkay Akkaya attracts attention to the precarious online journalists and urges authorities to act on the matter immediately.

Those organizations have to change their registered departments and provide social insurance according to the article 5953. For example, a journalist who is employed by the online division of a newspaper can own a yellow press card. However, a journalist who is employed by a digital news website cannot. Because those news websites are registered as ordinary companies. In order for them to be registered as a media company there is an urgent need for a regulation. The level of exploitation is really high in this law of the jungle. The obligatory measures for the protection of the journalists must be taken as soon as possible (Aydinlik 2018).

With reference to the registration issue and additionally to understand how an alternative media organization is run and how it is structured, I dug into the questions such as the way they are established, the editorial process, and management type. My other ambition in asking these questions was to bring out the differences between the traditional mass media and alternative media, particularly in terms of inner workings. As discussed in the previous section Theoretical Framework many scholars came up with different types of alternative media to define its structure. One of the distinctions is Traber's advocacy and grassroots media where professional journalists have almost no place (Atton 2002, 16). However more thorough approach comes from Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2015) – the writers of *Understanding Alternative Media: community service, an alternative to mainstream media, alternative media's engagement with civic society and rhizomatic alternative media*. As we could conclude from the statements of the interviewees below, we will see that alternative media organizations in Turkey are an alternative to mainstream media.

When it comes to starting an online media organization, the first two conditions they asserted were the capital to establish and to register as a company. Hakan states that there is not one true way of starting. Since they cared about being a corporation they founded a joint company, however he points out that the process does not necessarily have to be the same for every organization. Alper's website followed the same path as Hakan's. He says that they had to start a corporate business to buy the 'com.tr' extension. In addition to starting a corporate business Adnan points out the importance of a good team and the digital equipment more than anything. For him the rest is about learning and experiencing along the way.

In alternative media organizations the management type is pretty horizontal comparing to the traditional media. Except Leman and Hakan, all of the interviewees underlined that there is almost no hierarchy. They discuss together and make decisions with their teams. Leman states that it is less hierarchical but admits the fact that it is not completely a horizontal management type. Hakan takes the hierarchy issue on a different level. Even though he desires everything to run horizontally, he explains that horizontal type of management carries many risks. He says,

There are so many legal and ethical problems that the responsibility should be taken. If you let your staff be independent during the decision-making process, the levels of bravery might cause serious troubles. But in some areas where there is no political or legal pressure, horizontal management could be applied. Arts and culture section is an example for this.

Hakan also tells that they have to ask themselves whether it would be okay to publish this or that. When a writer takes the risk, the organization takes that risk as well. Ezgi shares similar worries with Hakan. Due to the current political situation in Turkey, they feel like there is not much room for a horizontal structure, at least not in the levels they wish it to be.

The most similar aspect of an alternative media organization to the traditional mass media is the editorial process. There are not many differences between those two types of media when it comes to the production of a news article. They have an editor-in-chief, editors, writers and few reporters if they can afford. The way they produce news stories, the usage of the digital equipment and the views on citizen journalism, which is touched upon in the following sections, are the continuum of the habits in the traditional mass media. Considering the fact that they do not have enough capital to build a network of reporters, they are still dependent on news agencies that produce content mostly for the traditional mass media and are highly manipulated by the government. In order to avoid the trap that might be set by the news agencies for the purpose of misleading the public, they follow foreign news outlets and platforms to produce content and by trusting their journalistic instincts they filter and frame the reports they receive from the local news agencies. Hakan's team has a few reporters in the field but he also complains about the cost of the

production of a news story. To him the problem is not the payment of the wages of the reporters; it is the process of production. At most places when there is shortage of staff or can simply afford only for one person (especially for the night editions), that person can be the reporter, the editor and the editor-in-chief at the same time. Most of them have small teams of 10 to 15 and work with many freelancers and volunteer contributors. Their reach varies from 2,000 to 200,000 depending on the familiarity of the organization and depending on the content itself.

2.6. SHOULD JOURNALISM BE FREE FROM ADJECTIVES?

Before I started to interview, I observed that most of the journalists in alternative media avoid and worry about being called and described as dissident, adversary or opponent. Whenever there is some discussion on the description of alternative media, they strongly object being referred as one of those adjectives. Regarding to this sensitivity I had heard, I included the question of how they describe their organization and their journalism into my research.

Most of the interviewees describe themselves and/or the organizations they work at as independent. They refuse to make definitions such as dissident and even sometimes as alternative. Ezgi is one of them and strongly rejects the adjective of opposing. She explains,

I am not against opposing the governments. However, there cannot be such a thing as an adversary journalist or a partisan journalist in that matter. If there is something to be criticized, of course no journalist should refrain herself/himself from speaking out.

Adnan took the issue on a more institutional level:

A journalist might have opposing ideas, but if a newspaper, a television channel or a news website calls itself dissident then it makes it a political definition. Our job is journalism and I absolutely reject that description. We are not an opponent website. We are a news website that tries to do independent journalism. We might not share the same worldview with the

current government, however it does not mean that we will abandon the independent journalism in case a political party that has a similar worldview as ours comes to power. That's why I do not think it is appropriate to use such definitions.

The interviewees' understanding of being a dissident is being a dissident of the current government, which leads to a limited understanding of the situation. The interviewees paint a picture in which the only duty of journalists is to report news. What they speak does not really apply to what they do in practice. If the duty of a journalist is to serve the public interest and they seek for alternatives when there is no room left for them in the traditional mainstream media, then the duty goes beyond reporting. They seem to neglect one of the most crucial aspects of journalism which is to be opponent against any kind of power and ruling elite that is corrupt and authoritarian, exploits the workers, discriminates the minorities, practices economic policies that widen the gap between the lower and upper classes, transforms the independent judicial system into a system of the power, silences the freedom of expression, crushes the press freedom whether that power is align with journalists' personal world views or the alternative media organizations' stance. When you examine the websites it is easy to observe that they make news of inequality, injustice and undemocratic practices. However it seems like they hesitate or refuse to speak up. It is obvious that journalism should be objective in terms of fairness and ethics. Many different arguments and discussions occupy the journalism environment about how much unbiased and objective a journalist should or could be. In an article published on Nieman Reports underlines a critical point:

As a group, journalists probably have more opinions than most, and it is very rare that a reporter starts working on a story without having some notion as to what happened – in other words, a point of view. But objectivity does not require that journalists be blank slates free of bias. In fact, objectivity is necessary precisely because they are biased (Jones 2009).

According to the American Press Institute, a story with no bias is a story with no life. Therefore, what is important for journalists is to find ways to handle the bias justly.

A bias, moreover, can be the foundation for investigative journalism. It may prompt the news organization to right a wrong and take up an unpopular cause (American Press Institute).

Therefore, the crucial point here is to clarify what bias is and what objectivity is. It is unimaginable that a professional journalist could mix up those two terms, but also it is not clear that why the interviewees treat the objectivity and the bias the same way. Even though it is very difficult to keep the balance between those two terms, what stands out in journalism is to stress the point and opinion of the article without losing the equilibrium of objective reporting.

CHAPTER 3

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

3.1. ON THE BALANCE OF PRECARIITY AND AUTONOMY

Before digging into the questions about the source of income and the seek for a sustainable financial model, I asked the interviewees the underlying reason behind precarity and the challenges a journalist face to protect and to do their job. Is it the capitalist structure of the mass media or is it purely the political reasons?

Kergel and Heidkamp (2017) define precarity as “an unstable employment relationship, which grounds among others on fixed-term contracts and are an effect of neoliberal roll-back processes. As a socio-economic phenomenon, precarity influences life planning and self-narrations of the affected individuals. Precarity and other societal power structures manifest in the digital age and reproduced by the way new media are used.” (Kergel and Heidkamp 2017, 10)

This unstable employment fits perfectly into the deregulation policies of the neoliberal economies (Kergel and Heidkamp 2017, 22).

Precarity is the outcome not only of insecurities of labour markets but also of capital's capture and colonization of life within and beyond the workplace (Mahmoud 2015 as quoted in Kergel and Heidkamp 2017, 11).

According to Standing, the transformation of media aligns with the precarity of neoliberalism due to the need for flexibility emerging from the immediacy of digital media (Kergel and Heidkamp 2017, 11). From the economic perspective, the Internet has made cheaper production a lot easier as well as creating more opportunities for freelance works. All a freelancer needs connection to the Internet and enough skills to do the job. Mostly people with creative jobs such as designing and writing are luckier to find an online company and the companies do not need more than a few people to start their business. Although this may seem a great opportunity for media to transform, the concentration still continues at the same level. Thus, the inequality between workers and the company holders is present in the independent

organizations. The fact that earning less online than the 9-to-5 jobs still remains as same as during an economic recession (Dijk 2016, 270).

This individualization of work (in terms of motivations and careers) makes media professionals both easier and harder to manage: easier, because they are less likely to engage in collective action and bargaining, and harder because managing a more or less temporary network of fragmented individuals can be quite costly and complicated (Deuze 2014, 2).

All of the interviewees think that the problem of precarity is the combination of the capitalist structure of the mass media and also the political reasons. They agree that the background of this issue goes back to 1990s when the private media organizations were founded for the first time in Turkey. Hakan asserts that in 1990s two-tier monopoly structure and the state broadcast controlled the media. There were few attempts to build left wing and independent newspapers but they all failed except *Cumhuriyet*, *BirGün* and *Evrensel*. The big bosses realized the void and targeted well-educated, left wing and white-collar audience. So they founded *Radikal* and *Yeni Yuzyil*. *Radikal* stopped publishing the newspaper in 2014 and totally became an online newspaper, which ended its life after two years of publishing online. That was the transformation of the rotten system. In the social and cultural areas the government was criticized but no newspaper, no journalist dared to criticize the neoliberal economy policies of the government. Ezgi also states that due to the ownership structure of media the bosses have always wanted to get along with the government since they have other businesses in different sectors. She says that they never cared about the employee rights and created an environment where there is a huge income gap between a columnist and a reporter. She goes on,

Those columnists were paid a lot, they enjoyed the privileges and benefits, so they were worried that they can lose everything they gained in such a short notice should anything goes wrong.

According to Adnan, today approximately 90 per cent of the mass media is directly or indirectly under the control of the government. The ownership of a media organization in Turkey means to do well in other businesses. That's why journalism

has become a tool to please the government and to win new business contracts. For the challenges a journalist faces this situation reflects itself as censorship which she/he does not report certain subjects or reports in a way that does not bother the government too much and reflects as self-censorship which the journalist already knows at this point what to write and what not to write. They are familiar with the expectation of the company they work for so they automatically apply self-censorship and if they do not, they are aware that they can get fired or go to jail.

For well-established journalists in national media, the relevant pressures, whether they come from owners, advertisers or politicians or combinations of these acting in a consensus forged by common interests, comprise an open secret. The result often takes the form of self-censorship amongst media professionals who interiorize political, economic, and market-based constraints... Indeed, the most pressing challenges journalists have to cope with concern the security of their jobs, professional autonomy as well as the protection of press freedom in the face of media concentration and commercialization trends (Guyot 2009, 13).

This brings us to the problematic relationship of precarity and self-censorship. In 2000s the media in Turkey even experienced “censorship in advance” which refers to the censorship of the unpublished work or a media organization in the process of founding (Sahin 2013). Haluk Sahin claims that many business owners refuse to buy ad space from the newly founded media organizations that might seem risky in terms of attracting attention of the government (Sahin 2013). Low wages, unregistered and/or freelance work, inadequate social conditions, the pressure from the political and economic elite are the primary elements of precarity and thus contributors to the self-censorship (White 2014). The legal protection of the journalists has been almost abolished when the article 212 lost its effectiveness in front of the media owners. According to the article 212 a journalist has the right to annul their contract and collect the compensation in case of resignation or layoff, which provides a strong sense of job security against the media owners (Yanardag 2004). This legal protection places the journalists beyond the mercy of the boss and relatively provides independence (Yanardag 2004). However, most of the interviewees are not registered as a media worker, which is the basic condition of the article and thus exempts them

from the article 212. When I asked Burak about his status of social insurance and registration, he replied that he did not know his registered status but probably not as a media worker.

