The Relationship between Democracy and "Other Media": An attempt to describe the non–mainstream media environment in Turkey

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Demokrasi ve 'Öteki Medya' arasındaki İlişki: Türkiye'de anaakım olmayan medya ortamını tanımlamak için bir girişim

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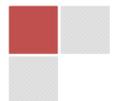
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I would like to begin by reminding to you the black and white picture of the global media environment which works against the interests of the disadvantaged segments of the world. On the one hand, we see the mainstream media, which has become more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

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

I may sound too optimistic, but this is my argument: the importance and effectiveness of the "other media" is on the rise. It is argued that while mainstream media was claiming to be the "fourth power" with a role of supervision on behalf of the public, it has become a center of power for itself, thus, the other media constitutes a sine qua non "fifth-power"[1] for those who do not settle for the current liberal democracies that leans against the mainstream media and who look for a different democracy. So, I argue that there is need for a different communications, and a different media for a different democracy. But here, in this paper my focus will be on democratization of the mass media, but not on communication in wide sense, although it is a very important and mostly ignored issue when democratization of political and public life is discussed. However, before I carry on with my argument, I would like to draw your attention to

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[1] The "Fifth power" notion belongs to Ignacio Ramonet, the Chief Editor of Le Monde Diplomatique, and I am quoting it from an article titled "Another communication" by Ertugrul Kurkcu published in Radikal Iki (29 October 2006).

some examples that prove that "the importance and effectiveness of the media that fall outside mainstream media is on the rise".

"Other media": From where to where?

The "other media" is as old as social opposition. If I use the word "media" with its wide meaning "other media"[2] always existed as a result of the need by those who have been suffering from discrimination based on class, ethnicity and religion; those who have been excluded from the public and political arena; and those who have been unable to have their voices heard. On the other hand, if the narrow meaning of the word "media" is used, and if the radical newspapers published by the British labor class starting from the second half of the 18th century is taken as a basis; the "other–media" has a history of at least two centuries (Atton, 2002: 2). However, the other media I would like to focus on here is, the media with its narrow meaning.

To make a long story short, in the second half of the 19th century, thanks to the industrialization and colonization, the development, which accompanied the West to become the economic–political center of the world, was the rise of the media as an industry branch. As a direct consequence of this, the mainstream media positioned itself on the side of the hegemonic. Although the media in the West went under the control of the international capital during this period, it continued to carry on with its mission, that was construction of the national identity through imposing standard national language within the defined the national-borders—to a certain extent until the 1980s. However because of this characteristic of the mainstream media, the alternative media stepped in as a vehicle for those, who were not represented by the nation-wide media, to have their voices heard. As a matter of fact, the 1970s were the golden years for the media of those who emerged with important experiences from the new–left political climate of 1968s and with new identities such as – environmentalists, feminists, ethnic identities, and moreover, those who had redefined their relations with the media. With the beginning of 1980s, the effects of the new–right wing politics on the radio and television broadcasts, and the deregulation and privatization waves, caused the "other" type of media found especially in wealthy geographies of the world and in Latin American countries, and which are known by the names as "underground media", "community media", "parallel media," "alternative media," and "radical alternative media" to be unable to cope with –like the media that does public broadcasts– the competition of the commercial media. In this way, these examples of the other media, which had found a place at the margins of the media environment and in financial difficulties, began to cease to exist one by one. Those that continued their existence, either became marginalized, or became a part of the mainstream media by losing their specificity or radicalism of content, as many of their characteristics began to be incorporated by the commercial media. The specificity of the other media in the 1980s was the zines[3]. Zines were the extension of the fanzines being

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

[3] It is difficult to give a definition that has been agreed on about the Zines. This word, in essence, is being used to define the printed materials the sub–culture groups published and distributed by using cheap technologies such as photocopy machines, and where everyone could be both the writer and the reader; the "editor" and the "publisher", with the aim of communicating among themselves. However, with the 2000s, and with the relative cheapening of the

nourished by the subcultural groups that were gathered around the groups making Punk music, starting from the end of the 1970s. The main herald of the revival of the "other media" was the birth of the media of new social movements of environmentalist and anarchist nature in the 1990s in the West (Atton, 2001: 80–81). Another example of the other media during the same period was the oppositional media of the Eastern European countries, known as *Samizdat*. Samizdat flourished under the political climate of the Eastern European countries and played a very important role in encouraging the opposition to organize and take action at the time of the collapse of the "socialist' political regimes in Eastern Europe by the end of 1980s (Downing, 2001:354-387). Now, since the 2000s, we are able to talk about the new–golden age of the other media that are the good example of *glocalization*[4] of the media of those who are in opposition/in resistance to the hegemonic as it is case with the Indymedia as the initiative of many online news sites in horizontal/loose relation with one another.

