DIGITALIZED LOCAL ECONOMIES IN TURKEY:

THE CASE OF MEDYASCOPE.TV

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ABSTRACT

DIGITALIZED LOCAL ECONOMIES IN TURKEY:
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The research is shaped around the hypothesis that the Internet, as a public sphere, enables new forms of production strategies in relative autonomy, making it possible to produce information and sustain in an authoritarian setting. The thesis consists of three sections. First, the theoretical background is built upon the digitalization of society, public sphere and media as well as testing the adaptivity of the social economy model of Amin Ash and incorporating the networked information economy perspective of Yochai Benkler. The cronyism and the lack of funding in Turkey's media environment made it impossible for a neutral and objective view to survive in the mainstream. Many variations of the 'alternative' broadcasting platforms have been established over the years within social media. While some show great potential in different aspects, most of these new mediums failed due to economic challenges. In this framework, the last section focuses Medyascope.tv as a case study to find out if the approach of social economy can apply to this empirical case. The ethnographic research includes participant research and in-depth interviews with executives and personnel of Medyascope.tv.

Medyascope.tv is selected as an analytical case, and it is defined as an organization operating with relative autonomy from government-controlled media. It provides a clear example of independent online news production, with its ground of operation, participatory funding, and network form of organization. It is currently operating for six years with a lot of subscribers and viewers around the world. Medyascope.tv is the pioneer in Turkey that utilize a crowdfunding system. The Fieldwork consists of observations on meso level of analysis that covers organizational aspect of the production patterns, workplace hierarchy and co-operation, distribution of resources, impact of political oppression and the level of autonomy.

Keywords: social economy, independent media, digitalization, crowdfunding, Medyascope.tv

ÖZ

TÜRKİYE'DE DİJİTALLEŞEN YEREL EKONOMİLER:
MEDYASCOPE.TV ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu araştırma, İnternet'in bir kamusal alan olarak, kurumlara göreceli bir özerklik sağladığı ve otoriter bir ortamda yeni üretim stratejilerine olanak verdiği hipotezi üzerine şekillenmiştir. Tez üç bölümden oluşmaktadır. Teorik çerçeveyi içeren ilk bölüm; toplumun, kamusal alanın ve medyanın dijitalleşmesi kavramlarını, Amin Ash'in sosyal ekonomi modeli ve Yochai Benkler'ın ağ tabanlı bilgi ekonomisi perspektifi üzerinden ele almaktadır. Türkiye'deki medya ortamındaki kayırma ve sermaye eksikliği, tarafsız ve objektif haberciliğin ana akımda yer almasını imkansız hale getirmiştir. Bir çok sosyal medya platformunda yıllar boyunca 'Alternatif' medya olarak tanımlanan kurumlar ve insiyatifler ortaya çıkmıştır. Bunlardan bazıları büyük potansiyel göstermekte iken, bir çoğu ekonomik zorluklar karşısında başarısız olmuşlardır. Bu çerçevede, tezin son bölümü, Medyascope.tv platformunu bir örnek vaka araştırması olarak ve sosyal ekonomi teorilerinin uygulanabilirliği açısından mercek altına almaktadır. Yapılan etnografik araştırma katılımcı gözlem ve Medyascope.tv çalışanları ve yöneticileri ile yapılan derinlemesine mülakat tekniklerini içermektedir.

Medyascope.tv, hükümet kontrolündeki medyadan göreceli özerklikte yer alan bir örnek olarak incelenmiştir. Bu anlamda kurum, ağ tabanlı organizasyon yapısı ve katılımcı fonlama ile İnternet üzerinden içerik üreten bağımsız bir haber platformu olarak önemli bir örnek teşkil etmektedir. Altı yılın üzerinde etkinlik gösteren kurumun yayınlarını dünyanın farklı yerlerinden bir çok insan takip etmektedir. Aynı zamanda Medyascope.tv, kitlesel fonlama sistemini de Türkiye'de ilk kullanan medya kuruluşu konumundadır.