Alongside of the entwined challenge of precarity and censorship in the traditional media, when I asked if they feel safer and more independent working for an alternative media organization, the responses I received were a mixture of yes and no. They mostly feel more independent since the harsh capitalist media ownership does not apply in this area. However, Ezgi makes an interesting note about feeling independent. She says,

I do not feel either economically safer or independent. I worry about the future of my workplace. Working at an alternative media organization does not mean that self-censorship is no longer a problem. We are trying to cover every news story but we are being careful. We are worried of course.

Hakan states similar worries as well. According to him, in terms of the economy and sustainability there is no feeling of safety. No alternative media organization is able to offer safety. Yes, a stronger sense of freedom exists, but there is no absolute freedom. You can be arrested easily. Even a reader can go to jail just because she/he shares a certain link on social media platforms. For Hakan the difference of alternative media is that the journalists decide the level of risk they take. He says,

There is always another way to express yourself or report your news.

Since he is a freelance journalist Kerim delivers what a freelance writer goes through. He points out the fact that he is not paid regularly or he does not receive the promised amount of money all the time. Since he does not always know when to receive the next paycheck and does not have social insurance, there is no feeling of safety for him. He still depends on his family's financial support to make a living in addition to his side job as DJ.

A scandal broke out during the preparation of this research section. One of the most popular alternative media organizations *Dokuz8 Haber* was on the spot for the labour

exploitation and the cover up for an alleged bully in the organization. The story broke when the journalist and a former employee of the *Dokuz8 Haber* Safak Timur tweeted that the management forced her to work with a man who assaulted her (Ugantas 2018). Timur's tweet about her assailant being protected by *Dokuz8 Haber* started uproar among alternative media journalists. The founder of the news website Gokhan Bicici published a statement declaring that they parted ways with the assailant and are never going to employ that person, however Timur revealed that Bicici was one of the first people that she told about the assault (Ugantas 2018). Following her tweets four journalists resigned from the organization. Timur also pointed out that there is no systematic mechanism in the sector that protects the victim against victimization once more and thus social media exposure becomes the only way to be heard (Ugantas 2018). Also another former employee of the alleged news website claimed that there are full-time employees who have no social insurance and the organization turns a blind eye on labour exploitation (Ugantas 2018). After the outrage towards *Dokuz8*, Journalists Union of Turkey and Basın-Is branch of the Confederation of Progressive Unions of Turkey declared their full legal support to those who are affected by the exploitation (Ugantas 2018).

It is pitiful to see the cases from the alternative media organizations like *Dokuz8 Haber* or the case of Kerim. Alternative media is a space full of potentials in terms of embracing aspiring writers and journalists, providing autonomy and improving working conditions. However, unpaid interns and workers who work long hours and the socio-economic ability to tolerate these conditions widen the gap among media employees (Hesmondhalgh 2015, 11). As mentioned before, this type of incidents could be analyzed as a proof that alternative media in Turkey only as alternative in terms of the mainstream media. I have not observed any fundamental and systemic transformation of the media system in the alternative media organizations.

3.2. ON UNIONIZATION AND SOLIDARITY

When the issues as the labour rights, unionization and solidarity are brought to the table, the approach of the interviewees is almost completely in the same place as the big media conglomerates. They are distant towards joining the Journalists Union of Turkey since most of the interviewees think that it is an inefficient and irrelevant

institution that needs to renovate itself. Additionally, the interviewees did not demonstrate any enthusiasm about establishing their own association or any platform to create solidarity in the sector or to defend the rights of journalism with a more collective spirit.

Founding a union for the workers of alternative media organization is out of question for the interviewees. First, they think it is quite impossible since the alternative media itself is not there yet and as the second reason most of the online journalists and workers in the alternative media organizations appear to be a regular employee at a simple company. Before law they are not registered in the social insurance system as the workers of a media organization.

According to the official statistics of Ministry of Labour and Social Security the ratio of unionization in the media sector was 64.37 per cent in 1994 (Ucak 2011, 393). This numbers rapidly dropped to 39.17 per cent by 2000 (Ucak 2011, 393). By 2011 the ratio is approximately is 25 per cent according to the data of the Journalists Union of Turkey (Ucak 2011, 393) and as of today the Journalists Union of Turkey (TGS 2018) has 1260 members, which sounds quite weak in numbers, though it is hard to put in any context due to the registration of most of the media workers as an ordinary office worker. In spite of the negative attitude towards unionization among alternative media journalists in Turkey, unionization rate in the world tends to increase. At least 2,000 employees from various digital media organizations such as *Salon*, *Slate*, *Vice*, *Vox* and *the Intercept* have become members of NewsGuild and the Writers Guild of America East according to a special report published by Columbia Journalism Review (Greenhouse 2018). Journalist Umit Otan's words could be considered as reassurance of the CJR report. Otan states that a journalist who is not a part of a union is not independent; they cannot report either accurately or seriously; they are not capable of placing themselves within the struggle for democracy (as quoted in Ucak 2011, 393).

Hakan as a manager who sits in the opposite side of the table of the employees explains the reason why unionization is not on the table for media workers:

The existing unions could not grow enough to bring people together. Actually they shrank down and stayed in that position. I do not know what the problem

is in the unions; I am not a member. The thing is that those structures do not give trust to the people and are not reliable in terms of sustainability. I speak for the employees of course.

Ezgi also thinks that the issue of unionization is an obsolete story as the unions themselves are old and outdated. She states that the ruling class has never allowed unions to be active and she has never been enthusiastic about being in that fight. The statements of the interviewees enlighten why unionization is not considered to be a matter of discussion anymore. This attitude of most of the journalists is one of the main reasons why journalism has lost the chance of defending its rights and is fighting to survive today. Yanardag finds journalists as much responsible and guilty as the media owners, since they had never said a word during the process of violation of the press freedom and the enforced process of deunionization (Yanardag 2008, 179).

Leman is the only interviewee who brought up the problem of the registration of alternative media organizations as an ordinary company, thus placing media employees in a position no more different than an employee of a service sector company. Since they are not recognized as a registered media worker, they are not subject to the article 212 that allows journalists to nullify their labour contract and recover damages. Journalists Union of Turkey has recently announced that they will take action about the proper registration of the online media organizations. According to their statement, they will encourage the media organizations to register as a media organization in the government's system and media workers to be a member of the union (Ugantas 2018). If any of the organizations fail in proper registration, the union will get in touch with the funders of that organization and also will get in touch with the authorities. The union seems to be taking the issue seriously and in general considers being more active in the sector (Ugantas 2018).

Leman is also probably the only one who thinks that the journalists must care about the problem and pursue to earn the right to move beyond this. She gives the example of Dogan Media workers' becoming a member of the Journalists Union of Turkey after the selling. She thinks the reason why might be the fear of losing their job or it might be the fight for workers' rights, nonetheless she points out that there is no

systematic thinking underneath. Still it seems like a 'save the day' tactic and that's why the journalists should develop more permanent strategies in order to defend their rights.

Kerim is one of two among the interviewees of this research who was a member of the Journalists Union of Turkey; at least he was for a while. His was also due to the advantage that the union membership provides for the time he worked in Chile on an assignment, it was not due to any ideological purposes or occupational consciousness. Kerim claims,

I never felt that I could count on the union. When there is a press conference or a protest organized by the union, you do not see many journalists to come together and support each other. It is either journalists from a few left-wing newspapers or the journalists who are present to report or broadcast.

In terms of a sense of solidarity within the profession the journalists state that there is no feeling of solidarity or an effort to build a support system among journalists. Ezgi states that the only solidarity happens when a journalist goes on a trial. She says other than the trial times the journalists feel lucky if they still have a job. That's why they are not in a position to defend their rights, let alone unionization. Adnan says that as an organization they support their colleagues by exposing any attempts of censorship from the political power and they attend trials to write a news story to inform the public. Hakan acknowledges that many alternative media journalists has come from the traditional mass media which ended up in bringing old habits into the digital world such as one-way communication, not building a community, no feeling of strong solidarity, etc. There is not much room for dialogue and solidarity, because it is not very easy to deal with a lot of editor-in-chiefs. However, Hakan finds solidarity in some other areas:

Medyascope is one of the best examples. Rusen Cakir had to be very rich if he wanted to pay every content creator. *Diken* is also a place where unemployed journalists write voluntarily. If they asked to be paid, *Diken* could not be able to pay them. So this is solidarity. We benefit from that solidarity as well; a lot of people produce news stories for us. I tell them that we do not have the

budget to pay, the response I get is 'it is not for money. I just do not want to waste my time doing nothing. I want to contribute.'

Although Hakan concludes that in terms of a bigger occupational solidarity, the rights of workers and independent journalism, the environment of alternative media is not ready yet. Neither political environment nor economic environment is fit for that kind of solidarity. This statement of Hakan is not a hopeful one unfortunately. In that matter I observed throughout the interviews that in the alternative media sector it seems like certain people form their small networks in order to keep doing journalism in their own terms and standards. They do not want to interact other journalists or build an occupational network. The reason behind this unwillingness could be the worry about the attention of the government. They want to keep things low key as much as possible but also they want to do their job on a satisfactory level.

3.3. ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN SEARCH FOR A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC MODEL

Despite the statements about that the rise of alternative media is due to the need for fulfillment of the void in mass media, the interviewees express that alternative media is not that much of an alternative for the faults of the traditional mainstream media such as precarity, employee rights and profit concern. They all agreed on the need to find a sustainable economic model without falling in the trap of the triangle of politics, business and media. Because of the lack of income and low budgets, most of the time writers work voluntarily with no social insurance, which leaves the copyright issue out of the equation and thus increases the rate of plagiarism. The lack of financial resources roughly ends up producing poor quality work and exploitation of workers. Alper describes this situation of alternative media as getting things done under the counter. Hakan sees the roots of the problem laying behind the fact that since the backgrounds of the most online journalists go back to the traditional mass media, the same maladies keep appearing on digital, especially deunionization has a big effect on the issue. Criticisms are mostly on the theoretical basis, not applied to real life. He continues,

Big companies post news online and manipulate the audience for the benefit of their needs and profits. The small organizations whose ambition is to only practice journalism cannot find enough financial resource to grow and eventually when they find it, it is only sufficient to barely survive. It should not be treated as injustice when a big media company pays 100 Turkish Lira per piece and a small alternative media organization pays less or nothing.

Hakan claims that people who write for smaller news websites are already aware of the conditions they work under and they accept that. Those small places always have to look for funding because it is almost impossible for them to make enough money only through the production of content. Funding and finding a financial resource are the major problems in the current situation. He admits that they have to be careful about the exploitation of the workers and asserts that all of them have been looking for a way to a sustainable economic model for journalism. However, he worries that their efforts will be dying in case they cannot find a sustainable economic model anytime soon.

When it comes to the economic structure of alternative organizations, they seem to be struggling to find an inventive and sustainable financial model. They try to either find funding or to sell ad space, which means following the footsteps of the traditional mass media. Adnan's organization had the initial capital and they try to stand on their feet by adding onto it and they also make use of Google ads. Hakan says they receive funds and additionally sell ad space as well. However, selling ad space and earning from advertising for alternative media organizations are pretty tough since the big ad buyers in telecommunication, energy, construction, automotive, banking, retail and tourism are mostly interested in the media organizations that please the government. If the government does not like a certain media organization and labels them as terrorists, anarchists or dissidents, the companies that can bring money to the table avoid buying ad space from them.

