

deScripto

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DOSSIER

Internet

COUNTRY FOCUS

Serbia



Letter from Editor-in-Chief

Dear Readers,

Living in a communication and media society means being concerned with all relevant sites of individual and social life by what is communicated and by what is communicable through media. It also means being challenged to organise one's individual and social life in all relevant sites in reference to media or even through media. What we know, we know from media. What we think, we refer to media. What we plan, we plan in compatibility to media programmes, media schedules and the media agenda in building public opinion. There is no media-free existence, not for individuals, not for organisations. Life has become a part of public opinion, in an active and a passive sense. To survive as a political, economical or as any other social body means to obtain any endeavour for keeping public attention, which always also means - to respect public opinion or public interest. Never before was the situation like this: Individual life and social life depend on public feedback.

Media change the organisation of social life and turn it from an industrially designed agenda to a managerial task. In order to become a part of it and not to get outsourced, media literacy is an indispensable competence, especially in relation to the internet. The internet is an infrastructure of social communication and a platform for organising communication as well as communicating the organisation. However, media literacy in reference to the internet is not only a question of skills, of technical abilities or of managerial capacities; it also is a challenge of culture, of ethics, and of sociability. The infrastructure itself extends the possibilities and opportunities of building and establishing

relations far in excess of the dimensions of personal and interpersonal awareness. The culture of mutual awareness is becoming a matter of public trust; which brings the analysis to the point that public trust is on the one hand the crucial point of public, media-organised communication; on the other hand it is a measure of the societal status of social competence.

That, I think, is the point of critical reflection for countries in transition. Did they have the chance to learn to trust one another and to establish a culture of public confidence – not in family or familiar environments, but in public ones, which means in environments beyond interpersonal awareness? Having lived for long years under occupation or under authoritarian systems – which is more or less true for most of the SEEMO member countries – could be a reasonable cause of a culture of distrust.

As it is not the most pressing problem (for the EU) to install an infrastructure in order to get connected to the technological standards of organised societies, the money is being found for that. But do the countries have the “money” (attention) or do they develop it in partnership with European partners (in politics and in economy) in order to pay what it costs to become a society of mutual trust – open and dialogical communication? The following articles try to find out the achievements and the shortcomings. I hope that you will gain some critical arguments by reading them. Thank you for your attention,

Thomas A. Bauer, *Editor in Chief*



Letter from Publisher

Dear Readers,

Bulgaria and Romania are, since 1 January 2007, new EU members. I hope that this means that investigative reporters in both countries will have it easier in the future if they would like to present in the publicity a story about corruption, smuggling or another criminal activity, but also that investigative journalists will receive more help from the state in a case of threats from some criminal groups.

However, the disturbing feature of 2006 was that there are still groups, individuals, but sometimes also governments in South East Europe, who prefer to silence journalists practicing their profession. Different methods are used to ensure that news never reaches those who have the right to the information. We have still a culture of secrecy.

Also, although we do not need state-run media; the reality is that this is the media in South East Europe we have. As a former journalist I miss real and professional public radio and TV in most countries in the region. It means we need still a public broadcasting system that is independent from the state and government, and where a journalist can broadcast, if she or he has for example a story about the

president of the state, is free to publish it and not have any negative consequence.

In 2006 in the daily work in all countries of South East Europe there were lot of new on-line publications, on-line newspaper editions in addition to the regular papers. This is very good. What I see also as very important in 2006 is the fact, that use of blogs on internet became very popular in this part of Europe. A blog is a website generated by the user. Blogs are giving everyone a chance to report about an interesting topic. Blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject, but some function as personal online diaries. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of a blog. We should be aware that the emergence of blogging has internationally also brought a range of legal liabilities. Worldwide, several cases against bloggers have been brought before national courts. I think blogs will be an important topic in 2007.

Oliver Vujovic
Publisher, SEEMO Secretary General

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those of the authors and do not necessarily
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DOSSIER INTERNET

The Flip Side

Anyone, at any time, at any location? With anybody for any reason? Faster than you think, you could find yourself in the middle of nowhere. More than ever before information society demands media competence.

by Thomas A. Bauer

The internet is a wonderful thing: it turns one's own small world into a universe of options – not only in respect to the personal and individual life but also in respect to the political, collective, and public life. Any information is accessible, imaginable and feasible. Borders and distances are dying, not only in a geographical sense, but also in a social and mental sense. Knowledge is no more a category

The internet is a wonderful thing: it turns one's own small world into a universe of options – not only in respect to the personal and individual life but also in respect to the political, collective, and public life.

of property but a currency of exchange. Everybody, who has access, is able to get any information on whatever one wants from any point in the world. The wide free universe of knowledge and information is taken as proof of an open society, as a sign of democratisation and as a social-cultural significance of individual autonomy. The internet has a flip side, which has to be understood as a challenging part of it. The front side of the world wide web (democratisation, individualisation, an open source of cultural and social life) only works if the reverse side does not become an enigma.

Internet Studies are Cultural Studies

Communication science, now finally turning from a somewhat old fashioned social science to embrace new and open concepts of social theory or cultural studies, is working hard in different ways on utilisable and realisable interpretations of the internet as a factor of life. After a long period of techno-euphoric analysis, the scientific critique discovers the socio-cultural perspective of problematisation now.

According to the socio-theoretical understanding of media, media is not what amounts to the technical or the organisational system that has just to be seen as an infrastructure. The media becomes media not less than by the use of it. Or in other words: the cultural significance of media gets actually and intrinsically manifested through its usage.

The way to use media is to appropriate them. Accepting that the perspective of media opens a cultural level of conceptualising what media is: the agency of social practice in mediated symbolic interaction. If that socio-cultural character of media-communication is taken as the designating difference, then the scientific consideration of everyday media use shifts from a structural description to a cultural analysis.

Such a theoretical perspective produces many more topics of proposed problems than it is possible to solve. It is exactly these results that have to be taken as a merit of complex theories, which cultural theories of communication are. Technological theories – used in analysing media communication – tend to work in the mode of techniques: exclude as much as possible causes of defect. They follow the interest of perfection – what always has been the original interest of techniques.

Due to that intent, they authorise themselves by methods of reduction of complexity – what usually is taken as a way of problem solving. Technological studies explain new situations through already proven models of explanation. In contrast to that, cultural studies find itself in a scientific context, where science does not content itself with technical knowledge.

Cultural studies contextualise observations of media, communication, culture and society from various perspectives, in order to understand what was not understood until now within that context. In doing so cultural studies understand itself as a problem producing science.

of A Website

A New Chapter of Social Configuration

The term culture conceptually covers everything which construes and assesses the style of everyday life as a meaningful one, consciously or unconsciously. In that context the usage of the internet (as with any use of media) scientifically is a question of culture.

The internet is used as a means of organising ones life and as a resource for shaping ones own lifestyle. In that sense it has almost become our daily food. Regarding and analysing the impact of the internet in a changing society, politics, economy, education, and any other sector of private and public life, it is time to get aware that internet is the agency of a new arrangement of social (equal cultural) practice, a new chapter of configuration of society in construction. The structural development of society (societies) appears as a problem of scarcity of mutual cultural (intercultural, trans-cultural) understanding.

The cultural development of society (societies) appears as a problem of lack of structural resources. Thus structural borders – usually constructs of significance, not natural items – disappear. The internet reflects that imposition of significations. The structural design of society building does not any more disclose national borders, languages, passed down cultures, closed ethnicities, common history, common heroes, and common administrative structures, but rather open horizons, mixed cultures, hybrid lifestyles, open and changing relations, and communities that are not arranged for longer than just for the time they are needed. For that reason the internet society often is apostrophised as a society of individualisation, fragmentation and coincidence, what would equal a structural change of social life. But analysing this process in a cultural-semiotic framework of interpretation the impositional change that is stated in any intellectual analysis is not going from community to fragmentation or isolation, but rather from a homological

to a heterological self-observation of society – which is not a structural, but a cultural change.

Knowledge Gap

The cultural perspective in the analysis of the internet reveals that the internet by far is not a World Wide Web, as the myth of information society tirelessly suggests. The

The internet is, to some extent, an infrastructure of an overall informed society, which again has to be seen as a structural format of an economically driven society.

internet is, to some extent, an infrastructure of an overall informed society, which again has to be seen as a structural format of an economically driven society. In any case, the impact of democratisation, free opinion building, and participation – qualitative dimensions of information - in that concept of information society is much less noticeable than the impact of the market. The economic capacities, not the social implications of information still decide whether there is access or not. Having access still is a chapter of social privilege or otherwise. The post-industrial perspective, according to which citizens shall have universal access to all resources of common life – and as such constructing a knowledge society, is just a perspective for the western world. In reality the information society until now still has just come to a model of information economy. The diffusion of information by media, as well by the internet, does not lead to a universal and general increase of standard of knowledge – maybe to some extent to an enlargement, but least of all to enrichment. Why?