The new–golden age of "alternative media": 2000s

There are important differences between the other media of the 2000s—and the movements that are trying to gain publicity through this media—and those of the 1970s. This difference arises from the changes in the collective subjects of the counter–public spheres. And there is another important point to remind; the characteristics gained in the 1990s by the revival in the public sphere, which had began in the mid 1970s, and whose subject was "new social movements", owes a lot to the developments of the new media technologies. Or, maybe it would be better to say that the new–social movements and the new media transformed and grew stronger together, with the convergence of especially the internet and the mobile telephone technology, its relative cheapening and its becoming widespread. Here I would like to clarify my argument more through asking some questions: What was the difference between the "new social movements", which were struggling at the margin of national–public sphere, but then glocalized and earned a trans–national bargaining power, and the old social movements? And how effective was the "other media" in enabling this difference to come into being? Or, in other words, if, as I just argued, there always were counter–publics and their (other) media which served as their voice, then what are the differences of the ones we have today? Based on my first argument/question, I will first try and explain what the counter–publics of the public sphere are, or what the "new–identities" scattered among these counter–publics are. Meaning, thus, that I am taking a distinction between "old counter-identities" and "new counter-identities" based on a distinction between "old–identities" and "new– identities."[5]

The old counter/oppositional-collectivities presented people with identity clothes that were too tight. And those, who tried to wrap these identities around themselves, found the solution in throwing out these clothes, which were tore already to ribbons. Instead, they put on "new identities" that deserve to be described as "rainbow" because of their color and patterns (or they renewed/re-defined their "old ones").

Probably, the best example to the breaking up of the old identities is the dissolution of the Socialist identity, which marked a class–based state of belonging for themselves, and it being

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Internet technology, e–zines are now on the rise (Atton, 2002: 54–79). For the zines in Turkey, see Altay Öktem, Genel Kültürden, Kenar Kültüre 101 Fanzin, Istanbul: Ithaki, 2002.

[4] Term of *glocalization* belongs to…….although I am using here with a slight different meaning.

[5] I am making the distinction between "old and new identities" by referring to Stuart Hall (1991).

replaced by the new feminist, environmentalist, ethnic/cultural minority etc. identities.[6] Because the Socialist identity or class–based identity, at least as in a way it was constructed—exactly like the "national" identity it opposes—was an identity that was too tight on people; that homogenized the individuals and that put their other differences behind the class identity, even if it did not always disregard them. However, today, we are very well aware that, the inequalities that we want to struggle against are (were) not only class– based; the "class" identity, which has been constructed by being loaded with an ontological privilege is tight enough to be able to struggle against the inequalities that we face in the form of sexual, ethnic, religious, cultural etc. [7]

In the meantime, the result of the new or renewed identities' struggle to gain publicity, participation and legitimacy was to diversification and pluralization of the national public spheres by infiltration of the counter-publics through its cracks, although they were tried to keep in "cohesion" through the uses of every kind of forceful and persuasive techniques, and they gained their "visibility" and "activity" to a great extent by 1) rendering it impossible for the mainstream media, which had ignored them for years, to disregard them; 2) creating their own media. But the relationship between these counter–subjects of the public sphere, called "new–social movements," and the media, was/is very different from the relationship between the old identity movements and the media[8]. For the old identity movements, media—as the name implies—was a vehicle.[9] On the contrary, the new–social movements have the characteristic of a "media" or they turned themselves into a media but a "counter–media". The new social movements or the new identity movements (feminist movements, the identity movements of ethnic and cultural minorities, gay and lesbian movements, counter–globalization movements, and environmentalist, anarchist, and pacifists)[10] are movements that *render themselves a media*. Or that are *media–familiar* movements. This is what I mean; these movements build their presence, sustainability, and actions on "visibility". Accordingly, while on the one hand, they were putting the mainstream media in a position that they cannot ignore themselves, and on the other hand, they use their own media for a very creative publicity and visibility or simply they turned themselves into a media. In this sense, there is a *sine qua non* relationship between new social movement and the media as John Downing discusses in his book (2001) and his several articles. Here is my argument: If it wasn't for the mainstream media, and if the Green Peace movement was not so media–familiar, it would not have become so prevalent and, for example, affect the Bergama villagers in Turkey (by becoming glocalized), and render them similarly media–familiar, visible and effective. I will give two negative examples as well: if the media was not so mainstream and accessible, there would

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

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

[8] For a theoretical contribution to the notion of "new social movements", see Mellucci, 1996.

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

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

probably be no Al– Qaida. There would be no September 11 attacks, and even the suicide bombers![11] However, to be able to better explain the relationship between the new social movements and the rise of their "other–media", I will seek the help of another notions; the notion of globalization and/or glocalization.

The two faces of Globalization and Counter–Publics/Media

"Globalization," as a notion that has began to become a buzz word in the last 25 years in everyday life, whether we like it or not, or find tens of definitions of it from different perspectives, is in fact, as old as human history. It just gained acceleration in 1990s. In its most "neutral" definition, it means that shrinking of the world through distanciation of the time and space (Giddens, 1990). And what causes this shrinkage is the circulation in unprecedented quality and quantity of capital, ideologies, people and information due to the developments in access and communications technologies –which interests us more here (Appadurai, 1990). And this has two faces that complement each other (Robertson, 1990); inequalities and discrimination are increasing in number and becoming diverse, due to the characteristic of globalization, which enables capital and human fluidity in an unprecedented way. For example, there is an increase in exploitation of migrants and illegal workers; women and child labor; women and child prostitution. And the ethnic and cultural minorities, who make up the cheap labor, continue not only to face class–based discrimination, but also racial, political and cultural discrimination. But parallel to this, the new–social movements that comprise of those, who are faced with such inequalities and discrimination, form the counter–publics, due to the new possibilities provided by globalization or the ideology, information and technology fluidity that gave rise to globalization. Through these new possibilities, these new–social movements meet with similar movements in other geographies, have one foot on the local and the other on the global, and form the counter–publics with "*glocal*"[12] characteristic. For this reason, now it is possible to talk about global counter–public spaces or the presence of global non–governmental organizations. As I have said before, the emergence of the environmentalist movements in Turkey and their relation with other environmentalist movements is an example to this. The May (grand)mothers of Argentina, first of all have an effect, and then a symbolic support, in turning the relatives of the missing into Saturday Mothers in Turkey...The emergence and politization of the Gay and Lesbian Movement in Turkey, and the support they get from similar movements in other countries, such as the Bursa Walks that took place recently, is another example to this...Politization of especially the Kurdish movement and other ethnic groups in Turkey have both local and global dimensions is again one example. Finally, the Global Peace and Justice

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

[12] For the usage of the notion, see Robertson, 1990.