Saha çalışması mezo analiz seviyesinde gözlemler ile, Medyascope.tv'nin kurumsal yapısını, üretim biçimlerini, işyerindeki hiyerarşi ve işbirliğini, kaynakların dağılımı ve yönetimini, kurum üzerindeki siyasal baskıyı ve özerklik seviyelerini ölçmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: sosyal ekonomi, bağımsız medya, dijitalleşme, kitlesel fonlama, Medyascope.tv

"Less trust, more truth."

Dr. Gavin James Wood

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Sustainable courage!" In a video that was broadcasted on December 31st of 2020, Ruşen Çakır stressed the importance of 'sustainability' in the turbulent political atmosphere of Turkey. By sustainability, he was referring to a strategical attitude of even-tempered, rational, and long-reaching perspective. For him, the experience of Medyascope.tv can only achieve and maintain a change by following this formula (Çakır 2020). This dissertation is an attempt to challenge those premises in an analytical formulation. Indeed, establishing an independent media outlet in an authoritarian setting requires great courage. Yet I believe, an attempt to critically approach to this kind of organization also requires at least some sort of courage since it intrinsically puts one in a position of dissidence against the dissidents. Though in reality, no one is dissident in this composition, and we all just try to improve and create value for the future to the best of one's abilities.

There are three main chapters in this thesis. The First chapter provides a theoretical background for digitalization, and it is divided into three sections. The main basis of the first section is built upon the idea of network society by Manuel Castells and explains the digitalization of society. It continues with a more focused approach to digitalization of public sphere by combining the former with Habermasian understanding. Digitalization of public sphere lays the ground for the final section, digitalization of media.

The theoretical construct in the first chapter is vital since it constitutes a background for the highlighted topics of this thesis. It is claimed that through digitalization, the concepts of pluralism, participatory governance and equal access to information come

to the foreground. But it should be considered that these developments also have a negative impact since it is evident with the rise of populist governments and their use of digital technologies. These negative consequences show themselves as the spread of disinformation, fake news and consequently, a post-truth regime.

Independent media is essential for the future of political transformation on a global scale. Centralized structures and their heavy domination over information flows are doomed to fail in an ever-expanding and ever-evolving digital technologies. Capital flows and concentration of capital on a global scale also parallel this evolution as the top multinational corporations in terms of market capitalization are focused on information technologies. This creates a requirement for an approach on the economic level.

The second chapter deals with the economic aspect. It concerns operationalization, and the chapter is divided into two sections. First, the premise of social economy is explored to create an analytical ground for the field research, predominantly utilizing the ideas of Amin Ash. Afterwards, the theory of networked information economy by Yochai Benkler is explained to strengthen further the link between the digitalization approach and social economy in an organizational setting.

The final chapter is divided into five sections. After briefly mentioning the history of journalism in Turkey, the case study of the thesis, Medyascope.tv is introduced in the second section of this chapter. The third section presents tangible information about the organization, and the following section renders the field research methodology. The final two sections focus on the findings of the field research, as well as a discussion that interprets the findings with the provided theoretical background.

Overall, this thesis contributes to the disciplines of political sociology and communication. The field of study is shaped around the contexts of digitalization and media studies. Arranged in the order of significance, the research questions of the thesis can be summarized as follows:

How does Medyascope.tv utilizes the digital tools and spaces with the technologies in its disposition?

In which sense does Medyascope.tv dissociate from the practices and experiences of traditional media outlets? Is there a break or a continuation?

Why does Medyascope.tv use crowdfunding? Can community funding provide a solution to the sustainability of independent media?

Built on these questions, the hypothesis is formulated as the Internet, as a public sphere, enables new forms of production strategies in relative autonomy, making it possible to produce information and sustain in an authoritarian setting.

Although it is not prioritized, the issue of community funding was the preliminary drive in the genesis of this research, which was started around 2017. In the meantime, countless organizations and individuals adopted the practice of crowdfunding. While this confirmed the initial foresight of the thesis, it also made it scientifically redundant to focus solely on this aspect and provoked a need for a more qualitative approach. On top of that, COVID happened in 2020, and the whole world realized the importance of a digital public sphere; where they were forced to work, be schooled, shop, and socialize in a solely online environment for months. It also showed to the people that not every job requires physical attendance. As a matter of fact, those who could adapt and flex to this compulsory way of living proved successful in a short time, and many companies around the world embraced this "novel" way of working in their practices after the pandemic restrictions were lifted.