The answer is given by a concept that is called the “hypothesis of the increasing knowledge gap”. It says that an increasing flood of information leads to division and parti-

tion of the society: those segments of the global society that disposes of a higher economic level and of more education are capable to appropriate information in a faster and better organised way than those which are in lack of that eco-

By the worldwide dissemination of choices through the internet, new options and new forms of procurement have been raised. Skills in media literacy in that new media world are indispensable.

conomic level. The empiric experience is: those who have, get more, those who do not have, lose faster. The consequence of that process is an increasing knowledge gap between higher and lower situated segments of the global society. The fair diffusion of knowledge depends on the distribution of the social segments. As long as they are agglomerated within poor regions or nations, those regions and nations comparatively lose the connection to the social advancement and never will be able to compensate the acceleration of that process of economic partition.

Digital Divide

In general, the criteria of social disparity play a strong analytical role in scientific observation of information and knowledge society. Beside the physical criteria (gender, age, ethnicity etc.) the unequal distribution of life chances and life crises counts as a decisive criterion. By the worldwide dissemination of choices through the internet, new options and new forms of procurement have been raised.

Skills in media literacy in that new media world are indispensable. But until now scientific analyses have not diverted the scepticism of social equivalence by the internet. The empirical experience is that there are group-specific modes of adaptation of new technologies and that they build on existing disparities in the society. So the reason of disparity is not the special mode of use, but the structural disproportion.

This disproportion is called the “digital divide” which means: a social division between those who have and those who have not the information or knowledge, which digitally and globally is available.

Media Competence

The worldwide networking does not yet makes a World Wide Web as long as there are regions, groups or communities, which fall through the cracks. Therefore, the policy must be: education. Becoming, or being a part of the world wide community in knowledge, science, technology, economy and democracy – facilitated by the internet – is a question of education in general and of media competence in particular.

Competence in that context of course is a normative term. It is the key term of the normative theory, which assumes that there is a status of achievement where (and when) mankind has become independent from destiny, has arrived to the point of extinguishing uncertainty, and has come to an autonomous power of (self-)responsibility and rational(ised) decision. All those remarks concerning the notion of competence had to be made in order to argue the communicative construction of society and the societal construction of communication. The fact that society is constructed by its (non-media- and/or media-mediated) communication makes it worth to take a look at the quality of communication.

The fact that communication (non-media- and/or media-mediated) in its cultural construction is preconditioned by societal structures makes it worth to take a look at the (civil and political) quality of society.

The theoretical decision for society conceptualisation in a sense of an event of social communication and communication as a question of its societal conditions is to be taken as a precondition for reflection of the relationship between society and media, or better said, the relationship between the quality of society and that one of its media. In that sense, the normative understanding of society, by which communication and/or media competence becomes arguable, should be kept in mind as a specification of societal and social competence and as a cultural resource of society building.

Those diagnostic findings confirm the necessity of getting educated and trained in soft skills of media usage, so to say, in individually different and differentiable qualifications. The content and the claim of soft skills have to be gained according to the structural change of media.

The net-media in their structure and in the social character of its usage represent the fact that an economically organised and globalised world stakes its interest - according to what is meant by an open society - on an expressive individualism.

The net-media open the system for so many more possibilities for realisation of personal skills, needs, and interests, but set also so many more demands for coming along with multioptionality, polysemy, uncertainty and open horizons. Particularly the net-media in their structure and in the social character of its usage represent the fact that an economically organised and globalised world stakes its interest - according to what is meant by an open society - on an expressive individualism.

All in all: this diagnosis should mobilise and motivate the educational systems to invest in broad programmes of media education. ■

No Excess in Access

The exponential growth of the internet has become visible in South East Europe but the number of users is still far below the number of users in Western Europe. There are not only huge differences between South Eastern and Western Europe, but also between South East European countries themselves.

by Karin Jirku and Katharina Wagner

Slovenia has developed a large and very good infrastructure in the online sector during the last years. According to GfK Gral Iteo, the internet penetration there is among the highest in Europe: 59% of Slovenians have an internet access either at home or at work. As a member of the European Union, the country profits from various development programmes on the extension and the improvement of the European Networking System.

Unlike Slovenia, Serbia and Romania are among Europe's worst rated in terms of internet utilisation, with less than a quarter of the population having access to the internet. One reason for the low level of internet utilisation in these countries is the low average income. Hardly anyone can afford reasonable computer systems.

In Romania, the restricted supply of electronic commerce is another reason for the situation. According to Eurostat, the expenses for information technology in Romania are still very low. While Romanians spend only about EUR 35 for software or hardware, in the EU this expenditure per person is about EUR 500.

In Serbia, the problem seems also to be one of political priorities. For the Serbian government, information technology and internet utilisation do not seem to be of top priority, as Tanja Milovanovic from the Centre for Research of Information Technologies (CEPIT) explains.

"There is a lack of political will for developing information society. Absence of political will is based on two things: lack of awareness that information technology can help in growth and employment on one hand, and on the other hand the fact that Serbia has just begun to build democracy and citizens do not know what the models of their participation in democratic processes are."

A possibility to provide internet access for a higher number of citizens would be through public computers, in libraries for example. But according to Milovanovic, such internet access corners almost do not exist.

Internet Access and Users in South East Europe

Country	Access	Users
Slovenia	59%	55%
Slovakia	49%	38%
Cyprus		36%
Croatia	45%	35%
Hungary	37%	30%
Greece	29%	28%
Serbia	29%	24%
Romania	24%	23%
Bosnia Herzegovina		21%
Bulgaria	27%	20%
Ukraine	27%	17%

Source: ORF Mediaresearch, with data taken from regional statistics institutions
<http://mediaresearch.orf.at>

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Values for Europe - Europe for Values

edited by Thomas A. Bauer and Gerhard E. Ortner



Chapter 1: Democracy - Media as Place of Reflection and Self-Organisation

Chapter 2: Dialogue - Understanding Differences

Chapter 3: Diversity - Identity as a Trans-Cultural Project

Chapter 4: Sustainability - Learning Society Europe

The articles in this book are written by highly recognized scientists and experts from institutions such as the University of Vienna, the Distance University of Hagen, the University of Amsterdam, the University of Maribor, the Society of Pedagogy and Information, etc.

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D@dalos in Re-Education

EU Policies Trying to Bridge the Data Gap in South East Europe

Need a better way to conquer a gaping distance than flying? Why not build a bridge? These days the proverbial waxen wings are up in the air and safer ways are to be used. D@dalos organisation abandons avionics and becomes a bridge architect to close the online knowledge gap between Central and South East Europe.
by Iulia Mitzner and Regina Schrutz

Weblog, Podcast and RSS. Wiki, WIFI, Vlog. Even inveterate internet users are getting out of breath trying to keep up the pace with what all new features the World Wide Web is constantly creating and offering. For a broader section of these users, the internet has long been an important source of information, a way to communicate and network, a place to perceive media and, not to forget, a place for interactive self-portrayal.

Consequently, countries that were not participating in this phenomenon from the very beginning are now under pressure to make up for the time this technology could not evolve in their region. Due to war, political leadership or other circumstances domineering freedom of speech and information, the problematic nature of this so-called knowledge gap appeared. Therefore, some South East European countries still have not completely made up for this lag up to this day.

Different networks offered various supporting activities: Online/More Colour in the Media (OL/MCM) is an organisation that offered practical media education activities and career orientation through their programme Creative and Practical Media Activities (CREAM). This programme started in October 2003 and ended in September 2005.

The Italian NGO Scope supports projects aimed at promoting real social change and favouring the active participation of the people involved.

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) promotes the creation of high-quality and permanently self-sufficient higher education structures in developing and transitional countries. Their help includes individual support and training of young academic staff, as well as experts and executives (staff development), but also support for the construction of appropriate structures at the partner universities (institution building).

The Objective of Promotion

“The challenge in helping to keep pace lies not so much in equipping the affected countries with the latest technology, but actually in the training of skills needed for the use of the provided hardware,” says Wolfgang Schumann, professor of political science at the University of Tübingen in Germany and project supervisor at the organisation D@dalos. To gain a critical exposure to the medium and to exploit it for ones’ own interest is thus an important ability, which needs to be acquired.

D@dalos, which was founded in 1999, is one of the many projects that is, among others, sponsored and supported by the European Union’s Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

One of the focal points of the Stability Pact is to create and support independent media. Furthermore, it is of high interest for the Stability Pact to support the introduction of democracy, human rights and the rebuilding of infrastructure, especially in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and in Kosovo.

But the concerns of the Stability Pact also include economic rebuilding, cooperation and development, as well as addressing security questions.

Without a doubt the promotion of the internet medium is an economic concern, a basic precondition for democracy, as it provides freedom of speech and information, which is an elementary human right. Thus, it is an important tool for transitional countries to use in their process of overhauling the last barriers to become socio-economically equal to countries of the European Union.

Enhancing, what we would like to call Internet Literacy (in dependence on the term Media Literacy) is therefore an undertaking that supports all of the goals of the Stability Pact at some point. From the numerous projects working in this section there is one, held by the above-mentioned organisation D@dalos, which we found to be especially dedicated to this particular problem. It deals with the problem at the roots – in the educational sector.