Coalition (Küresel BAK), which opposes the invasion of Iraq, and its coordinated activities, which "bring together" the anti–war activists through various protests, is another example.

Therefore, one of the consequences of globalization, in terms of the easier, cheaper and faster circulation of ideologies, people and information in larger masses, and in terms of the shrinking of distances and time, has been to strengthen not only the dominant/hegemonic, but also the oppositional by enabling it to act beyond its nation. In other words, the counter–publics, be it through the media, or be it through face to face encounters, are now able to act together in a global solidarity. And these encounters are happening through the other media, which is multiplying horizontally and spreading like a network, as well as through the mainstream media.[13] Following this evaluation, I can go back to the question that I asked at the beginning of my paper, and try to answer it: "why is the other–media important?" The answer to this question rests partly in the evaluation I just made and here other reasons follow.

The other media is important, because...

Freedom of thought and expression are among the basic human rights. The only way to speak about other basic rights, and to fight for them, is to have these basic rights and freedoms. And exactly for this reason, they are of the rights that are violated the most. Those who enjoy exercising these rights usually are the "white", prosperous and heterosexual men. And they have a mainstream media that they can express themselves through. Because for the mainstream media, the "others" do not have a news value. For the other to have a news value means, s/he should either transfer into a higher class or ethnicity (then became "whiten"), or should change his/her gender as it is case with some of the celebrities in Turkey. Or she should fall victim to "tradition" or "honour crimes"; not just a few but tens of them should commit suicide like the women from Batman; hundreds of them should die in an earthquake or flood; or should die because of torture or hunger strike; should be "captured dead"; should be "a martyr"; should "commit theft at a young age"; should be the perpetrator of the crime that is called "murder by the glue–sniffing children"; should be gathered from the streets in the middle of the winter so that s/he does not freeze to death, and then should be left to go back to the streets etc. Therefore, the "others" need an "other" media to be able to become the subject of news before they die, kill, freeze to death, get beaten, get tortured, and in fact, so that these things do not happen to them. As a matter of fact, today, the migrants, refugees, those who are an ethnic or religious minority in their own land or in Diaspora, the homeless, those who are faced with racial, sexual etc. discrimination, in short, the "others," are becoming able to communicate with each other, supporting each other and are sharing experiences that would facilitate their lives a bit, through the other–media. Do just these "others" need a different media than the mainstream one? In fact, no. Those, who are not at a disadvantaged situation (in terms of poverty/wealth, social class, gender, cultural identities etc), but who do not want to consume the "mediocre" also need "alternative" media. The mainstream media, which has rating, circulation and audience concerns, always present the average, grasps and reproduces the standard taste, and supposes that the listener, viewer, reader is of average intelligence. So, those, whose taste, political preferences and special interests are a bit towards the end of the spectrum, need the other media besides the

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[13] For my previous discussions over the globalisation literature and the possibilities globalization provides for the counter–publics/localization, see Alankuş, 2000a.

mainstream, which reproduces the mediocre in every sense.[14] Who else needs the other media or an alternative to the mainstream media?: The migrants/expatriates, who have been displaced because of political and economical reasons of globalization, temporary and/or illegal workers, political refugees, as well as the "wealthy" people, who are constantly or at times, traveling: People falling into this category are businesspeople who have breakfast in one country and dinner at another, or "tourists," who escape the cold weather of the north and spend some seasons in hotels or houses they buy in different countries to take advantage of the sun in the south.

Today, there is something that brings together all these people. And, if I have to repeat, that is their need for the "alternative" media. People are always in need of getting news no matter for what reason. And naturally, they want to find out what is going on starting first with their immediate surroundings. Accessing news and keeping informed about the surroundings, give people the feeling that they can control their surroundings, that they are not alone, that they have a say on their lives, and that they belong to a place or places. Without a doubt, nowadays, the character of the "sense of belonging" has changed quite a bit. The "place" does not strictly have a geographical meaning anymore. The sense of place does not anymore only define the attachment or the state of belonging to the immediate surroundings. In other words, the place we feel a state of belonging to, does not necessarily have to be the place we live in. Or the places we feel a state of belonging to, are not unique or the one and only anymore.

Under these conditions, a German couple who has came to Alanya in Turkey to spend the winter in their house there, would feel the need to be informed about both, Alanya, and their home town in Germany. The situation is not different for other people, who have moved to other places for various reasons and in various dimensions. For example, a construction worker in Kazakhstan, a person from Diyarbakir who lives in Istanbul, a soldier from Mersin who serves in Turkish troops in Afghanistan, a worker from Elmadag in Belgium, a student from Izmir in the U.S.A. The common need of all these people, who have moved to other places for different reasons, is the need to get information about the places that they feel a state of belonging to –so that they can feel secure, so that their life becomes easier, so that they don't feel lonely, etc. And for the same reason, they do not only need to get news, but they also need to be entertained, and to be informed. And as I said earlier, such people need "alternative" media, besides the mainstream media, which present the average people with standard information, news and entertainment. They actually need the "alternative" media even more than they need the mainstream ones. Beyond this point, I can look at the question "why is alternative–media important and necessary" from a more macro conceptual framework and move towards another discussion; I can argue that a "democracy," which I believe is the best political regime ever no matter what its problems and shortcomings may be, "cannot improve without the presence of alternative media." Then, right now, I have to focus on the relationship between democracy and the other/alternative media.