Even if earning money from advertising were not a political issue, I strongly believe that alternative media should find a new business model that sets itself apart from the capitalist mainstream media organizations in order to eliminate all of the problems that the journalists and the audience face. Remembering the Blindspot Debate of

Dallas Smythe (1977), pursuing a financial model based on advertising still means the exploitation of the audience as labour no matter if you do it on an online platform or on a traditional media platform. As Eran Fisher points out, digital media gives a remarkable opportunity for a horizontal and decentralized structure with active audience (Fisher 2014, 129). Therefore, being stuck in old models having proved their weakness in front of the innovative technologies is likely to end up failing.

Even top international newspapers understood the way they could exist in digital and what opportunities the platform has to offer. The Guardian is one of those examples. The British newspaper sees their members as their audience and supporters and thus shares its stories from the newsroom with them via weekly emails (Skibinski 2019, 11).

At The Guardian, the team began to center on a strategy, O'Grady [Communications Director for Guardian News & Media] described as the "Relationship Strategy" approach. 'Good strategies tend to be quite simple,' he said. 'This one said, 'we will see our readers become members and supporters and make more significant contribution to our business model.' (Skibinski 2019, 11)

That was not the only way that the newspaper sees its supporters as its partners. The Guardian also launched a podcast series that the readers ask questions recorded by their own voices which led to conversation platform for the paper and the audience (Skibinski 2019, 12). Even though the Guardian is a traditional mainstream media organization, their understanding of digital journalism may be adopted by the alternative media organizations in Turkey since their core structure is quite align with a traditional mass media organization.

Also, funding comes forth as one of the business models that alternative media organizations in Turkey adopt. Some of those organizations as Alper's depend on solely funding. He states that they receive funds from various non-profit associations and organizations. They do not sell any ad space or do not have a system of paid subscription. However, trusting on funding has its handicaps too. There is no guarantee that you will be funded regularly 12 months a year. Apparently, Alper's

organization has hard times of finding funds. From December 2017 to June 2018 they could not find anyone or any institution to support them, therefore many writers had to contribute voluntarily and thus the frequency of production of content decreased significantly.

The distinctive financial model came from Burak. His organization founded a digital advertising agency where they produce content for brands and give consultation services for social media. That agency acts like their parent company and is their source of income. Even though so far this is the most sustainable financial model, this raises questions of conflict of interest between clients and their news productions. Additionally, even though this model seems like a creative solution, it still is within the limits of the capitalist system. The model is yet to include the audience as an essential part of the organization.

Yet there are many alternative media organizations that prove the methods outside of advertising and funding could actually work in the long run. Those alternative media organizations in different parts of the world embrace two-way communication and a collective-type business model. California-based *The Young Turks*, *Bristol Cable* from UK or *The Correspondent* are just a few that come to mind. *Eldiario.es* from Spain and *The Young Turks (TYT)* from the U.S. could be used as models. *Eldiario.es* has more than 30 thousand members that pay 60 € or more on a yearly basis and they offer the chance of ad-free website and free participation for their various events where they meet their audience funders (Cenberli 2018). A Spanish supporter states that donating or paying subscription for an alternative media organization is a public service for her/him (Cenberli 2018). *TYT* is a more complex case. *TYT* could be perceived as the real life practice of what Christian Fuchs and Marisol Sandoval offer which is the using marketing and public relations tactics of capitalism in order to overcome the capitalist mass media. *TYT* embraces a digital marketing strategy as well as mostly being dependent on the subscription revenues. They also have a digital store called 'Shop TYT' that sells clothing items and accessories with their logo and political messages on them. They very much care about the TYT network, which is the platform to meet their audience and have strong bonds with Wolf-Pac National that is a non-profit organization aiming to remove corruption from the U.S. politics (Cenberli 2018).

These alternative media organizations have implemented some components of Horst Holzer's suggestion for an alternative system. Holzer suggested a system where the audience is part of the production alongside the trade unions and journalist collectives (Fuchs 2017, 694). That would be the system to transform the capitalist mass media into a true alternative media. This cooperative model reverses the mentality of the profitable news (Boyle 2012, 4). By placing itself above and beyond a profit-making business a cooperative media organization and thus journalism will have stronger understanding and application of ethics (Boyle 2012, 14).

Employee-owned newspapers would respond to the collective desire of the journalists to be well-regarded, trusted and secure in their work, and would be well placed to end the bullying culture that senior officers have used to keep many concerned journalists in check for a fear of dismissal (Boyle 2012, 13).

This type of administration and management of a media organization simply means the dislocation of the capitalist system. The search for a sustainable financial model also indicates that precarity is not only a problem for the media workers; it is also a significant problem for the owners of the alternative media organizations. They feel the burden of voluntary writers and journalists; feel the lack of providing a worthy workplace and conditions and feel the constant worry of losing what they have built in a very short period of time.

However, when I tried to open up a new discussion about building a sustainable model based on the audience support in order to at least hear some ideas other than the old methods, most of the interviewees do not have a positive perspective. Except Kerim and Burak, the interviewees neither believe in that the audience support would work for them nor never pursued to build an interactive relationship with their followers. Leman asserts that they do not have an interactive communication with the audience as Adnan also made clear that they are not open to having a close relationship with the audience or to embrace a donation policy. The reason why they are not open to the support of the audience, as Hakan claims, is that every effort towards relying on that has failed or is pretty close to fail. The media organization that Ezgi works for is one of the few alternative media organizations that embrace the audience support policy as one of their financial models. However, Ezgi indicates that

they do not receive donations as much as they had expected. If they relied solely on the donations from the audience, they would probably go bankrupt until now. According to Hakan, this is due to the copyright issue. People are willing to pay 1 TL for a newspaper but they prefer to read online news for free, because it is so easy to reach the same content on many other websites for free. He continues,

When I pay a writer to produce content for me, we can read that copy-pasted content in 30 different websites in no time. If I go after that illegal publication and sue them, the price of a lawyer and the legal process will cost more than I can afford. Also there is no guarantee that I would win the case since the independence of judiciary is problematic as well.

When we look into the results of a research centered on the U.S., Spain and the UK, the percentage of donations by the audience are pretty low in those countries as well. The numbers are three per cent for the U.S., two per cent for Spain and one per cent for the UK (Cenberli 2018). The numbers reach 25 per cent only under the condition of that the participants agree that that media organization can barely survive. Donations mostly come from the millennial generation and they are willing to make donations to more than one media organization. What motivate the audience to donate are political reasons for the most part. The media systems supported by unions or cooperatives are most likely to receive donations rather than the other types of media organizations (Cenberli 2018).

Kerim questions the fact that how much of a transformation the journalists in alternative media have achieved in terms of creating a community and having the audience support. He points out that most of them comes from the traditional media with the habits of one-way communication of active producer and passive consumer. As a freelance writer he tries to be in touch with his followers, answering their messages and joining the discussions in order to build a strong communication.

Since most of the alternative media organizations that my interviewees work for have not built an interactive relationship with their audience when I asked about if they feel any support or receive any reaction in case of a censorship applied by BTK (the Association of Information and Technology), they acknowledged that they have not

witnessed anything like that. Ezgi also stated a different perspective on the matter of the audience support. She claims that the audience is afraid to speak up and openly support an organization, because they are aware of what it means to live under the state of emergency and to have the risk of getting arrested. Her claim is supported by the Reuters Digital News Report (2018) as well. 65 per cent of the participants agree with the statement about that they are being careful on expressing their political views on the Internet, because that may cause to get in trouble with the authorities, which places Turkey at the top of the list in that category (Diken 2018).

A good example for the audience support only comes from Burak. His organization is so far one of the best examples of creating a sense of community and receiving the audience support when in need. They create discussion groups with maximum 100 participants on a closed messaging application and set a certain topic related to their research project. They ask the participants to share their opinions and stories about the subject. He says that what the participants share help them frame the editorial process.

If there is a story we want to specifically include into the video, we offer that person an interview. So this is like a new kind of citizen journalism for us. We have built our community and try to protect that relationship.

Even though Burak's organization does not receive donations from the audience, there has been a time that they needed crowd funding and it successfully worked. The need emerged when their old office was robbed which cost them the loss of materials like computers, cameras, hard discs etc. and thus cost the halt of news production. In order to compensate their loss they needed 30.000 TL, so they found the solution in asking for help from the audience. They took a video that five or six of them explained how the robbery happened at night while they were downstairs and why they needed the help of the audience to get back on their feet again. In eight or nine days they managed to collect 30.000 TL. Although the organization Burak works at does not necessarily embrace all the elements of a cooperative/collective type business model that I try to offer throughout this research, even the bits and pieces of it prove the success of the model. In a way his organization adopts an open and honest relationship with its audience and keeps the communication alive, which pays back in times of need. Mario Tronti's term social factory (as quoted in Fuchs 2014) could be

applied inverse here. The audience became a part of the production system within capitalism, but this time the audience has become the funder of the factory.

However, the alternative media journalists in Turkey still look for solutions in the neoliberal market structure, which is totally against the spirit of the kind of journalism they have been doing recently. They either expect wealthy people to take care of them and fund their business or expect to earn from advertising which is quite harder due to the political pressure on the private sector where to advertise and where not to advertise. Ezgi underlines that dilemma by stating that there would be no absolute freedom the minute a businessman buys the organization she works for. None of the interviewees mentioned the thought of starting an employee-owned organization or a collective/cooperative type organization, although there are several cases in Europe and the U.S., which proves that active participation of the audience actually works.

In spite of the hopeless attitude towards the seek for a sustainable financial model and prejudice for active communication with the audience of the alternative media in Turkey, *The Correspondent* could set a sample case for us. A U.S. based Dutch news website *The Correspondent* has been built its financial model on the subscription instead of advertising which indicates they perceive their audience as active members of their organization and promises editorial transparency, representation of a big variety of communities and groups as much as possible and most of all promises that *The Correspondent* will express their point of view instead of pretending that they have no opinion (Kilic 2018). They raised \$2.5 million from 42,780 members in 29 days, which means that the organization will launch in the second half of 2019 (@The Correspondent, December 13, 2018). This one example covers almost all the missing factors in the alternative media of Turkey: building a two-way communication with the audience allowing to create a community sense and a public sphere, building a participatory financial model independent from the neoliberal market structure, and the importance of expressing opinion without getting caught up with unjust bias.

3.4. DEALING WITH BLOCKING: ALTERNATIVE TO THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA

Due to the relentless efforts of the government to silence the free press, the time and energy consuming process of re-writing the blocked article and the possibility of being labelled, most of the interviewees gave up on dealing with blocking.

Hakan stated that they do not make noise about blockings because of the possibility of being misunderstood as a media activist organization. Even though he emphasized that they respect media activists, he asserts that they do not want to be labelled as such. He says,

If any of our articles get blocked, we stay silent and move on. A few of them were political, the rest was due to complaints of individuals. If we pursue any legal action, we have to allocate a certain amount of money from the budget. Instead we can use that amount to produce more news stories and to pay our writers to produce more.

He gives the example of lawsuits of insulting the President:

They might sue me for insulting the President and I might go to jail, which is fine. But also, they demand for compensation in the amount of 50,000 Turkish Lira or 100,000 Turkish Lira. Neither I can make that payment nor my organization. So yes, we deal with the political pressure indirectly and equally as everyone else does.

The rest of the interviewees also note that after a certain point they stopped keeping up with blockings since they are fruitless efforts in the end. Hakan finds the solution in finding new ways to do sustainable journalism, not in exposing the injustice that has been done to them. They try to alter whatever it is that has disturbed the government and to keep practicing ethical journalism. This gives the impression of that the government is still able to shape the way journalism is being done in the country, even though alternative media seems to be challenging, they are careful about not attracting the attention of the government.