All They Need to Know

Schumann, also a civic education expert and author of the D@dalos EU-textbook, explains the strategic objectives: “With that course teachers do not learn how to use a single software application; instead they learn how to fulfil teacher-specific tasks.

FIT@school programme addresses the problem that nobody really reads the full manual of his or her computer. Training, which is designed to explain one software application, has to meet the expectations of many different users, but something that is interesting for an office assistant might not be important for a teacher.

Teachers do not really need to know how to write a serial letter. It is much more important for them to know how to produce worksheets for their pupils, search the internet for information and literature concerning one of their teaching-units, or communicate with colleagues by e-mail. This is what we are trying to concentrate on.”

The programme runs as a six day IT training course, during which the participants create teaching material on the topic of Human Rights. The first three modules cover the basic functionality of the application Microsoft Word. Modules four, five and six give the trainees an understanding of the internet and its numerous applications like browser basics, online literature research, effective use of directories and search engines, as well as the efficient use of e-mail.

Train the Trainer

For flawless delivery to as many teachers as possible, FIT@school is handing over the knowledge through professional training by D@dalos experts. It provides training for local trainers in their own mother tongue, in cooperation with different educational centres. Those local trainers then provide further training programmes to local teachers.

Shqipe Abazi, who works for the Kosovo Education Center (KEC) and has participated in one of the trainings provid-

„The challenge in helping to keep pace lies in the training of skills needed for the use of the hardware.“
Wolfgang Schuhmann

ed by D@dalos experts, shares her experience: “One of my personal highlights was that the contents of FIT@school were combined with a human rights education. This programme is very well designed and plants two trees with one seed: First of all the trainees learn how to use the computer and how to use the internet for their personal advantage, and secondly they learn about Human Rights, which is very important in our society.”

According to Schumann, FIT@school’s main focus in 2007 will be Romania: “Hopefully, the translation of our CD-ROM for the trainees will be finished by the end of the year. We cannot organise a workshop without having one of our most important tools.” These CD-ROMs include all details of the programme and the data of the online education server for the trainees who do not have internet access.

Learn to Learn

At the moment, D@dalos is awaiting authorisation on another programme. Learn How to Learn and Teach with PC and Internet should encourage the ability to work effectively within the World Wide Web. Like FIT@school, this programme will depend on multipliers within the local population and again has teachers as its target group. After attending this programme, the trainees will have acquired a standard of Internet Literacy equal to the Central European nations. Efforts are under way to fund this new programme.

Education Prospects

The former avionics master set a good example. He learned the handcraft of bridge building and is now guiding his students from Crete to the mainland. And those who will not cross the bridge should at least be taught how to build their own bridges, whenever they want or need to. Organisations like D@dalos already set important cornerstones for connecting Central Europe and its South East neighbours through an equal online network. Thus, EU countries to-be get a fair chance to keep pace with the rest of the Union. ■

Communities Without Barri

The World Wide Web offers a lot of options and today even your homeland is readily just a mouse click away, no matter where you live.

Two young men who, due to the war in Yugoslavia, started a new life in the West describe how it is possible to continue contact with their home country in order not to lose their roots.

by Linda Schürer-Waldheim and Michaela Wein

My group shows people everything, all beautiful things about former Yugoslavia and it has been created in order to motivate people to rebuild Yugoslavia economically, even though it does not exist any more," tells 'Vladimir', who uses this name as internet pseudonym and who left his homeland Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely

MySpace is nowadays the ultimate place to be at, if you want to show who you are – no matter which character you want to divulge.

Sarajevo, 15 years ago. The name of his virtual group on the MySpace platform tells its own tale: "Former Yugoslavia: Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Montenegro after breakdown." Bearing in mind that MySpace.com is the largest and most rapidly spreading online community in the world - what exactly is MySpace and what is it good for?

There are very different opinions on this question. Some might say it is a great masquerade, where people can pretend to be someone else and the socially retarded can adopt other identities to get in contact with others. But in one point there is unanimous agreement that MySpace is nowadays the ultimate place to be at, if you want to show who you are – no matter which character you want to divulge.

This virtual platform, with about 107 million accounts, is one of the largest and most popular internet communities, bringing together members from all over the world.

Founded in 2003, MySpace features options that vary from

uploading and listening to music, to creating special interest groups, in which a personal network can be built.

Udo Thiedeke, Professor of Sociology at the University of Mayence, points out in his work on Virtual Groups that users of such platforms develop a sense of belonging and can interact without need of the classic face-to-face communication.

The options seem to be unlimited: every user can define his virtual identity regardless of his real life. The social relationships that are built up become increasingly important for the user and picture an important part of today's society. Thiedecke especially mentions the decline in membership of other social groups (e.g. the church) that has caused this development.

By Mouse Click Back to Your Home Country

The conditions required for joining platforms are the access to the internet and a certain degree of knowledge about the latter. Barriers, such as national borders, are non-existent; internet communities like MySpace use this advantage for world-wide communication.

If you want to feel close to your former homeland, because you started a new life somewhere far away or your country does not exist any more in its previous form, than you have the possibility to join or even create on MySpace what you long for.

"It is a group for people from former Yugoslavia. I had another group about Yugoslavia, it had over 800 members, and then my profile got deleted so the group is unavailable now... that is why I created this one," reports a person

ers

People from former Yugoslavia founded new ways for reintegration – via the internet

using the pseudonym 'Anonymus 2.0', who has formed a virtual group named 'Jugoslavija'.

'Anonymus 2.0' and 'Vladimir' are just two of many others who emigrated during the war in Yugoslavia and built up a virtual place for people who come from there. Members of these communities do not only want to hold up contact to their relatives, but also try to find users, who share the same destiny and a similar set of interests. Discussions about political topics are as common as conversations about music, films and memories about their home country.

National Feeling cannot be Drawn into Maps

'Anonymus 2.0' emigrated from Slovenia in 1992 when the war in former Yugoslavia had already started and moved first to Canada and afterwards to Cambridge, Massachusetts. "In Slovenia, we were Serbs," he says. "Slovenia had a lot of anti-Serbian propaganda and was a bad environment for minorities to be in when Yugoslavia broke up. Also, Slovenia is poorer than the US or Canada so there is not much sense in going back there. I do not really plan on going back there anytime soon... it is lost and gone, and will never be again." Most topics of conversation on the bulletin board of 'Anonymus 2.0' and 'Vladimir's' group tie up with this theme of former Yugoslavia. Members express their opinions about different articles, which can be posted by other group members, for example about the dream of a once again unified Yugoslavia, the latest elections in Ljubljana or things reminding them of their origins.

Even 'Vladimir' does not consider returning to his home country. He describes his motivation to form a group for people from former Yugoslavia as follows: "Just to connect people and show them that it is better to be peaceful than to have a war over religion or culture." Unlike 'Anonymus 2.0', 'Vladimir' believes in reintegration of the Ex-Yugoslavian countries sometime in the future, when they

eventually have altogether joined the EU and borders would belong to the past. Nevertheless, both agree that the best thing about MySpace and especially in the virtual

Members of these communities do not only want to hold up contact to their relatives, but also try to find users, who share the same destiny and a similar set of interests.

groups is freedom of expression, where members can share their opinions.

But you will not catch the competition napping! Similarly to MySpace there exists a community named YugoMix.com, with over 3 000 members, which offers bulletin boards and chats to discuss, music and photos of former Yugoslavia and news concerning countries of ex-Yugoslavia.

Perhaps those 'virtual reunifications' of former Yugoslavia in terms of online communities are the first step to again connect the newly formed countries in reality, somewhere down the road. ■



Play it Again,

In the search for identity, music has always played an important role. Packed with pitfalls, but also possibilities, the internet has become the most effective market place for 'music shareware'. But how is it shared and by whom?

And which effects are to be expected towards identity building?

by Amadeus Henhagl and Johanna Strahlhofer

In our era of mass communication, the internet provides the best conditions to catch society's attention and to get in touch with other cultures in a formal way." Orhan Galjus, a Roma journalist and activist, has some

"In our era of mass communication, the internet provides the best conditions to catch society's attention and to get in touch with other cultures in a formal way."
Orhan Galjus

good reasons for his 'hymn of praise' to the internet: During the last couple of years, he could observe a steady raise of popularity of Roma music.

"Thanks to the internet," he emphasises, "it is possible to become better-known amongst Roma of other countries." Beyond that, he personally knows many non-Roma who possess a collection of Roma music, downloaded from the internet.

This fact is a reason for his hope and his considering the internet as a chance to fight xenophobia: "The internet can change a society. It could make the society aware of the Roma Culture, and promoting culture by the internet provokes a contribution to the development of culture." Roma music, which stands out due to a variety of combined elements, relies on the maturity of its listeners. Because for identity building it always takes some maturity to know who you are, as Orhan Galjus states.

DeScripto has taken a chance to ask Melisa for her opinion. The 24-year-old student, who has been living in Austria for eleven years, is just about to explore her Bosnian-Croatian roots. Music gives her a deep consciousness of identity and makes her again aware of her cultural background: "In my homeland, Westernised music is very popular, since it is some kind of an ideal; everyone dresses

in a Western style and everyone listens to the same music. For us diaspora, it is somehow different. We are keen on listening to Gypsy music, as it represents an important part of our identity. It feeds our nostalgia and connects us with our country of origin."