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

The Relationship between (Radical) Democracy as a Project and "Other Media"

Many things have been written and said about the role of media for democracies. The best known of these is the Liberal media approach, which argues that the role of the media is to supervise the power of the law making (parliament), law enforcement (government) and judiciary, and thus, is to act as the guardian of public interests. This approach also advocates that the media should be exempt of all regulations and control so that it can fulfill this duty and act independent of the government and political power. This approach also says that the functioning of the media should be shaped by the dynamics of the market. However, with the monopolization of the national and international media, and the transformation of media corporations into important national/international capital corporations, the media is no longer a watchdog of the public interest, but its own interests, since it has become a political as well as an economical power/interest center (Curran, 2002). Exactly for this reason, a commercial media organization can only be expected to support democratization, as long as this does not impede on its own interests, and chiefly to reproduce status quo. By the way, as you can all guess, there is no place for a public broadcasting or not–for–profit broadcasting approach in the liberal democracy and media theory –in consistence with the liberal economic approach. Moreover, this approach does not discuss the possibility that those that cannot survive in the market will one be one disappear and the media environment will become mono. For this reason, when trying to understand the relationship between media and democracy, we have to follow an other democracy approach rater than the Liberal arguments put. Some scholars found such an approach in the theoretical discussions by German writer Jurgen Habermas in his book called "The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere" (1997).[15] Following criticisms, Habermas had reviewed his thoughts and his influence still continues in the field.

In summary, there are two versions of this theoretical discussion. Those who are close to his thoughts, think of the public sphere, which is somewhere between the civilian space and the state space, as an area of common good and consensus reached after critical and rational negotiations on public issues. The important point here is that this public deliberation can only be made through, or via the media. But the current situation of the same media –as criticized by Habermas– is obvious. Consequently, those, who follow this approach, criticize the media, and especially the commercial media for the characteristics it has gained. And the solution is seen to be the restructuring of the public service broadcasting.[16] What's wrong with this approach is not the fact that the current situation of the media is being criticized and public service broadcasting is proposed as an alternative. The real problem is that the public sphere has been envisaged as a homogenous space stripped of differences, where everyone can equally and without discrimination participate in. It has also been envisaged as a place which, in a suitable media environment, can reach a "common good" through "common intelligence". Consequently, democracy has been envisaged as a consensual democracy. However, according to a second group of theoretical discussion, the public sphere, which as Habermas claims, emerged in the West with bourgeoisie and then disappeared or turned to be a "pseudo" public sphere, was never a homogenous, comprehensive space where everyone had equal opportunity to express

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[15] Habermas reviewed these discussions for the English edition of the book and the book has influenced the approach of many communications theorists. For a very comprehensive study in Turkish, which criticizes Habermas about the public sphere, but which compiles the theoretical discussions that stand close to his paradigm, see Ozbek, 2004.

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

themselves and where everyone participated in without being discriminated based on his/her differences and inequalities. It is neither the ideal that has to be sought. Public sphere, even in its most "ideal" form in the 18th century, was a space, where the voices of the hegemonic were dominant at the expense of the appeasement of the voices of others. As a matter of fact, therefore, even the democracies that are believed to be the most advanced are "white and wealthy male"–centered. Therefore, the "consensus" which is believed to be reached through public negotiations, or the "social consent," the mainstream media reproduces, all tell about a hegemony that has been established at the expense of those who have been excluded from the public sphere. This approach is problematic as long as it envisages a "monolithic" and "unique" public sphere cleared of agonisms, after looking at the existing democracies and seeing there only a fragmanted/cacaphonic sphere created by the counter–publics and their media by which everybody speaks and nobody listens. We thus have to seek a democratic project, which takes the antagonistic situation of the public spheres, which arises from the fact that those discriminated against, the unequal, the oppressed and those who are prevented from expressing themselves, and their counter–publics are gaining visibility and negotiation power, as an input data. But this project should also consider the antagonistic "nature" of the public sphere by its very definition. It should also be taken into consideration that the public sphere today, as it was before, is increasingly also the space of complex social relations which cannot be simply defined through double contrasts such as poor and wealthy, white and black, women and men. It is also the space of parallel– publics, where identities meet from time to time, intercept, clash, but survive without touching one another.

Finally, if I have to underline my earlier resolution, the new–collective identities of public sphere, or the counter publics of the new social movements, have gained an unprecedented bargaining power that puts pressure on the hegemony of the nation-state. In other words, we can speak of (a) global public sphere to the extent that we can speak of a global civil society. (Lipschutz, 2005; and Sparks, 2005). Consequently, the national public spheres are now spaces, where opposing/parallel publics with one foot on the local and the other foot on the global, encounter,

collide, intercept, interact and create a connection. And I believe the best example to what I am trying to say is the meeting that took place under the "International Independent Media Forum" and brought together the representatives of the independent media and those who write about the alternative/independent media. The two–day meeting took place under the slogan that "Another communication is possible." In summary, this new form of the public sphere and the current situation of the media environment that completes it, render it necessary to look at the media–democracy relationship from a different point of view.