In this sense, this thesis can also be considered as a criticism for the (in)ability of using digital tools and spaces. It is, indeed, focused on a specific organization. Nevertheless, it can also provide a perspective to many organizations alike, which are concerned and rely on online community participation.

CHAPTER II

SOCIETAL ASPECT

Social sciences are a vast area of theorization, and many topics overlap with the boundaries of different disciplines. Researching a specific organization's capacity and practices comes with theoretical pitfalls within these fluid theories, and cases are inherently typomorphic. Among them, the most prominent one for the context of this research is the thin line between the disciplines of sociology and business management. This section provides an epistemology to resolve this ambiguity, which follows deductive logic. From society to public sphere, and finally, the media, this section explains the sociological roots of the thesis.

2.1. Digitalized Society

From antiquity to the post-modern era, philosophy always preceded empirical science. Two years before a primitive form of the Internet was discovered in 1983, a French philosopher *Henri Lefebvre* foresightedly speculated about its social consequences in the third volume of his influential work, *Critique de la Vie Quotidienne* (1981). Though the English-speaking world has met with his work relatively late, it is possible to see traces of very recent technologies in Lefebvre's work, from the structure of digital organizations to online shopping habits. He starts by asking if computer technology will transform everyday life, specifically "the social relations of production, reproduction and domination" (Lefebvre 2005, 136). With a critical tone, he explains this 'utopian' change.

> Supporters of these technologies, their theoreticians – or, rather, their apologists – go so far as to claim that they will constitute a new *mode of production* – the one revolutionaries dreamt of, but to be ushered by a peaceful,

> silent revolution. Essentially, this mode of production would consist in the production of immaterial goods, supplanting the production of material products, as well the ever more complete predominance of services over other activities. (Lefebvre 2005, 137)

Opposing the theme of this thesis to an extent, Lefebvre argues that information technology will perfect the existing mode of production and foster capitalism and its world market rather than offering alternative propositions (Lefebvre 2005, 145). The same debate still continues after 40 years with both arguments; intensifying capitalist mode of production as well as creating revolutionary solutions. The theoretical ground of this thesis stands on empirical evidence, and it shows examples for both arguments. Though the social, within its interactive character, does not manifest itself in the dichotomous explanations.

The idea of strengthening the establishment is mainly accurate when it is analysed from a holistic point of view. Nation-states and multinational corporations control the highways of the information economy. But as the lenses get more specific, the aspect of public sphere comes up. In this context, alternative explanations are enabled in analysing the societal change. With its open structure, the technology of Internet provides a ground for public engagement, creating alternative paths as well as gaps within the controlled highways. By bending, twisting and altering the establishment, the Internet empirically shows the backdoors to create and develop micro-politics of production as well as limited forms of activism and resistance to the mainstream. Lefebvre's theory might be seen as opposed to this structural explanation at first sight, but it is possible to find a common root to this way of theorization as he appoints a decisive role to the agency in his theorization. After a brief comment on a primitive form of online shopping, he shows his agency inclusive perspective:

> The question posed cannot be resolved solely by means of technique; it is *political*, and will remain so. In society as in art, techniques are not an end by a means. A fundamental commonplace; everything depends on the way in which technique is used, who uses it, and for whom. (Lefebvre 2005, 152)

Thus, one of the main perspectives of this thesis reveals itself. Rather than focusing on a specific point of view; be it technology, governing body or a predefined agent,

the theoretical base should be constructed around the interaction between the structure and the agency, as they shape each other in an everlasting cycle which can be conceptualized as *social (re)production.*

The theory of network society became prominent as the topic steers from philosophy to more empirical grounds. One of the leading connoisseurs of this theory, Manuel Castells, advocates technological transformation as a revolution. He also warns about the "prophetic hype and ideological manipulation characterizing most discourses on the information technology revolution" as it might tend people to underestimate its "truly fundamental significance" (Castells 2010, 29). However, he defines this process as "inducing a pattern of discontinuity in the material basis of economy, society and culture" (Castells 2010, 29). While depending on Castells' formulation in many aspects, this thesis, however, denies any kind of revolutionary change as a discontinuity. Any change, whether it is a long or short phase, must be considered within a dialectical relation and it carries a historical continuity as long as it is defined as social.