Black Market Dot Com

Would this mean that the internet in South Eastern Europe has taken another step to become a real Western medium? Or is there any chance left for national musicians to use the World Wide Web for their own advantage? – deScripto turned to Serbia and asked the management of the Boban Markovic Orkestar for their opinion, from the artist's point of view.

They pointed out the problem of illegal downloads. Apart from that, they consider the internet as a promotion medium at its best stage – which applies not only to their own country, but also to others.

"We know very well about the problem of free downloads, especially pushed forward by emigrants from the Balkans, who are living in the West. But as it helps to promote our band, we are willing to overlook this fact," states the orchestra's manager.

But what are the reasons for these troubles with the web? Igor (23) from Skopje knows about the issue of free music downloads and one of the problems is that you initially need internet access: "It is right that almost no one here will pay for downloading music because of the economic situation. Internet access is quite expensive in relation to real income, which is why many people still buy their records on the black market, as it is cheap and simply available."

From another user's perspective, namely Melisa's, who prefers using national sites, comes an interesting aspect: "Download sites offer me the possibility to listen to

Boban!

Not only the very famous Boban Markovic Orkestar from Serbia, but also other Roma music groups have recently discovered the internet as their 'promotion tool'.

unknown interpretations. If I like the music, I download it for free, but afterwards I am willing to support the musicians by buying their CDs in stores.“

It becomes quite obvious that the internet might be used as an effective instrument – apart from its potential to strengthen identity, it must not be underestimated for promotional purposes. Orhan Galjus' ambitious advice to big Roma musicians starts out with a strategic marketing plan and ends up by using the internet consciously as a professional tool.

According to the expert, also the less famous artists could all too easily enter it, with only some basics of 'technological awareness': “Small musicians also use the internet for promotional purposes, without spending horrendous sums

on it. For instance, they may benefit from local radio programmes on the internet.”

Full of potential on the one hand and quite troublesome on the other, the World Wide Web truly does offer an invaluable platform for music. If distributional difficulties can be managed, including the dilemma of illegal downloads, and if it is handled correctly, especially smaller and as yet unknown bands could virtually spread their music all over the globe. Together with their songs, their way of life, their identity and culture is being transported and made available for every user of the net. And for what purpose could it be more precious and in the sense of the medium itself more useful than the one it was originally meant to fulfil: to connect us. ■



Free Knowledge: The Big Deal?

Recent internet tools valorise the online collective. Impulses are duplicated easily and cannot be controlled or bowdlerised. Democracy, freedom and transparency are to be spread especially over South East Europe.

A nice theory, but with a low impact on real life.

by Julian Paschinger and Manuela Tomic

What if a number of producers would not charge any money for their product despite people would be willing to pay? Basically, the creation of free content is a high-minded thought. Open Content means continuous updating of a free accessible database by an undefined collective. Particularly South East European low-income households will potentially profit by this trend, debuting in free and suitable access to information. The output is currently improved by discussion and may be read, copied or changed by any person.

Open Content offers also clear transparency, displaying every single step of creation. A laudable aspect you do not reach so often in reality, both in the private and public sector. “Open Content needs a long history of dialogue education, presence in schools and institutions in order to convince of transparency,” Svetlana Slapsak, Dean of the Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis (ISH) at the Ljubljana Graduate School of Humanities, told deScripto. “Application could be institutionalised in education and culture as an additional media feature, a public space of debate with strict restrictions related to hate and intolerance.”

There is a rising non-profit trend in the so-called Web 2.0. Campaigners are persuaded of its democratic organisation and believe in affecting society. “The functioning of internet and its sites is surely a sign of new expansion among masses, but not of democracy,” says Slapsak. She further notes that “There is no possibility of response or real acting in educational, cultural or political reality. The internet is not part of public discourse in these regions.”

Basically, there are two possibilities for existence of free content. The first one is to have free content as a public domain, which would also mean the disappearance of

copyright. The second possibility to realise free content is by using appropriate licensing. For example, one way to freely use already licensed content is by publishing the name of the provider. It is even not restricted to non-profit use. The famous Wikipedia network for example uses a GNU license for free documentation when publishing Open Content-based information.

Digital Rebellion

Svetlana Slapsak traces back the rapid Wiki-expansion in South East Europe to “Not only a large resource and information pool, but also a kind of a therapy for social isolation and cultural exclusion.” The numbers prove her statement: In only six years 214 000 writers have published more than 5 million articles in 114 different languages for the non-profit organisation.

There are some sleeping dangers in this huge reservoir of knowledge. South East European children follow a Western trend to be so much into Wikipedia, that they ignore sources. Slapsak thinks that “Since there is no demand for references or verification, it can seriously mislead a young person.” She accepts Wikis as a primary impulse to search for more verified knowledge, but declares that “Generations, which benefited from a large and demanding scholar scheme, have more general and also

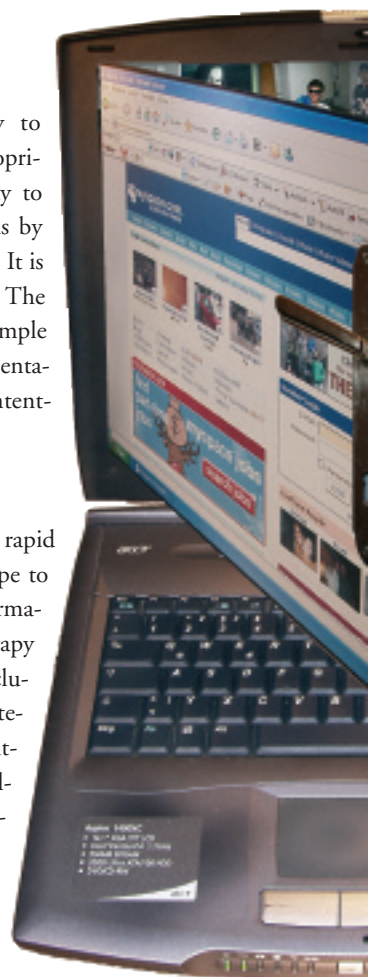


Photo: Jakob Fey

hard sciences knowledge than most members of the same generation among Western Europeans.”

“With free encyclopaedias we radically reduce the critical thought, which starts with comparison, doubt and curiosity,” she points out. If curiosity is superficially satisfied by knowledge obtained without effort, the critical spirit dies. Slapsak deduces that “Politically crippled masses do not even recognise the manipulation.” This factor seems to serve the governments. “Local encyclopaedias rather confirm than challenge the new situation (note: post Balkan war situation), which is generally characterised by the lack of criticism of capitalism.” Slapsak describes capitalism as an “Equal taboo and a semi-religious mysterious concept, that cannot be discussed.”

Free encyclopaedias are simply not suitable for discourse on capitalism and globalisation. The up-to-date discussion takes place at the participative online Open Publishing. The success of this often encouraged tool is based on its direct connection to reality.

Information Networking

Open Publishing is a serious attempt to undermine the ‘one-to-many’ relationship of traditional media. Everyone may post an online story using simplified software. This concept achieves popularity attracting committed people who want to contribute to, instead of just consuming, the media. Open Publishing takes place on weblogs.

It is difficult to confine the term weblog because its main function as an online diary has changed. Today most blogs are not even worth reading and only a minority use the platforms for special interests. Some

bloggers produce grassroots journalism, which stands for research and ongoing reporting by citizens. Through a simple replying technique modern networks with main focus on coordination and information exchange rose.

Slapsak attests some blogs a digital insubordination, but would like to see “Bloggers working for a rally, a protest, organising an electoral subversion, being funny, critical,

selective, and inventive.” Although blogs offer a platform for critical thinking, in her opinion, influence on South East European society and politics could not be achieved by them. “There should be some spare energy for doing, working, being in the society and politics.” That is exactly where the Indymedia network comes up.

Don’t Hate the Media, be the Media!

What started as an online information platform during the anti-globalisation protests of Seattle 1999 is now a global phenomenon of applied open publishing. Indymedia’s citizen journalists report directly from the line of fire. “The effort is to create radical, accurate and passionate tellings of the truth,” indymedia.org tells us. In the last six years, 165 collectives were built in 70 countries all over the world.