Radical Democracy, Agonistic Public Space and Other Media

The Radical Democracy project envisages a public space based upon the publics, that are not defined as fixed and essentialist but as a space of identities that are re-constructed through constantly rebuilt differences. Again it assumes a public space that is a place where agonistic relationships cannot turned into the antagonistic ones; not based on consensus, but on dissensus that functions within the ethics of "being responsible towards the other."[17] On the other hand, the

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[17] The Radical Democracy approach is, in many ways, different from Habermas's democracy approach, which moves with the idea of a public sphere, where the critical–mind reaches an agreement through negotiating. While Habermas makes an emphasis on *consensus* at the expense of discarding differences, Laclau and Mouffe make an emphasis on

Radical Democracy approach, which we   have to see as a never–ending project; gives us the opportunity to rebuild the theory of how the pluralism and agonism in the public sphere can be improved "in journalism" and "through journalism" (Carpentier and Cammaerts, 2006: 972). Postponing the discussion of the first part of this issue to the end here I have to mention only that radical democracy can only be brought about through the pluralism created by the "other media" environment, which has become the channel of the excluded identities and anti–hegemonic views, in a way to balance the mainstream media of the hegemonic. Do liberal democracies, with their present shape (at least in terms of the other media environment) have the potential to evolve into radical democracies? Or, in other words; is the presence of other media and counter–publics enough for such a transformation? The easy and immediate response would be to say that it is not enough. However, to be clearer on this issue, I would have to focus on two subjects: the characteristic of mainstream and other or alternative media environment(s) and how these media, as one of the channels of radical democratic project, are structured.[18] However, beyond this point, I will seek to focus on the media environment(s) in Turkey and the structuring of the other media. I will also make some comparisons with the examples from other countries that I am familiar with.

Mainstream and Other Media Environment in Turkey and Democratization

For quite some time now, and luckily, in Turkey, we are no longer limited to a roughly two–centered media environment made up of the commercial media and the media, which is said to be doing public service broadcasting. Let's remember: If we leave aside the relative diversity of the print media, we had to make do with radio and television broadcasts that were under the control of the government for many years similar to many other developing countries, except a very brief period of relative autonomy. This was a broadcasting approach that belittled the society and its taste, that decided on behalf of us what we had to like and dislike, that played local songs with the very same Istanbul (imposed) accent on the Izmir radio and on the Hakkari radio under the name of doing local broadcast. In short, it was an approach that tried to clothe us with the one–piece nation–state identity, that ignored all kinds of accent, dialect and language differences, and that commanded the "standard language" of this identity. Also, unfortunately, because the grass roots civil society mobilization was not strong enough, we never encountered a serious attempt to break the "state monopoly" being carried out under the guise of public broadcasts. Moreover, although the print media is expected to be relatively "freer", due to the penal laws that limited freedom of expression and the clauses of the media law, the print media, which were representing the political, ethnic, cultural, sexual differences had difficulty in surviving. There were only a few newspapers in languages other than Turkish, which were targeting the very small Christian community. Let aside electronic publishing, or the ethnic (Muslim) groups (such as Kurds, Circassians, Georgians, or Laz) other than the Christian Communities like the Greeks and the Armenians, who are regarded as minorities according to the Treaty of Lausanne to publish

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dissensus, saying that politics will always be the arena of clashes between differences, and that ultimate consensus impossible. Thus, these two approaches are paradigmatically different since—as Mouffe says—they "come from a different point of view and lead to different points of view." Moreover, Mouffe, does not like to use the public sphere concept and to make a distinction between her use and Habermas's use, she uses prefers the term "public space", and again to point to the amplitude of public spaces, she also prefers to use the term in its "plural" form (Carpentier and Cammaerts, 2006: 973–974)

[18] For a study, in which, being inspired by Mouffe, the question has been laid as such and discussed, see Carpentier, Lie, Servaes, 2003.

newspaper/magazines in their own mother tongues, there were times after the 1980 military coup when they could not even name their children in their mother tongues or speak in their mother tongues on the streets. Despite this fact, for a very long time, there were no pirate radio/TV broadcasts of political, anarchist nature in Turkey as like the examples that we used to see in other developing/developed countries. I do only remember secretly listening to TKP'nin Sesi (illegal Turkish Communist Party's radio station) during that period and how "pirate" that was, is open to question...Then, as you know, the 1990s began and we had a boom of first, commercial television channels, and then radio stations. Between 1990–1994 and until the re–regulatory law in 1994, the frequencies were being distributed unchecked[19]. Did this create plurality and diversity? If we are to look at the television channels, no. When the first excitement of having more channels to watch, starting to discuss issues that were formerly regarded as taboo, and seeing program formats we had never seen before on the television abated, we realized that, in fact, this did not create pluralism, but instead, only proliferation. With radios, the situation was a bit different... We faced a scene more in line with the tendency in the rest of the world. After all, radio was not a means for the wealthy like the television. It was a more suitable means for the different publics to have their voices heard and thus, there was an attempt to use it for that purpose. However, for exactly that reason, the radios were declared "pirate." Although televisions were exactly in the same situation, they were not closed down, as it happened to the radio stations. In fact, it is curious; according to a definition of pirate broadcasts, all of them including the television channels (since there has been no legal allocation of frequencies) are still "pirates." Moreover, the re–regulatory broadcasting law in Turkey has another characteristic: it is not possible for non–commercial groups, non–governmental organizations, and municipalities to do radio/TV broadcasts. Accordingly, despite the existence of counter–publics in Turkey, when we look for the type of media I have called the "other–media" until now, we can only find them among the local radios which are expected to be commercial—if we, of course, leave aside the print media. In other words, there is no broadcast media example in Turkey, which would be equal to the type of media called alternative media, community media/radio, minority media, ethnic media, radical media or independent media, and which has the characteristic of not being commercial. Although, with the rise of Internet technologies, this type of media has become more various, more accessible, more creative and more effective in the rest of the world. This is the main reason I have been calling the media, which I view as the voice of the counter–publics, as "other/different media" instead of using one of the names that are mentioned at the beginning of the paper.