Although Castells' description of the manner of change is open to debate, the change is there, and the framework of this thesis is more concerned with its empirical reflection rather than the 'nature' of its process. Castells (2010, 70 - 71) appoints some crucial characteristics of this new paradigm.

1- Information is the raw material, "these are technologies to act on information, not just information to act on technology".
2- All processes of human existence are shaped (not determined) by the new medium, "pervasiveness of effects of new technologies".
3- Networking logic, increasing complexity of interaction resulting in unpredictable patterns of development.
4- Flexibility, "not only processes are reversible, but organizations and institutions can be modified, and even fundamentally altered by rearranging their components".
5- Convergence "of specific technologies into the highly integrated system".

It is possible to find examples and crude forms of these characteristics in many different contexts. That is one of the main reasons to disqualify the discontinuity argument. Admittedly, Castells also points out this fact. He accepts that "the networking form of social organization has existed in other times and spaces", but "the new paradigm provides the material basis for its pervasive expansion throughout the entire social structure" (Castells 2010, 500). This argument clearly shows that the significant paradigm shift is not an essentialist one. It is very practical. It does not concern the core of the impact, but its speed, its extensity, and society's obligation to adapt to it.

As a structural feature, the Internet (as a network) is an open system that can limitlessly expand (Castells 2010, 502). Contrary to popular bias, the Internet does not necessarily need a service provider or governing body. A network can be established as long as multiple nodes connect with each other by using the same protocol.[1] Castells (2010, 384) argues, "The architecture of the network is, and will remain, technologically open. Enabling widespread public access and seriously limiting governmental or commercial restrictions." But he also strongly stresses the problem of social inequality, as it will "powerfully manifest in the electronic domain". This is a very important and frequently debated issue called *the digital divide* in the literature.

It should be stressed that the revolution is not in the devices nor in the cables that connect continents. The revolution is in the idea of global connectivity. Devices and technologies just made way for their expansion and widespread use. That is the main reason it can adapt to existing modes of production as well as create its own.

> Networks are appropriate instruments for a capitalist economy based on innovation, globalization, and decentralized concentration; for work, workers, and firms based on flexibility and adaptability; for a culture of endless deconstruction and reconstruction; for a polity geared toward the instant processing of new values and public moods; and for a social organization

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[1] Technical terms might be confusing but fundamentally it is a simple form of communication. A node is a user in any given network, which can be a human or computer software. A protocol basically means a standard set of rules. To oversimplify things, imagine five people communicating by smoke. The people (nodes) are organizing (as a network) and give particular meanings to the extent and colour of smoke (protocol).

aiming at the supersession of space and annihilation of time. (Castells 2010, 502)

When I started working online in 2012, many of my friends did not take it seriously and laughed it off. Now the very same people work online on the payroll. Especially after the COVID pandemic, millions of people started to work online. Even the centralized education systems adapted online teaching mechanisms, let alone the universities and higher education platforms. 'Virtual reality' was (and for many, still is) a ridiculing description that is used for children playing online video games. Now those 'children' make tens of thousands of dollars in a month just by streaming their playtime. Both inventors, and investors of the so-called 'virtual reality' constitute the wealthiest people in the world. Some still argue that it is just a 'trend' or make-believe, but from an analytical point of view, it is possible to argue that the world is experiencing a full-fledged revolution that is fundamentally changing the composition of society.