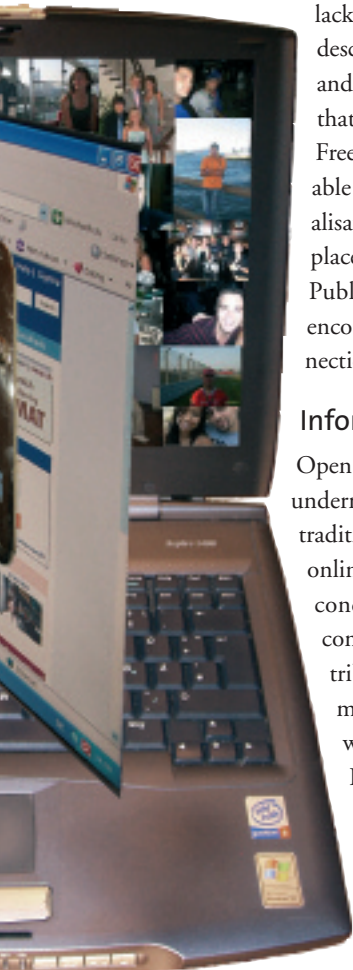
One of the young networks is situated in Sofia. In November 2005 rumours about secret CIA prisons on Bulgarian ground with further prisons planned occurred and were reported on. The governments denied them and the proximate protests with two arrests were ignored by the majority of the Bulgarian media. Indymedia reported non-stop and without lockjaw about the incidents. Due to anonymous collaboration no writer had to care about consequences. Logfiles with IP addresses are not even saved. Indymedia is more than a network, it is a movement.

In order to create a widespread, actual and manifold network, editorial control is kept to a minimum. Indymedia Bulgaria realises this by a free accessible article voting system. Porn, spam and discriminating articles are banned. Voted eminent articles decorate the front-page, next to the “newswire”.

These links to important world-wide actual stories form a greater network. Despite all those preferences the Indymedia network is put up with the allegation of being subjective in reporting. There is no effort of objectiveness. If hundreds of civil reporters hit the road, there is just one intention: truth.

Virtual World

Free knowledge exchange promises to revolutionise the world. It is about time to identify this revolution as a mainly digital one. But because we can locate a certain minimal impact on reality, we may not watch as the internet is being degenerated to a strictly consumer good. “I am always very suspicious when freedom and democracy are used for internet services,” says Slapsak. Web 2.0 definitely needs an update. ■



„We are not part of the political game“

Andreas Rudas, Head of K&K, Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (WAZ) media group's organisation for all its activities in South East Europe, on foreign investment, corporate responsibility and democracy.
by Thomas A. Bauer

Mr. Rudas, you have been managing the K&K since October last year. K&K is the organisation which belongs to the Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (WAZ) Media Group, located in Vienna. It is meant to be the headquarters for all engagements and projects of the WAZ Media Group in Eastern and South Eastern Europe. What is the reason or the advantage to run such an organisation from Vienna?

There are many reasons for that. One is a question of flight connections. What seems to be a funny answer turns out to be very reasonable. From Vienna you can reach all the important destinations in the region in the most effective time. Besides that very rational argument, we are also mentally closer to our partners in Vienna and they to us. We know the historical developments and have a common history. Therefore we also know the way of thinking. On top of that, all our partners prefer to come to Vienna rather than to any other destination in the area.

Regarding the extension of investments of the WAZ Media Group in Eastern Europe's media landscape, it is remarkable that WAZ goes East given all these countries suffer from a totalitarian history, lack economic structures for a sustainable media development and since all these countries now struggle in order to shape their own profile under conditions of transition. It seems reasonable to ask: What is the interest of WAZ Media Group's involvement?

No doubt, in general we have economic reasons. For us the CEE area is an upcoming economic area. A group like WAZ has a wide range of opportunities. Given our know-how we can create sustainable economical growth. But we are a European company and we support the European

vision. That means that we would support the way of these countries into Europe. We would never interfere into domestic politics, but we would like to contribute to the strengthening of the democratisation process.

WAZ itself is strong, but is also strong in developing strategic partnerships with media in South East Europe. However, it is not the only European investor. What is the impact of competition between the European investors on media development and media quality, or journalism culture in those countries? For example, in Croatia local experts often complain about the raising 'tabloidisation', especially among daily newspapers. What do you think, is the share of competition of foreign investments the reason for that or is some other factor causing that phenomenon?

There is no need for foreign investors to bring up tabloid newspapers. That is also possible for domestic entrepreneurs. Why should these countries be apart from international media developments? I think foreign investors are important because they are – especially in our case – independent, not part of the

political game and have no political interests.

Talking about tabloids and problems of media quality, and taking into account the responsibility of a big player as you are, what are your considerations to maintain the fame of the media group with its foreign investments?

You are right, the WAZ group has a quality image in the market and we have to take care that this image is not damaged through an international engagement. WAZ values and principles have to be also fulfilled in our publishing



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houses in CEE area. Beside that we start initiatives, both in raising the quality standards of our journalists and in starting a fundamental debate on media liberty and media responsibility in the area.

WAZ is well known as a strong company and supposed to be interested in a sustainable development of media as it always was committed to the mission statement of media as a key factor of democratisation. Quality, as you know, of course is one of the key factors of sustainability. What is WAZ or K&K doing in order to support the local structures and the local or regional resources?

We look for partners with whom we can start a programme in order to improve the skills of our journalists.

If there are considerations in terms of professionalisation or additional investments in professional education – what do you think has to be done first?

It is very difficult to make a statement on this question. I think both has to be done.

What is WAZ doing in order to guarantee and secure press freedom and journalistic independence in the countries where the WAZ group is present – namely in the countries where these standards, for example press freedom and independent journalists are not so self-evident?

Since the division of the editorial and publishing offices, the inner editorial freedom and the press freedom in general are one of the main components of the WAZ corporate philosophy, these principles are explicitly listed in all contracts, which WAZ completes when buying shares or whole media companies. Also the equidistance to all political parties, the strict party-political neutrality, is a further basis of all our actions, which is also contractually written down. In 50:50 share-holdings is clearly stated that WAZ is responsible for the financial, whereas our national partner is responsible for the journalistic and editorial part. But also our partners have to engage themselves to guarantee political independence. In cases when we own more than 50% of shares, as for example in Hungary in our financial paper HVG, not only the line of the paper is the matter of the

editors, but also the choice of the editor-in-chief. He or she is not determined by WAZ, but voted by the editors. There are only two topics, which WAZ is textually minding, namely the support of the parliamentary-democratic game rules and the support of the European integration. At the moment systems for job-related education and further training are also being developed. One of the important contents of teaching will be the topic of critical but correct equidistant journalism.

On which knowledge are WAZ media engagements in the new countries of South East and East Europe based on, especially the introduction of new concepts in the media field? Are there market-based studies or studies of demands and what do they show?

Each of our investments in new countries follows precise market-based studies. As professionals with many years of experience behind us, we know that the media usage, consumer tastes and reading behaviour from country to country partially show serious differences. One cannot copy and paste a model one to one. If one can diagnose one tendency, then it is that through the electronic media and internet the reading willingness has been changed. This leads to the fact that the papers need to consider very carefully how they can keep their readers. Against all prophecies of doom, we still believe that at the end quality prevails. But one thing is for sure: print media must also think in a multi media fashion and therefore first of all about internet.

What can one say already today about the further expansion plans of WAZ, both in the existing WAZ-related newspaper markets and in geographically new ones?

WAZ has a lot of pleasure and even more so a lot of success in its East European shares. This motivates us to move further. At the moment there are several talks, negotiations, but also the above mentioned market and opinion researches going on. No decisions have been made yet, but we hope that soon we will be able to report about new WAZ activities in East and South East Europe. ■

COUNTRY FOCUS SERBIA

Troublesome Road to Freedom

The end of Milosevic era liberated the media market in Serbia, but the failure to adopt new media laws has created a chaotic situation that now threatens press freedom and media development in Serbia.

By Martina Filipovic

There are a great number of print media, TV and radio channels in Serbia today. According to the World Press Review magazine most of them are staffed by the same reporters and editors who worked during the Milosevic era.

“The new government did not manage to create efficient media laws, which would clear up the ownership of the media neither have the new media laws been applied nor respected.”

Stevan Niksic

This is true for both media which were controlled by the state and for those which managed to stay independent, such as RTV B92 or media which are members of the Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM). B92 kept its independent editorial policy throughout the Milosevic era and nowadays it shows the viewers the current reality whether Milosevic's successors like it or not. These are certainly some of the reasons why B 92 is constantly attacked and criticised. The review further states that political authorities or the police are not really interested in protecting them because they are pursuing their own interests or the interests of those who are economically or politically powerful. After the fall of the regime several tabloids appeared, too, spreading sensational news and 'dirty stories'. The people concerned in reporting hardly reacted, official authorities even less. The review also notes that no one can really say to whom the numerous tabloids belong but it can be assumed that the owners are economically influential.

Stevan Niksic, former editor-in-chief of the weekly NIN and director of the Center for Professionalisation of Media, says: “Unfortunately, after the fall of Milosevic's autocratic regime in the year 2000, a radical democratic reform did not follow. This is especially visible in the media area. After

2000 there was a chaos on the media landscape, which was useful to the supporters of the earlier regime and for the rich tycoons, who were also near to the regime and who control a great number of tabloids and other media in Serbia today.”

The lack of regulation and the absence of real press freedom threatened even Niksic personally. In 1999 he was sued because he had allowed a letter to the editor to be published in NIN. The letter implied a critical opinion against the former communist functionary Milovan Djilas and other high communist officials because they had never been called to account for the war crimes they have been accused of.