Now, I will look at the names and definitions of the media of counter–publics in related theoretical studies, and try to give a clearer answer to the question of what those in Turkey should be called. Through this, I will also be able to suggest a new notion to replace the "other/different media" notion I have been using to define the non–mainstream media. First let's look at the definition of radical alternative media by John Downing: According to his definition, being closely connected with the social movements, radical alternative media are the media of the counter– hegemonic publics that have a project about changing the world. Downing places importance of the characteristic of this type of media, which questions the political and hegemonic processes, and which enables the people to believe in its own transformative power. However, he makes a distinction between being "partisan" and being "political" media. Downing's definition is a broad definition since he considers the street theater or performing art of the new social movements as types of radical alternative media as well. Is there such a media

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[19] For broadcasting/publishing politics in Turkey, see Kejanlioglu, 2005

in Turkey? If we take it from the wider meaning, there is a lot. If we take it from the narrower meaning, there is little, because the "partisans" are more in number, compared with the "political" ones. However, Downing's definition is criticized because of being very wide and because of his over emphasis on these media's direct relations with the social movements. Besides, it is argued that its content (being a political project aimed to change the world) would not be adequate to make it radical and alternative (Atton, 2002:9–18). Thus, there are some researchers who claim that in order to name a media as "radical alternative", every stage of its processes should be radical and alternative. But they are also being criticized for narrowing down extensively the definition of radical alternative media and for excluding the other counter–media experiences that we come across usually in the hybrid forms (Atton, 2002: 27–29). I am not for such narrow definitions that lead to the exclusion of important experiences. Meanwhile, definitions of Carpentier et al for "alternative media" are;

- "...small–scaled and one, which respects differences by speaking to specific communities, disadvantaged groups,
- independent of state and market,
- organized horizontally, and one, which enables the access and participation of the audience within the framework of democratization and pluralism,
- one, which gives the opportunity to individuals to express themselves, and one, which is based on the non–dominant (anti– hegemonic to a great extent) discourse and representations" (2003: 56).

Another example for the other media is the "community media": The examples that first come to mind are the not–for–profit media that is based on and that targets ethnic, religious, cultural communities, or communities as small as a single neighborhood, and that functions with that community's support and membership. It includes a very wide range of media from the "mini–FM" movement in Japan, to the radios with a range of only a couple of villages in India, to the radios of the indigenous people in Latin America, to the radios of the Turks living in the Netherlands, to the media examples of various sub–culture groups. Regardless of the characteristic of the community it is based on, the community media examples should be independent of the state and the market and should encourage the participation. We can often see examples of community media that turn their members into the "media" itself, and do away with the distinction the traditional media make between the "producer of the message," and the "consumer." At times when this is not done, the media, which claim to be opponent, can form a media example where the anti–hegemonic communities' elite—i.e the educated, wealthy, "white" men again—speak on behalf of the rest. Meanwhile, while one of the reasons of the low numbers of radio examples, which can be defined as "other media", is the fact that they are commercial, the other reason is because they fail in enabling participation.

Within this framework, the difference between the community media and the radical alternative media is that the latter is based on a movement, while the first —whether politicized or not —is based on an ethnic, religious, cultural community. In other words, the latter puts an emphasis on counter–publics, on more loosely organized, or not organized, possibly temporary groups. The first points at a community, a semi–organized or fully–organized structure where the connection between the members is stronger. However, it is no longer a condition to share the same geography to be a community. Today the notion of "community" can be used to define those who share an interpretative community and thus it is possible to extend the definition of community media, as it is possible to extend the definition of community (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes, 2003: 54). But this extended notion of community media to the extend that it makes an

emphasis on participatory and horizontal (non-hierarchical) structures, intercepts with radical alternative media definition, or even renders the definition unnecessary.

Before discussing whether it is positive or negative to define the community media in a narrow or wide sense, I would like to try and answer whether or not there is a community media in Turkey in both senses of the community. The same situation applies here. According to certain criteria, there is a community media in Turkey. According to others, there isn't. If we are to disregard the criterion of being non–commercial, we can consider the local commercial Alevite, Kurdish, Islamic local radio channel and televisions, as community media in the narrow or traditional sense. However, within the framework of this example, we have to disregard a second criterion; which is the criterion of "participation." because the media examples that fit into the "radical alternative media" definition, like those that fit into the "community media" definition rarely embrace participation that does away with the distinction between the producer and the consumer of the message in a way to abolish professionalism. In other words, it is difficult to find a counter/alternative media example in Turkey that puts pressure on the separation between the source/sender of the message and receiver of the message; let alone one that eliminates that separation of the traditional model of communication. As far as I know, there are only a few initiatives in this regard. One of them is the Uçan Süpürge's (Flying Broom) project known as the "Local Women Reporters Network," which enables women to become local reporters after a certain training period.[20] However, it is not possible to view the Uçan Süpürge experience as a community media example since it has more the characteristic of "alternative media." (Köker, 1996: 23–44). And let me add; when we use the "community" notion in its wider sense to cover the interpretative publics, rather than its narrower sense, which refers the traditional–based religious, ethnic communities no matter how modern their structures are, there are no such examples among radio and television channels in Turkey. In brief, we encounter neither community nor alternative radical media examples among even local radio and television stations in Turkey, which would fit exactly into one or the other definitions I summarized above. Instead, we are faced with hybrid media forms, which carry one or a couple of the characteristics of each one, or which bring together the characteristics of more than one model. We have even examples that proof it is a mistake to see the differences between mainstream media and the other/non-mainstream media as a contrast[21]. In that case, are there specific historic, cultural, sociological conditions in Turkey that give rise to these hybrid forms? Separately, is it a disadvantage to have these hybrid forms? Or are encountering with these hybrid forms not exceptional, but simply the typical?