In a way he also makes a confession that no other interviewees dared to make:

We are alternative in the sense of the mainstream media.

He emphasizes that they appear to be alternative since the mainstream media has been brutally destroyed. In fact they try to do journalism on standard journalism norms: liberal, democratic and independent. Due to the current political and economic situation in Turkey and the causes it has generated on media that journalism appears to be opponent. Though he also mentions a significant difference as Ezgi also mentioned before. Alternative media organizations have more reputation and are more effective than the traditional mainstream media, because they do not have any gimmicks on their economy pages to please the government. By speaking about gimmicks on economy pages the interviewees touch on a controversial issue: the advertorial content. A French journalist reminds us that the emergence of the advertorial content is due to the financial struggle that the press has been dealing with and in case of a critical article on another page about the buyer company of that advertorial content could cost an expensive advertising revenue (Guyot 2009, 12). The incompetence of finding an innovative financial and business model that could save the press from its strings causes a blurred relationship between the editorial and financial elements (Guyot 2009, 12). But the question remains for alternative media: Imagining that there is no alleged political pressure on the private sector about buying advertising space from certain news outlets – would they accept publishing an advertorial content that is not in conflict with their editorial line if they are offered a satisfactory agreement?

On the other hand, Burak's organization hasn't faced a political censorship yet. Only one of their links on Twitter was censored when the content of an explosion included a violent scene and it was censored only in Turkey. Burak also thinks that it is no big deal, because what matters is the first few minutes of the story to be watched or read online, in the digital world the worth of a news story fades away rapidly anyhow.

A curious claim about an example for the issue of censorship comes from Kerim. Once Kerim's editors from the alternative media organization he works at as a freelancer refused to publish one of his articles on the corruption in Turkish football

linked to a Turkish bank and a foreign businessman. Their excuse was that they hired him to write pieces about sports, but this particular piece of his was about politics, which he was not expected to write on. Kerim asserted that he defended his article by stating that he does not only write about scores or how much money a transfer cost to this or that team, he writes about political economy of football as well. However, he did not succeed in having his article published. Considering the reason why many journalists work at alternative media organizations, it sounds like an oxymoron to hear a story like this happened in an alternative media organization when the rise of them is highly linked to the similar practices in the traditional mainstream media. This case is an important token on that an alternative media organization might practice the same pressuring mechanism on freedom of expression and the free press if the management feels like that they might get in trouble with the government and/or the ruling elite.

3.5. ON THE POLITICAL PRESSURE IN THE SHAPE OF REGULATION AND THE CHANGE IN OWNERSHIP

During my research two major news broke out for Turkish media. The first one was the new regulation of Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK) on online broadcasting that allows the institution to control and monitor all the visual content on the Internet. According to the new regulation, RTUK can ban any online broadcast that does not have a right to broadcast or any license and it may ban the online division of the media companies whose licenses got cancelled (BBC 2018). While the regulation has been widely criticized over the concerns of the freedom of expression and the censorship, the government claimed that they try to prevent any misbehaviour that may threaten the moral values of Turkish people (BBC 2018). After the negative reactions voiced by the public, the president of RTUK made a new statement that the new regulation does not target the social media accounts or news websites; it only targets the online broadcasting platforms as *Netflix*, *Puhu* and *BluTv* (Milliyet 2018). Even then this statement did not satisfy the public since there are news websites as *Medyascope.tv* that are online broadcasting platforms. Therefore I felt the need to add the question of what the interviewees think about the new regulation and the efforts to silence the Internet.

Ezgi takes the issue on a broader sense. She claims that the political power wants to have control over the information flow as in any other country in the world. More confident governments may let loose the control a little more comparing to the others, but in the case of something disturbing happens they want to be in a position to stop or to put it out of sight. She says that regarding the fact that the new source of power is information in the 21st century more authoritarian and insecure governments build the mechanisms of control and monitor. And she goes on,

I do not know how much it will affect us, but I have to go on as if nothing has changed. If it affects us, we will find another way to do our job. This is my job and I will continue to do it no matter what.

Alper and Kerim think of the new regulation as a futile effort since it is almost impossible to ban anything on the Internet. As the veterans of the media in Turkey Adnan and Hakan think that they will not be affected by the new regulation. They also take the issue on a deeper level claiming that the government has all the means to control and pressure the alternative media, thus there is no need for another regulation to censor the online news websites. Hakan says,

Any bureaucrat can shut us down. If we pursue to defend our rights, they issue a decree stating that our organization is against the law and thus the employees cannot work anymore. That is it. We are over. So there is no barrier to ban online publishing.

Leman and Burak think that they will be affected but nothing has happened yet. They will wait and see what happens in case of the execution of the regulation.

On the other hand the Internet as a communication network works for the benefit of politics and hegemony. Even though a computer has no boundaries as political institutions have, the Internet networks can serve as a surveillance program for the states. Particularly in the authoritarian states information and communication technologies allow a space for censorship (Dijk 2016, 148). Many utopian Internet advocates have failed to recognize how the authoritarian states could turn information and communication technologies into a control and censorship mechanism. That's

why having an access to the Internet and using it do not mean that the Internet can build direct democracy; the modern society is too complex for that (Dijk 2016, 157). We are so fascinated by the Internet sometimes we overlook the facts in reality. For instance, 40,000 government employees are only in charge of scanning and filtering the websites in China, especially the antagonist websites, social media profiles and blogs are exposed to the government surveillance (Dijk 2016, 203). The more democratic countries use the online surveillance methods to prevent illegal activities such as child porn (Dijk 2016, 203). Although the Snowden case proves Dijk wrong in his assumption on “the more democratic countries.”

The second major news that broke out during my research was the selling of the biggest media company in Turkey from Dogan Media Group to Demiroren Group which cost \$916 million (Dunya 2018). Demiroren Group has close ties with the government, which means the selling was the completion of the transformation of the traditional mainstream media for a fully controlled mass media structure. Thereby the sell opened new discussions in particular for alternative media. The crisis in the mainstream media could be an opportunity for alternative media to grow even more. However, the interviewees do not see it as an opportunity for themselves, but they all have different reasons about why they do not. Ezgi believes that it is risky to benefit from the situation and to put oneself forward in times like this, because anything you do could count as illegal or as a terrorist crime. She also thinks that the audience needs to demonstrate some effort if they want to reach the truth and ethical journalism. Leman is on the side of ‘not an opportunity’ but her reason why the selling should not be treated as such is that in spite of its many faults she thinks that Dogan Media was the oldest mass media company left behind and had the culture of harbouring journalists from all sorts of views and backgrounds. She also claims that people will keep reading *Hurriyet* in spite of its possible downfall in near future since humans are creatures of habit. For Adnan nothing has changed with the selling of Dogan Media. According to him, 90 per cent of media is already directly or indirectly under the control of the government. Dogan Media was under the indirect control and now with its selling to Demiroren Group it is under the direct control of the government. He continues,

I do not mean to underestimate the importance of the selling; in the end it is not good news. Nonetheless, it is early to claim that this will pave the way for independent journalism. Time will show us what is going to happen in the future.

Hakan thinks that the selling of Dogan Media Group is not very important for alternative independent media. He reminds that Dogan Group supported all of the economic policies of the government and fought against the opposing ideas positioning itself next to the government and the ruling party:

If Erdogan called the Nationalist Movement Party as a fascist party, they called that party fascist too. If Erdogan called them his nationalist brothers, they called them brothers too. So, if there had been any opportunity to support alternative media, it would have happened back then.

He also believes that the reason behind the selling was not political, but economic. Reminding the fact that Aydin Dogan kept the digital platforms of the media group, according to Hakan, Dogan sold a holding that had the high potential of losing money. On the other hand selling of *Dogan News Agency* is the biggest concern of Hakan about this issue. Even though it is not a great news agency and has many faults, *Dogan News Agency* is a big network with its contacts in and out of the country. For the alternative media organizations like Hakan's it is impossible to establish as a big news agency as Dogan's.

Another worry comes from Kerim. His question about the selling was whether *YaySat*, the biggest distributor in the media sector in Turkey, will continue to distribute the newspapers that the government is not pleased with. However, shortly after the interview with Kerim, *YaySat* was shut down by its new owners Demiroren Group, making the Turkuvaz Group the only distributor in the country (Gazi 2018). According to an open letter by an old vendor of *YaySat* this shutdown cost 30,000 people to lose their job (Journo 2018). Kerim's worry on the distribution of the opponent newspapers is not feasible due to the article 23 of the Press Law, which obliges a distribution company to distribute any kind of newspaper on a mutual reasonable contract. However after the shutdown of *YaySat*, the distribution of

newspapers depends on a monopoly structure and as Ceren Sozeri points out nothing is impossible in Turkey (Gazi 2018). A possible solution was mentioned by the editor in chief of the left wing newspaper *Evrensel* Fatih Polat after indirectly having forced to sign a deal with Turkuvaz Group. Polat stated that if there would be a need, they could look for ways to build a distribution company funded by various campaigns and events with the other like-minded publications; however he thinks that it still is a fantastic idea and if it ever became a reality, the vendors would be harassed (Gazi 2018).

Kerim also states that the journalists might turn towards the alternative media, but it is hard to say the same for the audience. The only person who sees the selling as an opportunity is Alper. He even wrote an article about the possible opportunity as an outcome of the selling. In his article he strongly defends his point by emphasizing that it is a real opportunity for alternative media, even though everyone else is busy with complaining about how 90 per cent of media has become a lapdog of the palace. He embraces a more proactive attitude comparing to the other interviewees. Alper suggests establish new alternative media organizations; strengthen the existing ones and work for founding news agencies. Even though this is the best time to shine, he thinks the problems within alternative media are the actual challenges to move forward. He points out the fact that more than anything many alternative media organizations are not willing to learn about the digital world. Most of the time they copy and paste articles, plagiarize and they fill up the whole website with advertising. He says,

Then they find no one to support their crowd funding. Why would I pay for a copy-paste article and a website full of ads?

He highlights the importance of having well prepared content based on scientific data. If they achieve in creating that type of content, he claims that the audience will support them financially. Burak is also more positive about the issue. He thinks that the certain times of crisis in the mainstream media, people turn towards to the alternatives. He gives the example of the Gezi protests:

After each street protest, the followers of our organization highly increased. Because they cannot get the news from the mainstream media and thus they check social media and other digital platforms. Each incident like the corruption protests, the protests against the Internet censorship or the death of Berkin Elvan increased our number of audience.

He observes that when people convince that the mainstream media do not cover what is actually going on, they go to digital media. When people cannot breathe anymore, they go to a place where they can, which leads them to start reading and watching alternative media. Digital News Report 2018 of Reuters Institute proves Burak right. According to the report, 66 per cent of the Turkish people use social media for news, 30 per cent use Whatsapp to discuss the news and 56 per cent share news via social media or email (Digital News Report 2018). 86 per cent use online platforms as sources of news and 26 per cent pay to read online news (Digital News Report 2018).

Though Burak warns against the danger of getting caught up with the wind of crisis, because he thinks it would be illusive to expect the public to abandon the traditional mainstream media right away. However, throughout the process alternative media will be a rising star in time.