Niksic protected himself with the argument that he did not write the letter himself, but as the editor-in-chief he allowed it to be published. Also, the letter contained the general opinion that everyone, who had committed a crime, has to take the responsibility in front of a court. Besides, the deceased Milovan Djilas, because he was an official with a high position, should have tolerated criticism more than a common citizen. Before his death he did not contradict the accusations, so his family had no right to sue the media in such a case.

In 2002 the same judge who started the proceeding in 1999, sentenced Niksic to a five month imprisonment term on probation. Luckily, the higher court aborted the case due to 'formal reasons' and put the issue again at the beginning of the proceeding, but in the meantime the legal time limitation expired.

“That was obviously an attempt to brush the issue under the carpet and forget everything. Nevertheless, the issue left a bitter impression and it showed that even after democratic changes in Serbia, the court was willing to bring such a decision in a specific case, in which very important principles of media freedom have been argued”.

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Lidija Kujundzic, who works for the Journalist's Association of Serbia (UNS), says that the main problem of the media is the big influence of economy: "The focus of pressure to influence media has been transferred from the state to the business field. Today business interests jeopardise the freedom of media".

Another problem is that editors do not support their journalists at all. She also had the experience that editors shortened or even changed her articles before publishing them. During the Kosovo conflict she found it impossible to reach certain places where she could get the information from. Kujundzic had also been criticised by local politicians, because they did not agree with her conflict coverage. Through privatisation of the media market many journalists lost their jobs or have to work under very bad economic conditions. "The salaries are very low and especially freelancers are in an insecure position because they have no social security or retirement insurance," says Kujundzic. The result of the bad working conditions is a very low professional level without training in professional standards, whereas investigative journalism is almost entirely neglected.

Stevan Niksic also indicates the lack of professionalism: "Unfortunately, the professional level is alarmingly low. Despite the fact that Serbian media and journalism have a long and rich tradition, they obviously miss the knowledge of professional codes, which are usual in democratic conditions."

The Center for Professionalisation of Media tries to recover this deficit by education of media professionals and journalists. The worst thing for Kujundzic is that there are hardly any prospects of improvement of the journalists' situation. She hopes that it will change for the better, especially concerning education, and that one day they will stop censoring themselves because of politicians. Auto-censor-

ship results from fear of powerful people from politics or economy and the fear of losing a job or being sued for defamation, which is possible even after the democratisation, as the example of Stevan Niksic shows.

"I hope that one day journalists will stop censoring themselves."

Lidija Kujundzic

According to a paper by Radomir Licina, from the daily newspaper Danas and President of the South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) Board, titled "Independent Journalists in Serbia", there are two basic media groups in Serbia today: The bigger one is more or less controlled by the government, various interest groups or foreign owners. In this group there are many journalists who were loyal to the Milosevic regime and are interested in keeping the current situation as it is, forgetting everything about the past and pushing the dirt under the carpet. The other, much smaller group consists of some politically non-aligned and independent private media or their professional associations. They lack infrastructure essentials and 'somehow' they are those who are ready to treat new authorities the way they did preceding ones, with due critical attitude. "Unfortunately, too many politicians think that the media is an instrument for political plans and not a service for the citizens," says Licina.

"The chief editors of many newspapers are in contact with politicians and business tycoons every day to see what they are allowed to publish and what they are not allowed."

The other group are politically non-aligned independent private media. They are the only ones that are addressing the most significant and sensitive issues of the country in a proper and serious way. It is them who will, despite all political or other obstacles, pursue their efforts on the long

road towards democracy and stability. They are not very popular with other colleagues or politicians, who were obedient and 'loyal' earlier, which is not a very good environment for the freedom of press.

The situation on the media market is very hard for independent media today, because they are fully exposed to the conditions of the market without financial back-up of any political or interest group.

"Daily newspapers in Serbia cost about 30 Dinars, which is nothing, compared to European standards. But for many citizens even 30 Dinars are too expensive."

Radomir Licina

The expenses which have to be paid, like taxes or printing and running costs are very high, whereas the profit is much lower. "The print run of the biggest newspapers is 200 000 copies, which is insufficient, but that is the reality. Electronic media have these problems as well: even political programmes are interrupted by advertising spots," Licina adds.

Radomir Licina had to suffer due to the Milosevic regime during his career, too. The daily newspaper Danas he works for today was prohibited before the Kosovo conflict. At that time, Danas appeared as a supplement in a newspaper in Montenegro, but they still had problems to import the newspaper to Serbia. In early 1999, Danas was forced to pay large amounts in fines. During the NATO bombardment the newspaper was censored, but still found ways to write real and objective news, which bypassed the censorship. After all, Danas managed to survive and to stay true to its principles and was given the Pioneer of Free Media Award for its efforts in 2002 by the International Press Institute (IPI) and U.S. Freedom Forum.

Licina thinks that it will take a long time until the media situation in Serbia changes and that it is important for the journalists to realise their responsibility in the fight for public interests. He also hopes they will have enough courage to do this. He notes that, "Serbia is not an exception, there are the same problems in established countries too, but this is no relief."

The question, when the media situation in Serbia will take an effective change is not clear, but it is sure that it will not happen very soon. In Niksic's opinion, a great number of media which exists today will disappear and international groupings will take over the main media in Serbia, just like they did in the neighbouring states.

It will be hard for independent media to survive under such conditions and some of them will converge to the new authorities step by step, while others will sell themselves to the new tycoons and in that way lose their one-time innocence. ■

Persist Stands

Serbia's Media Policy Makes No Headway

Serbia's media landscape is characterised by its arbitrariness; political control over broadcasting; insufficient reforms in broadcasting; media policy and regulation. The legal framework is still incomplete.

by *Susanne Schoppelt*

The Serbian media market is one of the most unregulated markets in Europe. Therefore, it will need to introduce media reforms required to reach European broadcasting standards. However, media reforms have been slow and insufficient up to now. The television market is highly concentrated in terms of both ownership and audience shares. A regulation agency with considerate and democratic amendments should bring a system into the Serbian media landscape.

Sasa Mirkovic, General Manager of RTV B92 and chairman of the Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM) implicates that the transition process in Serbia is still not good enough as people have been expecting. "Up to this point the country has been in a stuck position compared to Croatia." There is a noticeable standstill characterised by political reluctance to set up independent and proper law enforcements in the regulation agency - the Broadcasting Agency of the Republic of Serbia (RBA), according to the Serbian country report "Television Across Europe: Regulation, Policy and Independence" (2005) drafted by Prof. Snjezana Milivojevic and published by the Open Society Institute (OSI). The country is waiting to conform with the European media law framework. The framework's basic components include: a dual broadcasting model in which public broadcasters and commercial media exist; broadcasters with proper authority; licensing to commercial media on a legal basis; programme stan-

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dards and the regulation of the media market. Serbia needs to have relevant media laws in order to reach the European standards and proper legal framework. The Broadcasting Act, adopted in 2002, was the first in a package of media laws adopted since 2000. The act applies to broadcasting in general and, for the first time, regulates both the public service and commercial media. It also introduced a new licensing system, defined general programme standards, regulated advertising and sponsorship issues, and introduced anti-concentration instruments.

Broadcasting Act under Constant Change

Serbian Parliament decided to re-adopt the amendments of the Broadcasting Act, for the third time, each time without consideration of expert knowledge coming from media associations. ANEM demands responsible amendments to the broadcasting act, rather than urgent ones. It also recommends to the Members of Parliament, nominators of amendments to be voted on in the Parliament, to engage in the initiated public discussion and by consulting other interested subjects. In response to the actual need of the broadcasting sphere in Serbia. Another striking point is the fact that the Serbian Government is given the power to approve the financial plan of the Broadcasting Agency instead of the Parliament. Therefore, it is not guaranteed that the Broadcasting Agency is able to work independently. In order to emphasise the modification in the public broadcasting sector, one has to mention the re-introduction of the licence fee. After years of not paying for television, the public now pays approximately four Euro per month, which gets collected via the electricity bill. A clever way to ensure all viewers pay. Even though the public broadcasters get financed partly through this money, they are having problems to follow the amendments of the Broadcasting Act.

Decisions of the Broadcasting Agency must be transparent. ANEM therefore demands that the Broadcasting Agency should bring more specific regulations concerning advertising and sponsorship on radio and television, in line with

the provisions of the Advertising and Broadcasting Acts. Radio Television Serbia (RTS) is leading with the highest number of violations of the Advertising Act. There are many reasons that call the Agency to rethink the method of financing of the RTS and also the provisions of the Advertising Act. "RTS is far away from being a public service. It is rather after popularity than quality. RTS has to work on education and social matters. This is very important," says Mirkovic about one of the most watched television networks in Serbia. In May 2006, RTS went through a transition process from a state-owned to a public broadcaster. It now consists of two channels instead of three, divided in the Public Service of Serbia and the Public Service of Vojvodina. Mirkovic also did not forget to refer to the strong political influence behind RTS. He cannot compare it to the Milosevic era, but in his opinion it is still somehow present. The next difficulty is the absence of a transparent structure at RTS. At this point, the Broadcasting Agency is called up to work on.