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[20] The "Local Women Reporters' Network" project began in March 2003 in 8 pilot cities (Antalya, Çanakkale, Diyarbakır, Eskisehir, Mersin, Samsun, İzmir and Gaziantep). Four more cities were added to the project in 2004 (Adıyaman, Van, Mardin, Sanlıurfa). The target is to reach 81 provinces and get the women in all provinces to produce news for this network. For information on this project, you may refer to Selen Dogan's article titled "The Story of Uçan Süpürge 'Local Women Reporters Network' or 'Live is News'" in the book named "Women Rights Focused Reporting" which is the second book of the BIA Rights Reporting series.

[21] An example of this began in the Radikal Newspaper as I was reviewing this speech. Radikal Newspaper started handing over the authority of being the chief editor of Radikal to the intellectuals/artists in Turkey, starting with Nobel prized author Orhan Pamuk. (Turkey)

Why aren't there examples of alternative/radical, independent media or community media in Turkey?

In Turkey, the counter–publics and ethnic, religious, cultural collectivities have unprecedentedly increased in number since the mid 1980s, became demanding and gained strength by learning to act glocally. However, they cannot create permanent counter-media examples that could become alternatives for the mainstream media. This is mainly because they were/are not coming from grassroot but instead, they were/are elite initiatives of ethnic, cultural minorities/communities or political movements. This also explains why the existing examples have very short lives. For example, in the last years, the examples of the feminist media in Turkey, which tried to exist under many difficulties, have one by one disappeared. Despite the entire creative struggle by the Pazartesi Dergisi (Monday Journal) to overcome the financial difficulties, it can only be published with intervals. The most important reason for this the fact that it has no rooted support behind it coming from the base supporters. The situation is not different with radios. For example, there are no women's radios except Radiopink (104.2), which began broadcasts on 8 March 2006. Moreover, as far as I know, Radiopink has no intention or aim to become the alternative voice for women. ICN/BİA (Independent Communication Network, www.bianet.org)) is trying to overcome the shortcoming in this respect to a certain extent. It produces programs prepared from a woman's perspective and presents them to local radios. But it is not easy to say that the local radios have taken advantage of this adequately and that, with BİA's pioneer role, the "woman's voice" is being heard more besides the dominant "man's voice." For this reason, one cannot stop thinking whether there would be less number of women committing suicide in Batman if there was a women's radio station aimed at strengthening women and one, which was embraced by its local woman audience. Secondly, despite all demands and struggles, there still is no legal amendment to allow the political parties, non–governmental organizations, municipalities or the communities in Turkey that reflect the multi–cultural, multi–lingual, multi–religious structure of Turkey, to do radio and television broadcasts. Nor can the media, which is commercial but not–for–profit, and especially the community media cannot benefit from public funds. I believe this is because of the Turkish Republic's lack of trust in the state's citizens—and actually in itself—with a reflex it inherited from the division of the Ottoman Empire (Göle, 1993). As a result of this, the local media in Turkey, which can potentially provide for pluralism in the media environment to an e certain extent, is faced with the dilemma of either becoming a "bad" imitation of the mainstream media, or not being able to resist the vertical monopolization tendency, selling its frequencies to media monopolies and disappearing within the nation-wide media. In the meantime, only the local newspapers and radios with a "partisan" characteristic, or those that rely on publics that are organized to a certain extent, can stand on their feet even though they don't make profits. The radios in organic relation with leftist groups and Kurdish community radios can be given as examples for the first. Radios supported by various Islamic circles/societies and Alevite communities can be examples for the second. However, the radios mentioned above are faced with all kinds of political pressures because of their identities, are closed down, and become the subject of criminal investigations. In summary, this special situation caused by the re–regulatory law in Turkey, is both an obstacle and not an obstacle for the existence of the "alternative" media when radios and televisions are the case. Because, even the most controlling, anti–democratic political regimes contain some cracks that allow for leakages. Therefore, it is possible to claim that the mere presence of counter-media examples, that are able to leak through the cracks in Turkey as in other countries with similar conditions, are very important, as one of the channels of

"the war of position" –to use Gramsci's notion– fought for democratization and pluralism[22]. are allowed to the Kurdish is still far from being plural and democratic although during the last couple of years there are important changes in However, still, I have to say that the current situation is inadequate even for pluralism in a liberal sense, let alone a radical democratic transformation in the political and media environment. To explain the reasons for this, I have to move away from these determinations of the general characteristic of the counter/alternative media environment, and focus on how these hybrid– "alternative" media examples are structured. But still I will not offering a single comprehensive name to this type of media in Turkey.