One of the most important journalists and owner of a popular alternative media organization, Rusen Cakir made a commentary video about the selling of Dogan Media Group, which I think that it has to be included in this research since he analyzes the situation thoroughly. Rusen Cakir (2018) accepts that the selling meant the end of an era but it does not mean a beginning of a new era for the mainstream media in Turkey. He explains the reason why as that this has been a process of destruction in culture, education, etc. and this is a new phase of the process. He reads the selling as an investment of the government for the 2019 elections (his commentary was published online before the government's decision on early elections on June 24, 2018) (Cakir 2018). According to Cakir (2018), the ruling class has seen the current structure of the mainstream media as an obstacle getting in the way of succeeding in the elections. He sees the silver lining in that the illusion of the mainstream media has ended and goes on saying,

Of course the place that could satisfy the need for information and press freedom is vanishing. People will turn to social media, but hard times are waiting for social media as well. Many people keep saying that our organization is the only place left, but that is not a realistic approach. We have been here for almost three years. However, people who want to be informed and to access the news do not make enough effort. For us the selling means the enclosing bracket of the process. If anyone wants to attribute more responsibilities on our shoulders, they should also remember that they have their own responsibilities as well. (Cakir 2018)

He thinks that the audience has to financially support alternative media organizations if they think those organizations are the ones to fill the void in media. He finishes his commentary as the following:

The world discusses about citizen journalism, but at the same time they discuss how journalism should be supported by citizens as well. (Cakir 2018)

However, the efforts of maintaining the traditional media mentality within the new media space will not deliver the expected outcome.

It is undeniable that Cakir's project *Medyascope.tv* is one of the most influential alternative media organizations in Turkey and in many aspects it is a successful project, especially in terms of the usage of digital platforms, horizontal management style and independence. However, the same problem appears in *Medyascope.tv* as well. They embrace a one-way communication, just like television, in which the audience is passive in front of their computers or mobile devices instead of a television set. Cakir speaks about how other journalists complain that they do not have enough audience to make money, but he states that if a journalist has something serious to say, then the audience will read and watch that journalist (Unal 2017, 90). However, a few years later Cakir on this commentary video about the Dogan Media selling complains that the audience does not support them enough (Cakir 2018). *Medyascope.tv* has something serious to say and they have a quite number of people that follow and watch them. Then what is the problem? The problem is in the age of digitalism in which everyone has a voice and everyone is in dialogue, the audience

expects to interact with the platform they follow. Most of the old methods of traditional mass media have lost validity for online journalism. What distinguishes alternative media from the traditional mainstream media is that its ability to create communities and to open ways for a dialogue wherever you are and whenever you want. Ragip Duran (2018) comes up with a similar idea, not just for alternative media, but also for the mass media as a whole. In his article Duran suggests creating a parliament of journalists consisting of professional journalists, unemployed journalists, academicians, students of communications and activists from non-profit organizations (Duran 2018). People should form local parliaments, discuss what should and needs to be done without waiting any help from an authority and by maintaining the sense of solidarity, proactivity and unity (Duran 2018). Even though Duran's suggestion remains as an article forgotten on a website, comprehending and embracing the opportunities that digital offers to us will be the key to resist the indirect political and economic pressures.

3.6. ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF NEWS AND CITIZEN JOURNALISM

The distribution of news from the news agencies is one of the biggest problems in Turkey for the interviewees. They do not think that *Anadolu Agency* is reliable and accurate at all and they also think that what waits ahead is unknown after the selling of Dogan Media Group and thus the *Dogan News Agency*. Adnan sums up the issue,

The lack of well-written, edited, proofread and ethical news stories is one of our biggest troubles. Especially getting information and understanding what is happening in the borderlands like the East and Southeast of Turkey is quite a challenge for us.

Agreeing with Adnan, Leman thinks that reports distributed by the news agencies and broadcasted on television are heard by millions of people and thus are still more influential than social media. Therefore, in particular with the selling of *Dogan News Agency*, there is a high risk of not knowing, seeing or hearing about the places we cannot reach. Although she believes that local places that need to do something to be heard will find an alternative way against this risk. However, Hakan is more pessimistic about the subject. He states,

For organizations like us it is impossible to build a network as big as Dogan News Agency. If it is going to be like *AA*, darkness is waiting ahead of us. That is my only worry.

It is surprising that none of the interviewees thought about inspiring from the *Associated Press* and its foundational motivation. When the competitors of the New York City newspapers could not handle the usage of the telegraph lines among themselves, they found the solution in cooperating, which brought us the *Associated Press* in the 19th century (Schneider 2017).

In contrast to most consumer publications, the company's business model depends not on virality and click-bait but on trustworthiness. It does what many news organizations claim to do, but none can really accomplish: insulating news-gathering from news-selling. (Schneider 2017)

When I asked about the possible solution for the news agency issue or if citizen journalism could be an answer, the responses I got were either negative or asserting that business people should handle the issue. Coming together for the purpose of building a collective news agency, maybe managed like a cooperative (i.e. the *Associated Press*), is not on the agenda of the interviewees. Adnan and his organization found the solution in analyzing the reports from the news agencies with a professional eye, crosscheck the same story and pull out what the real deal could be, and in following the international news agencies to keep up with what is going on in Turkey. Leman's answer was to motivate the business people to establish an ethical news agency since the job needs capital investment and the business people have responsibilities to take for the public that they were fed on.

3.7. IS ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN TURKEY THE NEW FOURTH ESTATE?

After discussing whether alternative media will be considered as the main platform for news and receiving the answers from the journalists indicating that it is not likely to happen, I wanted to figure out how they position alternative media and if they see any potential for it to be the fourth estate, in particular considering the fact that the discussions around the independent new media and its potential of being a fifth estate

that includes the different parts of cultural works such as film and video producers, bloggers, civic leaders, students and teachers of news literacy, online journalists, not-for-profit organizations focusing on journalism etc. alongside the fourth estate mass media (Clark 2009).

Leman and Ezgi argue that journalism should be practiced without any need for adjectives. According to them, journalism has the responsibility of gatekeeping and thus it should protect that power coming from the responsibility no matter how or where it is done. On the other hand Adnan and Burak see the issue as the matter of time and strength. They both think that alternative media has the potential to be the fourth estate, however it is not potent enough to be considered as one yet. While Adnan thinks that they are at the beginning on the path of being the fourth estate, Burak sets the benchmark as whether or not an alternative media organization is invited to a press conference of the government or could get on a plane with the President and the other media crew. However, Hakan deals with the concept of the fourth estate from a more ideological perspective. The concept indicates the enthusiasm of the state and the function of media for him. He explains his way of understanding as the following:

The state has three estates: legislation, execution and jurisdiction. Media is the fourth one. Additionally, the word public refers to two meanings in Turkish: meaning of belonging to the state and meaning of social/society. That's why media has had the double meaning as well.

He claims that the reason behind why the newspapers and television channels of Dogan Media were considered as the fourth estate was the family's connections with the governments of Turkey throughout the years and the manipulation methods used to influence the public for their own benefits. He admits that media shape the society from this perspective, but also he agrees that before reaching a certain level of power a counter-media system cannot break that cycle of benefits and manipulation. For Hakan the way to reach that power goes through capitalism:

Yes, the state shapes the society through media and economically powerful groups influence the public through media. In theory media is precious for

freedom and democracy, but who is the subject to do it? In the end a media organization will be owned by a certain capital holder and will have a certain staff. Both the capital holder and the staff should embrace the ideology of freedom, justice and democracy. TUSIAD does not have that kind of people, MUSIAD does not either. So, there are very few people left we could hope for their support. Our supporters are among those very few. But that does not provide enough power, which brings certain limitations.

Over and over again, this is the statement belongs to a mindset that hoping a greater being will save the world, in this case it will save journalism. Instead of looking for alternative ways of doing business and instead of going beyond the search of alternative platforms to do journalism, the interviewees are waiting for the capital holders to improve the media sector. None of the interviewees offered any suggestions about neither abandoning the current system nor the transformation of the neoliberal capitalist structure of the media sector. The problem is that they do not see the problem in the capitalist political economic structure, they perceive the problem as the problem of standard journalism and as the problem of Turkey's current political economic structure.

3.8. ALL THEY HAVE IS HOPE

In spite of all the negativities, financial problems, political pressure, precarity and the feeling of lack of support from the audience, the interviewees are still hopeful for the future of journalism in Turkey. Ezgi believes the importance of motivating the young journalists by setting an example.

There is no right not to hope. The world is not revolved around our country. The reason every day I come to the office instead of working from home is to influence young people with my enthusiasm.

She considers all of this as a matter of willingness to fight for media and its freedom. It seems to be dark times ahead of us in the short haul, but every movement produces its counter-movement. So, everything will change eventually.

Claiming that journalism in Turkey is finished is an insult for the workers of alternative media organizations according to Adnan. He acknowledges the fact that they cannot write at the levels of freedom and democracy they desire, but to him it does not mean that their hands are tied:

The ones who want to do journalism always find a way. The discourse of censorship covers up one thing: when it snows in Istanbul, you go to the top of a skyscraper and it looks wonderful covered in white. Snow covers the ugliness, the dirt. The pressure on the press in Turkey has that function as well. To me the biggest problem is the unqualified media, from news writing to the shallowness of the columns... It is impossible to do investigative journalism. There are many problems within the profession itself and the discourse of censorship conceals it all. That's why independent media should deal with this side of the issue as well.

Leman also points out the same struggle of journalism in Turkey. She is hopeful but she believes that she could be more hopeful if journalism in Turkey were more qualified. She thinks of it as a sick person:

We have to cure the sick.

But her hopes lie in the power of capitalists as well. She says,

The businessmen have duties in this society. They have to be generous for qualified journalism.

A more realistic approach concluding the discussion comes from Hakan. He thinks that being hopeful depends on the political and economic situation in Turkey. The future of media depends on the emergence of a new strong political movement that takes equality, freedom and justice seriously, otherwise the media in Turkey will be similar to the examples in China, Singapore or Russia.

CONCLUSION

This research broadly discusses the political economy of alternative media in Turkey. In doing this it examines self-descriptions of alternative media organizations, their management structures, working conditions, precarity and independence, (de)unionization, the economic model of the organizations and their stance against the political pressures. The initial motive to start this research was to find the traces of the enthusiasm for the digital revolution, associating the rise of alternative media in Turkey and alternative media workers in Turkey with the recent developments and hoping to present the efforts of transforming the media structure. For the description of alternative media in Turkey the thorough analysis of alternative media by Olga Guedes Bailey, Bart Cammaerts, and Nico Carpentier is taken as the basis for this research, which took us to the conclusion that alternative media in Turkey is “alternative to the mainstream media.” (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 43) Therefore, alternative media organizations in Turkey act as a space that gives voice to the underrepresented or misrepresented portion of the society while preserving many structural elements of the traditional mainstream media.

The theoretical framework and the analysis of the political and economic structure of the alternative media organizations are based on the Marxist critical approach of Christian Fuchs, Marisol Sandoval and Horst Holzer. Holzer’s suggestion (Fuchs 2017) of building a non-profit newspaper by unions, journalists and audience in the form of a cooperative to manage the advertising revenue is presented as the ideal system for the alternative media organizations in Turkey. Alongside of Holzer’s proposal the critical perspective of Fuchs and Sandoval that suggests using capitalist marketing tools to cultivate alternative media for an anti-capitalist media system sets the normative benchmark for this research.

As the result of the in-depth interviews with the reputable journalists of alternative media in Turkey I found out that rather than the global digital revolution which has been shaking the global political economy of communication, the rise of alternative media in Turkey occurred due to the political and economic circumstances in the country which basically mean high rates of imprisoned journalists, the government’s threats of tax penalty for the media conglomerates, increasing censorship, the political

pressure on advertising revenue, the entrance of government-friendly companies into the mainstream media, markup on paper, etc. Four of the interviewees who transferred to alternative media from the traditional mainstream media stated that this reason for the rise in the country goes beyond the current regime. The transformation of the public media into the private media in 1980s and 1990s as the consequence of the neoliberal policies became the first signals of the change in the structure of the mass media. Their personal stories confirmed that change as well. The business people who have various investments in different sectors started to buy the media organizations and placed them as a profit-making companies that also function as a public relations agency for their investments in the other sectors, especially in terms of lobbying processes with governments at the time for their businesses. This situation shaped the mass media as an industry that has become a tool for strong political relations which remarkably affects the publication and broadcast policies, causes an increasing political and economic pressures that mostly ends up in censorship, self-censorship, layoffs and deunionization. In addition to this structural transformation throughout the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, a recent phenomenon is the national security threat hovering over the media. It is a global excuse of the governments to censor media and freedom of expression. For Turkey, particularly after the July 15 coup attempt many media organizations were shut down by the decree law that left many journalists unemployed. Leman's previous workplace was among one of those, but for her those shutdowns only encouraged them more to continue to do their job. She describes her current workplace as the outcome of the courage of the brave journalists who defend the right to information.