Lack of Interest in the Government

The OSI country report mentions that there is a lack of mutual interest on the transformation process. The fundamental transformation of the broadcasting sector, again, cannot be enforced without the establishment of new independent regulators of broadcasting and telecommunication. The transformation process of local and regional broadcasters into commercial outlets is also taking a long time. The government should ensure that this process is both more efficient and durable in the future. This lack of interest is causing the delay. The deadline has often been extended for the print, but also for the broadcasting media. Most of these stations are under the control of local governments. Regular elections will be held in 2007, however the deadline for the privatisation of local electronic media is still open. A possible reason for this lack of interest Mirkovic formulates in a very short and terse, but thoughtful way: "Why would it be in somebody's interest to push this issue of privatisation, if these stations can be misused for future campaigns of local leaders? That is the main reason for the lack of interest. Not to forget that there are so many other topics on the political agenda: future Serbian elections, Kosovo status, cooperation with the Hague and so on. Who cares about the status of media under such circumstances?"

Since the most distinguished mark in the Serbian media sector is the stagnation of media reforms, regulatory bodies and a slow transition process to a democratic system, one has to point out the importance of an independent Regulatory Agency - without the proper legal framework and regulation, the media market is turning into a new playground for the rulers in this country. ■

Sounds Crazy, B

Multilingual Broadcasting in the Multiethnic Province of Vojvodina

In hardly any other region of the world the linguistic and ethnical variety is as large as in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina in Serbia. There, where six official languages apply and people belonging to national minorities make up one third of the population, radio announcers and editors have to face special challenges.

By Ute Hanel

That persons belonging to national minorities are entitled to receive complete and unbiased information in their own language is axiomatically attested by the Federal Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities. This statute also includes the right to express, receive, send and exchange information and ideas by means of press and other mass media. In accordance with its heterogeneous national composition and its multicultural needs, multinational and multilingual Vojvodina imposed different media standards from other regions of the country. But what does the implementation look like in a province that usually communicates in more than two languages at the same time, on nearly every part of its territory?

Working Together without Consideration of Language

The answers of different broadcasting stations to this question are diverse.

“In the editorial staff of our radio station people with diverse national backgrounds work together. But, the organisation of the work does not acknowledge the division into editorial staffs by virtue of language,” says Olja Homa, editor at the multilingual broadcasting station BeatBox, which was formerly known as Multiradio.

Launched in 2000, Multiradio was a unique independent multilingual media in Serbia, which broadcast in the languages of the five largest minorities in Vojvodina: Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, Ruthenes and Roma. Of some 150 local radio and TV stations broadcasting in different languages in Vojvodina, Multiradio was one of only two stations with multilingual programming, and as the

only radio station it sometimes mixed languages within one broadcast. Moreover, the station was listed by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as the best example of broadcasting in multilingual societies.

Forced to Fight at the Market

However, after three years, Multiradio could not pay for itself any more. “Media help for our projects became smaller. We had to try to fight at the market to make our project commercial,” states Homa. Thus, the station changed its target group, its music format and its on-the-air name into BeatBox. Under the slogan “Think aloud”, the programme is now intended for young people, primarily for university and secondary school students and members of minority communities. “BeatBox is designed for young people to be in touch with European developments from their school days and to understand that coexistence in Vojvodina is of utmost importance for our further developments,” explains the editor.

Multilingual programming is realised through shows in weekend blocks of the ‘MultiBox’, ‘MultiKulti’ and Hungarian ‘VMTF’. “In Multiradio we had six languages - Hungarian, Romanian, Slovakian, Ruthenian, Romani and Serbian,” says Olja Homa proudly. “Everybody learns the important phrases in each language of their other colleagues. Flash news was broadcast every hour, in pairs: Hungarian-Slovakian, Ruthenian-Romanian, and Romani. We had 20 minutes central info in all six languages, a mix of original news and schemes of translations. In ‘Multibox’ we keep the scheme of mixing languages.”

Through not only its multi-language programming, but

ut It Works!

through all of its programme contents, BeatBox directed its efforts towards resisting cultural and political populism by producing high quality programmes.

It promotes the values of civil society, through reporting about all social issues concerning young people, and reporting about disputable political issues regarding tolerant coexistence in the multinational environment of Vojvodina.

“We receive positive reactions from the public and we can conclude that the new model of multi-language informative programme is successful. The new programme ideas cherished on BeatBox have completely achieved their goal,” states Homa delightedly.

Others Approach Differently

Another example for successful multilingual broadcasting in Vojvodina is Radio Subotica, which is a municipal radio station regulated by public law. Founded in 1968 by Subotica, a northern municipality of Vojvodina with about 150 000 inhabitants, today it produces and broadcasts its daily programme in the Hungarian, Croatian and Serbian languages, as well as a half-an-hour programme a week in German.

However, its staff-policy differs from that one of BeatBox. “We have one editorial staff for the programme in the Hungarian language, one for the programme in the Serbian language and a third editorial department that deals with the programme in Croatian,” explains Antal Biacsi, Director of Radio Subotica. Sub-editors of different languages do not work together and each editorial staff is completely self-dependant. “I cannot remember any ethnical conflicts, since I have been director of this radio,” says Biacsi, who has held this office for seven years.

Essential Premise for Developing Cultural Identities

“Of course, Hungarians prefer the broadcasts in the Hungarian language, but they also listen to Serbian programmes. Every Hungarian in Vojvodina also speaks Serbian, whereas for most Serbs, Serbian is the only language they are able to speak. I think that the reason why multilingual broadcasting is so attractive to the listeners is the fact that it provides information in their mother-tongue, first and foremost for the minority communities,” supposes Biacsi. “This is a great political and civil achievement, as well as an essential premise for the members of all ethnical communities to preserve, foster and develop their cultural identities.” So the media of the national minorities even can be an important element of democratisation of the society and establishment of tolerant and balanced relations in the surroundings and the region.

Notwithstanding or even due to the fact that the difficulties there today are graver than they have ever been since 1974, the examples of Radio Subotica and Multiradio show the possibility and importance of such kind of media in a region. Occasionally daring experiments like mixing languages within one broadcast can prove to be worthwhile. “At first it maybe sounds crazy, but it works. And we will go on,” concludes Olja Homa and laughs contentedly. ■

South East Europe Media Organisation - SEEMO

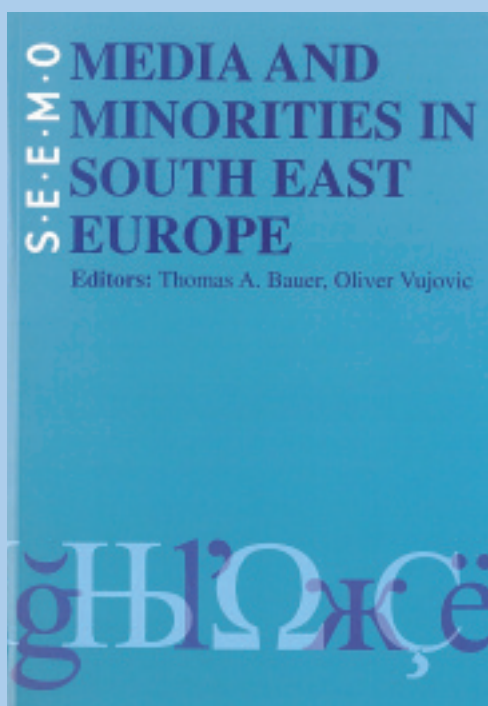
The South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is a regional non-governmental, non-profit network of editors-in-chief, media executives and leading journalists from newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations, news agencies and new media in South East Europe. SEEMO was founded in October 2000 in Zagreb, Croatia.

One of SEEMO's main activities is protecting press freedom. Over 60 per cent of SEEMO's press releases and letters of protest to governmental and other officials have had positive results in the past. Every SEEMO protest is distributed to more than 12,000 addresses: to leading regional and international media, national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations, politicians, and also public persons and institutions.

During the last four years, SEEMO has assembled over 3,000 editors-in-chief, media executives, leading journalists and public persons from the region in various meetings. Helping journalists means also furthering their education. Several workshops and seminars were organised in the field of education, especially for investigative reporters and representatives of minority media.

SEEMO regularly publishes deScripto, a quarterly media magazine for South Eastern Europe, which is committed to the enhancement of a climate of critical reflection on media culture and communication, in and among the South East European countries, and South East Europe Media Handbook (SMH), an annual publication covering media developments, which includes selected media contacts.

SEEMO also gives two annual awards for outstanding achievements in the field of media: "Dr Erhard Busek - SEEMO Award for Better Understanding" and the SEEMO Human Rights Award "SEEMO Award for Mutual Cooperation in South East Europe".



Media and Minorities in South East Europe

...is a publication realised by South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO). Its aim is to enhance better understanding of the minorities' situation in South East Europe and to serve as a source of information concerning their media. Next to detailed country reports, the publication contains a database of all important minority media in the region. You can order "Media and Minorities in South East Europe" for EUR 40,- excl. postage fee.

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Your Excellencies!

Recent SEEMO Protests and Press Releases

Protest Moldova, 19 October 2006

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe, and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is alarmed at the recent pressures on journalists from a Chisinau-based weekly.