However, I have to add that the difficulties in choosing words to define and explain the other media in Turkey do not arise only from particular historical, political and cultural conditions of the country. This also has to do with facing in general with the hybrid media forms in the developing countries. It also has to do with development of the related academic studies mainly in the West and their ethno-centric focuses, besides their lack of agreement on definitions. Thus, I believe that a conceptual quest must continue for not disregarding the differences between the mainstream media and non-mainstream media; and also for highlighting importance of the power that the "others" gained through their media as channels for their anti–hegemonic struggle. Then, what kind of a theoretical framework do we need to understand the relationship between the alternative/other media and democracy? And the answer is this: we need an approach that considers the diversity of the media environment and the specificity of the different structuring within that environment (Carpentier, Lie, Servaes 2003: 66; Carpentier and Cammaertz, 2006).[23] Additionally, an approach that explains neither mainstream and the other media in a dichotomic relation nor cloud their differences reducing the political importance of the second. Such an approach can be found in the theoretical openings of the "citizens' media" notion that is developed by Clemencia Rodriguez upon Chantal Mouffe's definition of "citizenship". Rodriguez uses the term in a way that would include all the different and lived experiences of all the alternative media practices. In this way, she proposes a notion that places importance on all "citizen" initiatives that would provide for the democratization of the media environment by taking into account all their specifications instead of squashing them within essentialist definitions (Vatikiotis, 2004: 21). By using the term she means a citizenship that intervenes in the present media environment with the aim of transforming it, that contests present social codes, legitimate identities and institutionalized social relations, and that uses all communications

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[22] Since the first publication of this paper some radical changes happened in Turkey's media environment. TRT (state controlled public service broadcasting institute), that had started to put two hours programs in Kurdish, Circassian, Arabic, Bosnian ethnic minority languages since 2004, set the Channel 6 in 2008 that broadcasts 24 hours in Kurdish and now openings of the new TRT television channels in Arabic and Armenian are planned. It is also look like soon, local commercial radio and televisions will be allowed to broadcast in ethnic languages, although right now, they are allowed to put only four hours programming in a week for the radios and two hours for the televisions in these "local" languages with the condition of having subtitles in Turkish.

[23] The writers whom I cite, expand the "community media" notion to such an extent that, there is almost no need for other related notions. But on the other hand, by combining together the Radical Democracy theory by Mouffe and Laclau, and the Rhizome theory by Deleuze and Guattari, they propose a different model. In this model, the community media work in relation with more than one non–governmental movement/organization, and by which all become connected with each other. Thus, model points out the importance of the rhizomatic net between, and, the joint strength of different democratic struggles. Besides, role of the other–media, including the community media, in radical democratic transformations are determined and importance of relations of the other media with the mainstream media are emphasized. Accordingly, their model introduces an alternative for the situation, where it is alleged that the other–media retires into itself or ghettoized creating an environment where those who speak and listen are the same. For a mention of the Rhizome theory by Deleuze and Guattari, within the context of radios, please see the Introduction of the 5th book (Radio and Radio Broadcasting)

practices to strengthen the communities/publics besides a media that is the outcome of such citizenship. And behind this, lies a quotidian understanding of politics, which questions and tries to transform the power relations in every aspect of life and turns every inch of it into a case of intervention through calling help of the media (Rodriguez, 2001: 34–35). Therefore, there is a need for "citizen's media" out as initiative of active citizens, and become a channel of "war of positions" for a radical democratic transformation. Now one last question:

Is it possible to consider the non-mainstream media in Turkey as "citizen's media"?

In my opinion, comparing with the others, citizen's media notion both has the advantage of being enough flexible to explain the hybrid and in-between forms of the media examples in Turkey and also has the advantage of emphasizing the differences between the other media and the mainstream media. However, still, this should not hold us back from saying that media of the counter–publics in Turkey, has to improve in three important aspects that may even influence and change the mainstream media. It is because, the other media examples which I may call by now on as "citizen's media";

1. fail to provide opportunities for participation of the audience or their respective publics/communities (and thus they are not embraced by the people enough).
2. are weak in developing participative–democratic models that demolishes the hierarchy in their own inner organizations.
3. are not willing to engage in horizontal networks that would enable them to be in relation with each other and strengthen like an ivy/rhizome (and this is somewhat because they have to have a commercial characteristic).

By all means, these –as I tried to briefly explain above– may have certain causes arising from the history and culture of the country. However, if the expansion and deepening of democracy –as Wasco and Mosco argue– requires pluralism and democratization through and within the media (quoted in Carpentier and Cammaertz, 2006: 969), I will say that two things need to urgently change in Turkey. First of all, to allow citizen's media for pushing radical democratic transformations, necessary conditions for not–for–profit broadcasts need to be created and thus, the media environment will be liberated from the dominance of those that are economically capable. Only by this way can we attain the required pluralism and thus democratization through the media. And for that –maybe this is a dream– there is need for a political willpower that does not regard the media of the others as a "(potential) separatist enemy", and that does not disregard or oppress differences in opinion for the sake of consensus. And second, steps need to be taken for inter/intra media democratization, that open channels for participation of the citizens and thus, even if when they do not have grassroots feature, they will be embraced by their audiences. In fact, the second is easier, since it is up to "us". It is also more urgent, since a more democratized and embraced media would exert pressure for democratization through the media. In any case, the anti– democratic characteristics of the system are not always obstructive. They sometimes incite creative solutions and Turkey's media environment needs these creative initiatives more than ever.

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