Since the conclusion I reached as the outcome of the interviews that alternative media in Turkey is in fact not alternative, the motivation to work at alternative media organizations is to find space independent enough to do professional journalism in a very resembling way of the traditional mainstream media. After all, they have found that space on the Internet. Considering the description of Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier (2015) through Downing, we could conclude that alternative media in Turkey pursue to form itself as a small-scale media that represent an alternative perspective against the hegemonic policies and approaches, but it is far from embracing an antagonistic approach towards the structure of the mainstream media. Regarding that the features of the mainstream media are usually listed as a large scale

organization targeting a homogeneous audience, supported by the state or owned by a private company, vertical management style with a strong hierarchy and the messenger of the hegemonic discourses and representations (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2015, 47), alternative media in Turkey situate its features as the reverse of the mainstream media without shaking its core capitalist structural elements. Therefore, independence from the market and facilitating the participation of the audience are not the strongest suits of the alternative media organizations of Turkey. Hakan's statement of "we are alternative in the sense of the mainstream media," and Leman's statement of "[The businessmen] have to be generous for qualified journalism," and Adnan's strict response about not considering a donation policy or a building an interactive relationship with the audience are the indicators that alternative media in Turkey does not even fulfill the features of being alternative to the mainstream media.

Furthermore, throughout the research I have observed many times that the current alternative media organizations in Turkey are far from the many international exemplary models that an alternative media organization meets the audience in which is built on a strong sense of community and funded by the audience. Creating the sense of belonging and maintaining a close relationship with the audience is essential for alternative media organizations if they wish to be independent from the capitalist market structure and the political elite. Many studies show that the audience is willing to pay for the alternative media organizations if they feel connected (see, especially, Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018).

The form of the traditional mainstream media is based on a hierarchical unilateral communication with standardized content for standardized audience (Fisher 2014, 129). As seen in the cases above what distinguishes new media journalism from the traditional mass media is that new media make interactive communication between the news producer and the news consumer possible. Ignoring the fact that this interactive aspect of new media has a critical role within the search of a sustainable economic model will only deepen the deadlock of the alternative media organizations in Turkey. Including the audience into the decision-making process, getting together with them occasionally, listening to the audience comments and questions will reward a financial system that is based on crowd-funding and/or donations. Hoping to survive

by maintaining the one-way communication habit of the traditional mass media and perceive the audience as one more 'click' is bound to remain inadequate and evaporate in the end (Cenberli 2018). Even though the interactive essence of the digital media does not necessarily mean a platform without exploitation, which allows it to be perceived as economic means of production through advertising (Henning and Hebblewhite 2014, 212), this will take alternative media back to the discussions around Dallas Smythe's (1977) Blindspot Debate which should have been overcome in the digital world that is able to pave the way for an anti-exploitation system.

Regarding the fact that four of the interviewees are the ones who have gone through the dramatic transformation of the mass media, their journey on alternative media started not out of choice but out of necessity. When I asked all of them whether they would still have chosen to work in an alternative media organization if the political and economic environment had been different in Turkey, three of them would not have started working at an alternative media organization even though their answers were slightly different. Their base of the answer to this question was that what matters is to do ethical journalism regardless of the platform, however I perceive this base as the core problem of the interviewees. Understanding the platform you are working at affects the way journalism is done. In the digital world no one has the luxury to maintain the perception of the traditional journalism, which is the tower of the one-way communication from the producer to the passive audience. The audience has a say, they have the capability of active participation and interaction. That's why ignoring this fact, especially in terms of developing a sustainable economic model, and expecting to be successful as an alternative media organization is quite an imaginary mission.

Besides, establishing an alternative media organization is not very much different than an establishing an ordinary company. The interviewees stated that the process begins with having the initial capital, founding a registered company to buy the com.tr extension, continues with obtaining good digital equipment and having a reliable professional team. For them the rest is all about learning and experiencing along the path. However, division of labour, the work structure and editorial process is again quite similar to the traditional mainstream media. Their team mostly consists of an editor-in-chief, editors, reporters, writers and columnists, sometimes it is not even that

crowded. The point where they differ from the traditional mainstream media is evident in the management structure. It is less hierarchical due to the efforts of preventing any political oppression, however the need for monitoring the decision-making process makes difficult to embrace a complete horizontal management system. Still, the important characteristics of alternative media, which are being collective and participatory, addressing to proletariat, and an inclusive decision-making process are substantially missing in Turkey.

The questions about the management style of the research led to the question of describing the alternative media organization that the interviewees are currently working at. They strongly avoid of being called as dissident, adversary, opposing and even alternative. They claim that journalism should be free from adjectives, which gives me the impression that they are confused about the terms of being objective and being biased. Journalism has to be objective but any journalistic effort has a point of view, the crucial point is to have an opinion/bias and still preserve the objectivity and fairness. Being free from any kind of bias is the work of news agencies. The perspective of the interviewees on the description of alternative media journalism could be considered as a narrow-minded understanding of being dissident. They take being dissident only means to opposing to the current governments. However, journalism is to stand in front of any political power and hegemony whether it comes from this ideology or that ideology.

As White stated that the core factors for precarity are inadequate occupational conditions such as low payments, freelancing and lack of social insurance as well as political and economic pressures, however five of the interviewees see the reasons for precarity only as the capitalist mass media structure and political pressures. Only Alper and Kerim acknowledged that precarity occurs because of the circumstances and preservation of the bad habits of the capitalist mainstream media. They start alternative media organizations or start working at them, but they still pursue the capitalist economic models to increase their income. Moreover, most of the interviewees are not even registered as a media worker, which is the basic condition of the article 212 and thus means the staying out of the legal journalistic rights. With the constant precarity, the only reason why they feel more independent comparing to the traditional mainstream media is because of that the harsh capitalist media

ownership does not apply in the alternative media organizations. Ezgi's statement about that self-censorship is still on the table for the reason why they worry about the future of their organization has been unsettling. Her confession about being careful and cherry-picking to cover stories indicates that being independent from the media conglomerates does not necessarily mean to be independent from the indirect political economic pressures of the government. Hakan's statements on the subject confirm this observation. He underlined the fact that there is a stronger sense of freedom, not the sense of freedom itself. The threat of being arrested or a possible shutdown on the allegation of being a threat to national security and also the cost of judicial process are enough reasons for them to put on breaks. His words – "There is always another way to report your news." – exhibits the gravity of the situation. Additionally, the interviewees state that they have been going through hard times to sell ad space, since many companies refrain from buying from alternative media organizations in order not to get in trouble with the government. Because of the reason why they see advertising as one of the main sources of income as it is seen in the traditional mainstream media, this barrier in front of the advertising revenue is another struggle that they have to deal with on a daily basis. This could be perceived as a proof that the political and economic power is still able to control alternative media organizations stealthily. The interviewees also believe that the government holds a great deal of power to control and pressure the alternative media, so no other regulation could damage more than the current situation.

However, when the subject comes to take a proactive stance to deal with all these struggles, in terms of joining the union or building a new one for online journalists or forming a community for solidarity including the audience and fellow workers in the sector, they prefer to stay passive. Except one, six of the interviewees agree on that the union is an ineffective, old and outdated institution. They neither want to be a part of it nor build one that they think is right. Furthermore, they do not acknowledge that their motive to stand by in front of all the occupational struggles are the exact reasons why they are pushed away from the traditional mainstream media.

Reporting the trials of the journalists or attending the trials are the acts of solidarity for the interviewees. In addition to that, Hakan takes voluntary works as a sign of solidarity which is a reciprocal system for him: alternative media organizations do not

have the capability of paying copyrights for every writer and those writers find space to write their pieces in return of writing voluntarily. However, these work conditions make the copyright issue a vulnerable aspect regarding to the fact that writers of alternative media organizations are often exposed to plagiarism. Unfortunately, volunteering is not a sustainable solution for an ongoing problem. At the end of the day unemployed journalists have to shelter, eat and stay healthy as the owners and managers of the alternative media organizations.

As mentioned above, the primary sources of income of the alternative media organizations are being funded by various investors or non-profit organizations and advertising.

[R]ecent benchmarks from Digital Content Next show that many publishers are still relying primarily on advertising revenue, even as they work toward increasing their direct consumer revenue. Eighty percent of DCN publisher revenue is based on advertising, while 20% is based on non-advertising sources (including direct consumer revenue). (Skibinski 2019, 3)

When it comes to non-advertising revenue, the interviewees are not very much eager to discuss thoroughly the other option – funding – that is widely embraced by alternative media organizations. They prefer not to share the details about how they manage to finance their daily activities. That's why it remains an open question how they barely survive. Campaigning for donations of the audience, crowd funding or establishing a cooperative style of business are out of equation for the alternative media organization managers and workers.

In terms of taking advantage of the crisis in the mainstream media most of the interviewees are pretty reserved to put themselves forward. They claimed that considering the crisis in the mainstream media for alternative media to grow would be an illusion since the audience will not change the habit of following the mainstream media and also coming forward at times like this would attract the government's attention as they prefer to stay under the radar. Only one interviewee suggested alternative media act on it, however it is the fact that individual suggestions or efforts will not be effective and are confined to fade away as acting collectively is the crucial

matter. The same attitude appears during the discussion of the news agency problem. Even though the interviewees acknowledge the fact that the current news agencies are quite inadequate to be an accurate and objective source of information, they prefer to analyze the reports coming from those agencies from a professional journalistic perspective before reporting and follow international and alternative news agencies to reach accurate information instead of finding a long-term solution which might include forming a non-profit cooperative style news agency, embracing the citizen journalism and be more open about it or investing in a news agency company.

It seems as if each of them is satisfied with their individual work and they do not look for a community sense to move forward. They paint a picture that they feel happy to do journalism at least in a more independent way than they used to and feel lucky that they have not attracted the government's attention so far. Thus, a collective effort for the purpose of the rights of independent journalism and the search for new sustainable economic models could jeopardize their current good place. Nevertheless, their lack of proactive attitude, particularly on unionization, collectivity and the search of a sustainable financial model, locks them in a small space that allows them only speak to their small audience.

Under these circumstances, precarity, self-censorship and unionization remain as the major problems in alternative media. In particular the freelance journalists do not have any social insurance and are not guaranteed to be paid on time. For the full-time journalists the situation is not quite bright either. As mentioned before, they are registered as an ordinary office worker, which strips them from the legal rights of the article 212. Therefore, precarity is not only caused by the political pressures but also caused by the organizations as well. In this sense for a journalist alternative media do not offer job security as much as it is expected. Certainly, it would be unfair to put the alternative media organizations in the same place as the mainstream media. Hakan made a clear emphasis on this issue, especially about the copyright payments of the writers, which is very small in numbers. The interviewees who sit on the management seats justifiably argue that they should not be expected to pay as much as the big media conglomerates since they barely survive in the first place and everyone should be more understanding about the high ratio of voluntary work. As Hakan indicated during the interview, if the managers and owners started paying copyright for every

content, there is no way that they would survive a day longer. For the interviewees who are in the management position, the demand of the outcast journalists for voluntary work is a strong sign of solidarity within the sector, even though it is difficult to maintain the professional relationship based on the voluntary work and thus the precarity continues for both the journalists and the owners/managers. In my opinion, under the recent and current political economic circumstances in Turkey voluntary work or minuscule copyright payments should be welcome by every party of this issue regarding the fact that the alternative media organizations fight for survival every day. Nonetheless, no one should fall in the trap of embracing volunteering as a business model. The fight for survival should not justify the neglect of labour rights and should not set a barrier in front of searching an innovative and sustainable economic structure.