According to information before SEEMO, after publishing a series of articles related to crimes and corruption in the legal system of the Republic of Moldova, journalists working for the Chisinau-based weekly newspaper Ziarul de Garda have faced ongoing pressure from the representatives of different state institutions as well as other unidentified persons.

SEEMO has also been informed that these persons have attempted to interfere in the editorial policy of the weekly by entering into doubtful agreements or by attempting to bribe its reporters.

SEEMO condemns these attempts to influence the paper's reporting and to intimidate journalists. With this in mind, we would ask Your Excellencies to use your influence on Moldovan officials and institutions to encourage them to investigate these accusations and to halt these illegal practices.

SEEMO would also like to remind Your Excellency that an open media environment allowing for the free flow of information, as well as the existence of critical media, is a fundamental principle of any democratic society.

Press Release Bosnia and Herzegovina, 24 November 2006

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists in South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is deeply concerned about recent death threats against a journalist from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

According to information before SEEMO, Mubarak Asani, a journalist for the Sarajevo-based public broadcaster BHT 1 TV, received anonymous death threats via telephone after the broadcasting of an investigative report in the weekly political programme "Javna tajna" (Public Secret) on 2 November 2006. The report revealed details about an illegal prostitution ring in the city of Sarajevo involving politicians and other public persons in Bosnia-Herzegovina, although the names of the politicians were not disclosed.

After the programme was broadcast, Asani received over a hundred anonymous threatening phone calls, as well as a bribe offer to make public the names of the politicians involved.

Speaking about the incident, Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO Secretary General said, "SEEMO strongly condemns such threats against journalists, as well as all activities which restrict the work of journalists."

Press Release Moldova, 19 December 2006

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe, and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is deeply concerned about the recent developments in connection with the local radio station Antena C, and the local TV station Euro TV, both run by the Chisinau Municipal Council.

According to information provided to SEEMO, on 14 December, the Chisinau Municipal Council decided to put Antena C and Euro TV up for tender and to dismiss the directors of both institutions. The two broadcasters are being privatized as outlined in the new broadcasting code. In reaction to this decision, journalists at both stations began an organized protest on 15 December. SEEMO urges all those involved in the process of reorganization to find an equitable solution that ensures the normal functioning of both media. It is important for every country to have local electronic media that provide citizens with access to comprehensive and impartial information. SEEMO is especially concerned about the interruption of the broadcasting signal of Antena C on 16 December, during a radio debate about current developments at the station.

"I agree with the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Ambassador Louis O'Neill, that it is curious that such a technical problem arose during a debate about problems at the radio station Antena C", said Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO Secretary General. Vujovic added that he is very worried about the recent developments in the Chisinau local electronic media. "I would like everyone to remember that free and independent media are crucial to the democratic development in any country. A plurality of voices is an essential element of every society."

SEEMO also calls on the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova to ensure that the new members of Teleradio Moldova's Supervisory Board will be selected transparently, based on professional experience.

Review

Recent Book Releases

Danko Plevnik: The Practice of Ethical Journalism *by Laura Weichselbaum*

In his book “The Practice of Ethical Journalism” Danko Plevnik, doctor of information science and a Croatian journalist, writes about several problems that journalists in Croatia, but also in the rest of Europe and in the USA, have to deal with.

The book is a collection of several speeches and essays, partly taken from lectures given at international or European journalist meetings or conferences, partly published in special magazines. Plevnik particularly deals with an ethical problem of journalism, which is almost as old as journalism itself: The influence of political parties and economic factors on journalistic quality. Plevnik claims that the one and only goal of quality journalism should be to spread democracy, humanity and freedom of speech. This is, of course, just an idealistic view that can never be entirely realised.

The author calls his book “The Practice of Ethical Journalism” because he thinks that it is the most important thing for young journalists and students of journalism to not only learn about the ethics of journalism, but to really learn how it works in practice. Furthermore, Plevnik thinks that media owners and politicians have to be willing to support ‘value-journalism’, because otherwise people will not be able to trust the word of a journalist anymore.

The author writes about current Croatian media circumstances and claims that there is a ‘moral dilemma’, especially for the state-owned TV station HTV. There definitely is a lack of professionalism on HTV because the Croatian government has a lot of influence on the journalists working there. Criticism of the government, or the president, is not wanted on HTV, and the working journalists there are ‘pseudo-journalists’ who only work for their profits, Plevnik claims.

Critical TV programmes are only aired at night, around midnight. The problem in the Croatian media is not the yellow press, but pretending that the yellow press was serious media, says Plevnik. He also writes about the media being responsible for the problem of hate speech between the Croats and Serbs, which is now getting slightly better.

There is another phenomenon in the Croatia media: There is a lot of ‘infotainment’ and ‘bizzification’, and journalists on TV become something close to celebrities, no matter if they are good journalists or not.

Another fact is that high-quality journalists are often fired, because their high wages are too expensive for the yellow press owners. Instead, young uneducated journalists are being hired, because they are simply cheaper. Plevnik calls this phenomenon ‘macdonaldised journalism’.

Plevnik compares the European media situation with the

American situation, where there is a very high media concentration and the media is mainly corrupted by the market. The USA is the best example for superficiality in the media, and that sometimes the presentation of a story matters more than its truthfulness. Plevnik supports the statement of Abraham Lincoln, who said: “It is possible to fool the people – when the government and press cooperate.” Plevnik thinks that this is true not only for the American ‘fast-food culture’ but also for the European and especially Croatian culture.

The book “The Practice of Ethical Journalism” is worth reading because Danko Plevnik does not mince matters to really reveal the truth about the Croatian media system. He says clearly what has to be changed to turn the ‘underdeveloped democracy’ in Croatia into a full democracy with freedom of speech and media independence.

One criticism can be levied at Plevnik, however: he seems to see everything in black and white. For him, there are good journalists and bad journalists, good newspapers and bad ones, etc. and one cannot draw such a clear line between good and bad.

Media: The Business of Ethics, the Ethics of Business - South East European Network for the Professionalisation of the Media *by Florian Blumauer*

The book is a result of the new research project of the South East European Network for the Professionalisation of the Media (SEENPM).

It focuses on good and bad practices of the media business in a general regional overview, which tends to stay on the surface of the topic and mainly states the obvious. The main problems are located in the often chaotic framework for media. In many countries even basic legislation on fair competition is missing and monitoring does not exist. Also, the lack of transparency of the ownership and funding of the media business creates a disadvantage for editorial independence.

The later chapters of the book put the spotlight on each single country. Because of the different authors and local conditions some chapters are far more detailed and draw a more deliberate conclusion, as well as access the topic in different ways. Some authors had many interviews with experts, some just studied the literature and some even did not try to make their sources transparent. However, overall the country focuses give a very comprehensive description of the respective media landscape.

The book can be very useful as a work of reference for people who need a short crash-course on the media in South East Europe and its specialties. The charts for each country which give some key-facts are also very helpful. Moreover, it gives a list of qualities which are very functional to analyse the condition of a media system and enable the reader to do further research in the field of media ethics.

Preview

Upcoming Events

Project: Media Researchers Network

1 November 2005 - 30 April 2007

This project aims to establish a regional Researchers Network under the control of the South East European Network for Professionalization of the Media (SEENPM). The Network is to conduct independent research in the media field, and furthermore to stimulate research in the member-countries.

Congress: IPI (International Press Institute) World Congress

12-15 May 2007, Istanbul, Turkey

Meeting: 16th IST Mobile and Wireless Communications Summit

1-5 July 2007, University Congress Centre of Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

Info: <http://www.mobilesummit2007.org/>

The International Society Technologies (IST) Summit is a major conference organized annually in Europe, sponsored by the European Commission. It is the first time that the Summit goes to a new member state of the European Union.

Congress: ICEES European Congress 2007

2-4 August 2007, Berlin, Germany

Info: suedosteuropa-gesellschaft.com

The European Congress 2007 of the International Council for Central and East European Studies (ICEES) is to be held under the motto "Transcending Europe's Borders - The EU and its Neighbours".

Meeting: SEEMO Meeting of Editors-in-Chief and Media Executives of Roma and other Minority Media in South East / Central Europe

20-22 April 2007, Belgrade, Serbia

Workshop: SEEMO Private News Agencies Workshop

31 May - 2 June 2007, Skopje

Seminar: SEEMO Investigative Reporting Seminar Albania

14-16 June 2007, Tirana, Albania

Forum: SEE Media Forum Zagreb

by WAZ - KAS - SEEMO, 27-28 June 2007, Zagreb, Croatia

Seminar: SEEMO Investigative Reporting Seminar Bulgaria

20-22 September 2007, Sofia, Bulgaria

Seminar: SEEMO Investigative Reporting Seminar Romania

12-13 October 2007, Bucharest, Romania

Seminar: SEEMO Investigative Reporting Seminar Bosnia-Herzegovina

8-10 November 2007, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Publication: Handbook for Investigative Reporters in SEE

(Serbian / Croatian - Bosnian - Montenegrin)

March 2007

Publication: South East Europe Media Handbook 2006/2007

by SEEMO, March 2007

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