On the whole regarding all the problems that alternative media organizations have been dealing with, the structural transformation was never suggested as a sustainable solution by the interviewees. Every answer of theirs has come to the conclusion of expecting from the others which is either the audience donations (without building a relationship with them) or is funding/investment from business people of the country which is bound to have exact same cause-and-effect relationship problem that the traditional mainstream media have been going through for over three decades. They are far from seeing the capitalist political economic structure as the core of all the troubles. The perspective of being contended with finding a sustainable solution for individuals is the dynamite to be exploded within alternative media. The exterior walls of alternative media glitter with the sparkles of independent, brave and fair journalism. However, when we step in from the door to get more acquainted, it does not take long to observe that the interiors are gray, dusty and rotting. Many troubles that pushed them away from the traditional mainstream media seem to catch them up in alternative media. It is only sad to see that they haven't embraced the mission of transformation of the current media structure in order to build a better future for journalism and for the political economy of alternative media in Turkey.

Surprisingly they still have hope about the future of media in Turkey. They believe that somehow political and economic situation of Turkey will change eventually and then alternative media organizations, or in general mass media, will have a chance to

take strong roots. However, this could only be achieved by understanding that alternative media aims to work for an egalitarian political and economic system where people cherish being an individual instead of being objectified (Atton 2002, 16). Thus, besides embracing the role of being an alternative to the mainstream media, alternative media organizations in Turkey could also embrace the Fuchs and Sandoval's (2010) critical theory approach to become stronger during the transition process of building a non-capitalist media structure. In order to become a strong element in the society the capitalist marketing and public relations strategies could be used as a tool to achieve the ultimate goal.

In spite of all the negative sides of the alternative media organizations in Turkey, we should acknowledge that those journalists are persistent and feel the responsibility for their profession to survive. The existence of alternative media (as an alternative to mainstream) could be perceived as a hint in the way of existing independently from the market and the state. In this sense, alternative media organizations in Turkey represent a wider variety of communities and ideas/ideologies, recognize diverse social movements, minorities and subculture and have the opportunity to experiment for the different techniques in news content production. That's why one more time we should remind ourselves how media itself sits in the heart of political economy and remind ourselves of the steps that leading to alternative media.

All in all, mass communication, and in this research for us alternative media, will provide social conditions of free expression for the cultural participants if it separates itself from the government and the market which suggests mass communication be taken away from the economic and political establishment that is supported by the state and the market, democratize and decentralize (Stevenson 2015, 33). The digital revolution in communication is able to facilitate this process. Technological means of reproduction preserve the forms of cultural production and reception that are more democratic and open to mass participation via new media in particular (Stevenson 2015, 96). A collective solidarity is able to change the structure of political economy of alternative media in order to build a media system that is participatory, anti-capitalist, independent and just. Only this structural transformation in the political economy of alternative media will be the emancipation of the future journalism.

REFERENCES

- Adorno, T. W. 2001. *Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. London, New York: Routledge.
- American Press Institute. 2019. Understanding Bias. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/journalism-essentials/bias-objectivity/understanding-bias/>
- Ataman, B., and B. Coban. 2016. Alternatif Medya ve Anti-Gozetim. *Gozetim Toplumu [Panoptikon]*: 33–49. ed. B. Coban and B. Ataman. Istanbul: Elektrik Muhendisleri Odasi Istanbul Subesi.
- Atikkan, Z., and A. Tunc. 2011. *Blogdan Al Haberi*. Istanbul: Yapi Kredi Yayinlari.
- Atton, C. 2002. *Alternative Media*. London: Sage Publications.
- Atton, C. 2007. Current Issues in Alternative Media Research. *Sociology Compass* 1, no. 1: 17–27. doi:10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00005.x.
- Aydinlik. 2018. TGS Genel Sekreteri Ilkay Akkaya: Internet habercilerine kart engeli kaldırilsin. *Aydinlik*, December 16. Accessed April 20, 2019. <https://www.aydinlik.com.tr/tgs-genel-sekreteri-ilkay-akkaya-internet-habercilerine-kart-engeli-kaldirilsin-medya-aralik-2018>
- Bagdat, Hayko (@haykobagdat). 2017. Selam millet, Ben Can Dundar ile birlikte kurdugumuz @Ozguruz_Org macerasından ayrılıyorum. Istifa gerekcem ektedir. Haberlesiriz... *Twitter*, June 13. Accessed April 20, 2019. https://twitter.com/haykobagdat/status/874584364750962688?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E874584364750962688&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fm.bianet.org%2Fbianet%2Fmedya%2F187391-hayko-bagdat-ozguruz-den-ayrildi

Basaran, F. 2010. Yeni Iletisim Teknolojileri, Alternatif Iletisim Olanaklari. *Mulkiye Dergisi* XXXIV (269): 255–270. <http://mulkiyederigi.org/article/view/5000007013>

Baytar, O. 2013. *Teorik ve Pratik Acidan Medya Ekonomisine Bakis*. Konya: Cizgi Kitabevi.

BBC. 2018. 4 soruda internete RTUK denetimi duzenlemesi. *BBC*, March 22. Accessed February 13, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-43494950>

BBC. 2016. IMC TV de kapatildi. *BBC*, September 30. Accessed February 13, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-37517516>

BIA Haber Merkezi. 2017. Hayko Bagdat Ozguruz'den Ayrildi. *Bianet*, June 13. Accessed April 20, 2019. <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/medya/187391-hayko-bagdat-ozguruz-den-ayrildi>

Bibby, A. 2013. Stop the press... and make way for the co-op media. *The Guardian*, September 25. Accessed March 7, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/social-enterprise-network/2013/sep/25/co-op-local-newspapers-journalism>

Boyle, D. 2012. Good News – A co-operative solution to the media crisis. *Co-Operatives UK: Fresh Ideas* 2. https://www.uk.coop/sites/default/files/uploads/attachments/good_news_-_fresh_ideas_2.pdf

Briggs, A., and P. Burke. 2004. *Medyanin Toplumsal Tarihi*. Trans. I. Sener. Istanbul: Izdusum Yayinlari.

Cakir, R. 2018. Dogan Grubu'nun Satilmasi. Filmed March, 2018, Istanbul, *Youtube*, 16:17. Accessed March 1, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haq9vGWuCH4>

Cenberli, Y. 2018. Alternatif medyanin kurtulus recetesi: Topluluk yaratmak. *Journo*, July 3. Accessed April 20, 2019. <https://journo.com.tr/alternatif-medya-topluluk>

Cevikel, T. 2004. Turkce Haber Siteleri ve Turkiye'de Internet Gazeteciliginin

Gelisimini Sinirlayan Faktorler. *II. Uluslararası Turk – Amerikan İletisimcileri Sempozyumu*: 147–163. Istanbul Universitesi.

Clark, R. P. 2009. Who is the Fifth Estate and What is Its Role in Journalism's Future? Last Modified April 28, 2009. Accessed February 12, 2019. <https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2009/who-is-the-fifth-estate-and-what-is-its-role-in-journalisms-future/>

Coban, B., and B. Ataman. 2015. *Direnis Caginda Turkiye'de Alternatif Medya*. Istanbul: Kafka.

Cook, B. A. 2001. *Europe Since 1945: An Encyclopedia Volume 2 K – Z*. United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis.

Deuze, M. 2014. Work in the Media. *Media Industries Journal* 1.2. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mij.15031809.0001.201>

Dijk, J. V. 2016. *Ag Toplumu*. Trans. O. Sakin. 3rd. ed. Istanbul: Kafka.

Diken. 2018. Oxford arastirmasi: Turkiye'de 'solcu'lar internetten, 'sagci'lar TV'den haber aliyor. *Diken*, November 7. Accessed March 13, 2019. <http://www.diken.com.tr/oxford-arastirmasi-turkiyede-solcular-internetten-sagcilar-tvden-haber-aliyor/>

Dogu, B. 2015. Comparing Online Alternative and Mainstream Media in Turkey: Coverage of the TEKEL Workers Protest Against Privatization. *International Journal of Communication* 9: 630–651. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3443>

Dunya. 2018. Dogan Medya'nin satisi onaylandi. *Dunya*, April 6. Accessed February 17, 2019. <https://www.dunya.com/sirketler/dogan-medyanin-satisi-onaylandi-haberi-410578>

Duran, R. 2018. Gazeteciler Meclislerini Artık Kuruyoruz. *Arti Gercek*, April 05. Accessed February 13, 2019. <https://www.artigercek.com/gazeteciler-meclislerini-artik-kuruyoruz>

Durdag, B., and F. Basaran. 2019. Alternatif Medya ve Sorunlari. Hala Gazeteciyiz Medya Raporu 11. <https://halagazeteciyiz.net/2019/03/29/medya-raporu-11-subat-2019-alternatif-medya-ve-sorunlari/>

Ekman, M. 2014. Birikimi Anlamak: Marx'ın İlkel Birikim Kuramı'nın Medya ve İletişim Çalışmaları Açısından Önemi. Trans. F. Basaran. In *Medya, Meta ve Sermaye Birikimi: Marx Geri Döndü*, ed. V. Mosco and C. Fuchs, 83–118. Ankara: NotaBene Bilisim.

Ercan Bilgic, E., and Z. Kafkaslı. 2013. Protestocular Kim? Ne İstiyorlar? İstanbul Bilgi University. <http://habervesaire.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/gezi-parki-anketi-24df92a1.pdf>

Fisher, E. 2014. Daha Az Yabancılaşma Nasıl Daha Fazla Somuru Yaratır? Sosyal Paylaşım Sitelerinde İzleyici Emegi. Trans. F. Basaran. In *Medya, Meta ve Sermaye Birikimi: Marx Geri Döndü*, ed. by V. Mosco and C. Fuchs, 119–150. Ankara: NotaBene Bilisim.

Fuchs, C. 2012. Dallas Smythe Today - The Audience Commodity, the Digital Labour Debate, Marxist Political Economy and Critical Theory. Prolegomena to a Digital Labour Theory of Value. *TripleC – Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, no.10 (2): 692–740. <http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/443>

Fuchs, C., and V. Mosco. 2014. Marx Geri Döndü: Günümüzde Eleştirel İletişim Çalışmalarında Marksist Kuram ve Araştırmanın Önemi. Trans. F. Basaran. In *Medya, Meta ve Sermaye Birikimi: Marx Geri Döndü*, ed. V. Mosco and C. Fuchs, 21–43. Ankara: NotaBene Bilisim.

Fuchs, C. 2015. *Dijital Emek Ve Karl Marx*. Trans. T. E. Kalayci and S. Oguz, Ankara: NotaBene Bilisim.

Gazi, F. 2018. Turkuvaz Dagitim sektorde tek basina: Bundan sonra ne olacak? *Gazete Duvar*, November 26. Accessed February 15, 2019. <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/gundem/2018/11/26/turkuvaz-dagitim-sektorde-tek-basina-bundan-sonra-ne-olacak/>

Ginsberg, Jodie. 2017. Targeting journalists in the name of national security. Last Modified October 26, 2017. Accessed March 15, 2019. <https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2017/10/targeting-journalists-name-national-security/>

Greenhouse, S. 2018. More secure jobs, bigger paychecks. Spring/Summer 2018. *Columbia Journalism Review*. Accessed April 11, 2019. https://www.cjr.org/special_report/media-unions-history.php

Guedes Bailey, O., B. Cammaerts, and N. Carpentier. 2015. *Alternatif Medyayi Anlamak*. Trans. C. Ozturk. Istanbul: Kafka.

Gurcan, H. I., and O. Bekiroglu. 2007. Turkiye’de Internet Gazeteciligi Acisindan Yerel Basinin Genel Gorunumu ve Bolgeler Arasi Bir Degerlendirme. *Selcuk İletisim* 5 (1): 22–29. <http://josc.selcuk.edu.tr/article/view/1075000195>

Gurleyen, P. 2017. *Alternative Media: The Life Support of Journalism in Turkey*. MA Essay, Simon Fraser University.

Guyot, J. 2009. Political-economic factors shaping news culture. In *Making the news – Journalism and News Culture in Europe*, ed. P. Preston, 135–149. New York: Routledge.

Hebblethwaite, C. 2017. World Television Day 2017 – is TV still the world’s most effective advertising medium? *Marketing Tech*, November 21. Accessed March 3,

2019. <https://www.marketingtechnews.net/news/2017/nov/21/world-television-day-2017-tv-still-worlds-most-effective-advertising-medium/>

Henning, W., and J. Hebblewhite. 2014. Uretim Araclari Olarak Iletisim Araclari. Trans. F. Basaran. In *Medya, Meta ve Sermaye Birikimi: Marx Geri Dondu*, ed. V. Mosco and C. Fuchs, 193–216. Ankara: NotaBene Bilisim.

Herman, E. S., and N. Chomsky. 1994. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. London: Vintage.

Hesmondhalgh, D. 2015. Exploitation and Media Labor. In *The Routledge Companion to Labor and Media*, ed. Richard Maxwell. New York: Routledge.

Holzer, H. 2017. The Forgotten Marxist Theory of Communication & Society. Trans. C. Fuchs. *TripleC – Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* no. 15 (2): 686–725. <http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/908>

Jeppesen, S. 2015–2016. Understanding Alternative Media Power: Mapping Content & Practice to Theory, Ideology, and Political Action. *Democratic Communiqué* vol. 27: 54–77.

Jones, Alex S. 2009. An Argument Why Journalists Should Not Abandon Objectivity. *Nieman Reports*, September 15. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://niemanreports.org/articles/an-argument-why-journalists-should-not-abandon-objectivity/>

Journo. 2018. Gazeteci kadınlar meslek örgütlerini duyarsız buluyor. *Journo*, March 9. Accessed April 20, 2019. <https://journo.com.tr/gazeteci-kadinlar-meslek-orgutleri>

Journo. 2018. Bir YaySat bayisi anlatıyor: Sirket kapatildi, 30 bin kisi magdur. *Journo*, December 11. Accessed February 17, 2019. <https://journo.com.tr/bir-yaysat-bayisi-30-bin-kisi-magdur>

Kang, J. 2015. *Walter Benjamin Ve Medya: Modernitenin Gosterisi*. Trans. D. Gedizlioglu. Istanbul: Kafka.

Karlıdag, S., and S. Bulut. 2017. Alternative Media in Turkey: The Political Economy of News. In *Research on Communication*, ed. C. Ruggiero, H. Arslan, and M.A. Icbay. 73–83. <http://iassr2.org/rs/011.pdf>

Keane, John. 2015. *Medya ve Demokrasi*. Trans. H. Sahin. Istanbul: Ayrıntı, Yayınları.

Kergel, D., and B. Heidkamp. 2017. Media Chage – Precarity *Within* and Precarity *Through* the Internet. In *Precarity Within the Digital Age: Media Change and Social Insecurity*: 9-27. Switzerland: Springer. Doi: [10.1007/978-3-658-17678-5_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-17678-5_2)

Kilic, S. O. 2018. 'Radikal sekilde farkli' bir dijital habercilik dusunun: The Correspondent. Last Modified December 18, 2018. Accessed March 27, 2019. https://teyit.org/radikal-sekilde-farkli-bir-dijital-habercilik-dusunun-the-correspondent/amp/?_twitter_impression=true

Kim, J. W. 2009. A Concept of Autonomy for Critical Communication Studies. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 33, no. 2: 126–42. doi:10.1177/0196859908329083.

Kuyucu, Michael. 2012. *Turkiye 'de Medya Ekonomisi*. Istanbul: Esen Kitap.

Langlois, A., and F. Dubois. 2015. *Otonom Medya: Direnisi Ve Muhalefeti Canlandirmek*. Trans. G. Sener. Istanbul: Kafka.

Marketing Turkiye. 2019. Alternatif Medya Anaakim Medyaya Donustu. March 30, 2019. Accessed May 28, 2019. <https://www.marketingturkiye.com.tr/soylesiler/alternatif-medya-ana-akim-medyaya-donustu/>

Milliyet. 2018. RTUK Baskani acikladi: Yeni internet duzenlemesiyle neler degisecek?. *Milliyet*, March 30. Accessed February 12, 2019. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/rtuk-baskani-acikladi-yeni-teknoloji-galeri-haber-2637899/?Page=19>

Morris, A. 2018. The Guardian newspaper unveils new font and logo in major redesign. *Deezen*, January 15. Accessed March 13, 2018. <https://www.deezen.com/2018/01/15/guardian-newspaper-unveils-new-compact-format-redesign-font-logo/>

Mosco, V. 2009. *The Political Economy of Communication, Second Edition*. London: Sage Publications Inc.

Mosco, V., and C. Fuchs. 2014. *Marx Geri Dondu: Medya, Meta Ve Sermaye Birikimi*. Trans. F. Basaran. Istanbul: NotaBene Bilisim.

Murdock, G., and P. Golding. 1973. For a Political Economy of Mass Communications. In *The Socialist Register*: 205–234. <http://www.socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5355#.WmCc1eiFgUs>

Mutlu, E. 2008. *iletisim Sozlugu*. Istanbul: Ayrac Yayinlari.

Newman, N., R. Fletcher, A. Kalogeropoulos, D. A. L. Levy, and R. K. Nielsen. 2018. Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

Nielsen, R. K., and R. Sambrook. 2016. What is Happening to Television News? Accessed February 27, 2019. <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/publications/2016/what-is-happening-to-television-news/#ways-forward-for-television-news>

Onderoglu, E. 2018. Is It Way to Prison by Verdict Instead of Freedom for Journalists?. *Bianet*, October 22. Accessed March 22, 2019.

<https://bianet.org/english/media/201897-is-it-way-to-prison-by-verdict-instead-of-freedom-for-journalists>

Ozoktay, A. 2018. Somuru her yerde: Bir haber sitesinin genc medya emekcileri anlatiyor. *Sol*, May 27. Accessed April 20, 2019. <http://haber.sol.org.tr/emek-sermaye/somuru-her-yerde-bir-haber-sitesinin-genc-medya-emekcileri-anlatiyor-238513>

Petryszak, N. 1977. The Frankfurt Schools Theory of Manipulation. *Journal of Communication* 27, no. 3: 32–40. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1977.tb02121.x.

Sahin, H. 2013. Turkiye’de medyanin ekonomi politigi. *Yurt Gazetesi*, November 5. Accessed February 17, 2019. <http://www.yurtgazetesi.com.tr/turkiyede-medyanin-ekonomi-politigi-makale,6531.html>

Sandoval, M. 2009. A Critical Contribution to the Foundation of Alternative Media Studies. *Online Internal Journal of Communication Studies* 1 <http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/14324/>

Sandoval, M., and C. Fuchs. 2010. Towards a critical theory of alternative media. *Telematics and Informatics* 27, no. 2: 141–150. doi:10.1016/j.tele.2009.06.011.

Schneider, N. 2017. The Associated Press is a joint media venture. Maybe Twitter should be too. *America Magazine*, April 21. Accessed March 23, 2019. <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2017/04/21/associated-press-joint-media-venture-maybe-twitter-should-be-too>

Skibinski, M. 2019. DCN Direct Audience Revenue Case Studies – Building Subscriptions and Memberships for Quality Journalism. Last Modified February 6, 2019. Accessed March 17, 2019. <https://www.lenfestinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Lenfest-DCN-Reader-Revenue-Case-Studies.pdf>

Smythe, D. 1977. Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 1 (3): 1-27.
<https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/ctheory/article/view/13715/4463>

Stevenson, N. 2015. *Medya Kulturleri: Sosyal Teori ve Kitle İletisimi*. Trans. G. Orhon and B. E. Aksoy. 2nd ed. Ankara: Utopya Yayınevi.

Tekvar, S. O. 2017. Türkiye’de Feminist Alternatif Medyanın İşlevselligi: Bir Alternatif Medya Örneği ‘Kadınların Postası’ Projesinin İncelenmesi. *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6 (1): 537-552.
<http://www.itobiad.com/download/article-file/315643>

The Correspondent (@The_Corres). 2018. WE DID IT! \$2.5 million raised, from 42,780 founding members, in 29 days. The Correspondent WILL launch mid-2019! *Twitter*, December 13. https://twitter.com/The_Corres/status/1073348375733510150

Tugla, K. 2014. Türkiye’de İnternet Geleneksel Medyadan Daha Demokratik ve Alternatif Bir Haber Ağı Sunuyor mu: T24 Örneği. *Global Media Journal: TR Edition* 4 (8): 305-324. <http://globalmediajournaltr.yeditepe.edu.tr/sites/default/files/tugla.pdf>

Türk, G. D. 2013. Demokrasinin Dördüncü Kuvveti Yeni Medya Teknolojileri. *XVIII. Türkiye’de İnternet Konferansı*: 55-60. İnet-Tr’13.

Türkiye Gazeteciler Sendikası. 2018. Hakkımızda. Accessed January 24, 2019.
<https://tgs.org.tr/>

Uğantas, D. 2018. Sıddet failini koruma ve emek somurusu iddialarıyla gündeme gelen dokuz8Haber’de neler oluyor? *T24*, November 9. Accessed March 17, 2019.
<http://t24.com.tr/haber/siddet-failini-koruma-ve-emek-somurusu-iddialariyla-gundeme-gelen-dokuz8haberde-neler-oluyor,744346>

Ucak, Olcay. 2011. Medyada Fikir İşçilerine Tanınan Haklar Süreci ve Karşılaştırmalı Uygulama Örnekleri. *Sosyal Haklar Uluslararası Sempozyumu*, 383-400.
<http://www.sosyalhaklar.net/2011/bildiri/ucak.pdf>

Unal, R. 2017. Yeni Medyada Yeni Habercilik ve Is Modeli Arayislari: Medyascope Ornegi. *Galatasaray Universitesi İletisim Dergisi*: 26–83. Doi: 10.16878/gsuilet.324206.

Van Couvering, E. 2004. New Media? The Political Economy of Internet Search Engines. *Paper presented to the Communication Technology Policy Section 2004 Conference of the International Association of Media & Communications Researchers*. Porto Alegre, Brazil. July 25–30.

White, A. 2014. Precarious, Self-censoring and Under Political Pressure. *South East European Media Observatory*, March 2. Accessed January 19, 2019. <http://mediaobservatory.net/radar/precariouself-censoring-and-under-political-pressure>

Wilkin, P. 2001. *The Political Economy of Global Communication: An Introduction*. London: Pluto Press.

Wolff, R. D. 2004. Ideological State Apparatuses, Consumerism, and U.S. Capitalism: Lessons for the Left. *Economics Department Working Paper Series*. 74: 1–23. https://scholarworks.umass.edu/econ_workingpaper/74

Yanardag, M. 2004. Gazetecinin Drami: 212 Sayili Yasanin Oykusunu. *Bianet*, June 26. Accessed February 2, 2019. <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/37360-gazetecinin-drami-212-sayili-yasanin-oykusu>

Yanardag, M. 2008. *Medya Nasil Kusatildi? Emin Colasan – Aydin Dogan Tartismasi ve Medyanin Ekonomi Politigi*. Istanbul: Siyah Beyaz.