> The new communications system radically transforms space and time, the fundamental dimensions of human life. Localities become disembodied from their cultural, historical, geographical meaning, and reintegrated into functional networks, […] inducing a space of flows that substitutes for the space of places. Time is erased in the new communication system when past, present, and future can be programmed to interact with each other in the same message. The space of flows and timeless time are the material foundations of a new culture that transcends and includes the diversity of historically transmitted systems of representation: the culture of real virtuality where make-believe is belief in the making. (Castells 2010, 406)

A tiny correction is required here. Castells mentions a certain 'disembodiment of locality'. But it should not be taken as the eradication of physical location or, in any manner, loss of its value. It does not surpass the locality but transcends it. Sassen (2002, 352) express this transcendence as a "possibility of being global without losing the articulation with specific local conditions and resources". She also uses one of the forefront examples for this, the EZLN movement in Mexico. She claims, the movement surpass the conditions of territoriality; "the possibility even for resource-poor actors partially to exit national encasements and emerge as global political actors" (Sassen 2002, 352). The phenomenon, then, "cuts across the duality of global

and national" (Sassen 2002, 352); and binds them together in a new, transcended sense of 'locality'.

Another theorist of the network society, Jan van Dijk contributes a more specific and practical approach to the literature. Van Dijk (2006) argues that new unique organizational types have emerged, namely the network and virtual organizations. "Networks are new forms of organization between traditional markets and hierarchies. They are a compromise between freedom (market) and control (planning) in an increasingly complex environment." (van Dijk 2006, 94). For him, the 'virtual organization' is an adaptive form of organization that "tries to work relatively independently of the constraints of time, place and physical conditions" (van Dijk 2006, 71). However, van Dijk underlines that even though those constraints are more fluid, they still exist, and an entirely virtual type of organization is an 'ideal type' in the form of a web organization.

> The rise of new media networks should be explained by the needs of control in the complex organization, production, distribution, consumption and communication of the contemporary economy. These networks are able to support the flexibility, efficiency and productivity of organizations, to improve all kinds of logistic processes to replace transportation of goods and people by the exchange of information, and to reach a segmented public of consumers. (van Dijk 2006, 93)

Even though some organizations might take the form of web organization and entirely operate online, they are volatile and unsustainable (van Dijk 2006, 72). While mentioning the impact of ICT on existing organizational aspects, such as horizontal hierarchy and coordination patterns, he mainly builds his analysis on the corporate organizations, excluding alternative forms such as solidarity economies. Leaving himself in the invisible arms, he argues, "the networked economy is only a 'new economy' in a limited sense as all 'laws' or rules of capitalism remain. The only new aspects are a partial reversal of the value chain and a far-reaching dematerialization of the information economy" (van Dijk 2006, 94).

There are not one or two but many problems in this logic. But most of them are discussed in the third chapter, focusing on the aspect of (social) information economy,

including the all-mighty rules and laws of capitalism. From a theoretical perspective, the main problem in this theorization is the neglect of the agency. Van Dijk only considers the aspect of agency from the "personalization of demand" (van Dijk 2006, 93), which appoints the mere role of consumption to the agency. This aspect is very similar to the mass media model of the Frankfurt School, where the agency is crushed under the capitalist system by solely consuming what is provided. Fifty years later, the only 'change' van Dijk can see is the 'personalization of demand'.

Fortunately, a concept called "prosumer" comes into aid at this point, which is agency inclusive and more appropriate for the twenty-first century. The term is coined by Alvin Toffler in his book *"The Third Wave"* (1980) and simply refers to the pure consumption is not valid anymore and people simultaneously act as a producer as they consume. Since then, the concept is used by many authors. As Castells utilise a similar understanding, he claims the new technologies are amplified as they "appropriated and redefined by its users", and "new information technologies are not simply tools to be applied, but processes to be developed" (Castells 2010, 31). As the users are the ones who control these technologies, the production and consumption of these technologies become a dynamic relationship within the user base of the technology itself. As he points out, "for the first time in history, the human mind is a direct productive force, not just a decisive element of the production system" (Castells 2010, 31).

The user base, in this sense, is not a specific group of people but rather an organised and ever-growing community that transcends the limits of space and time.

> As the new network technologies strengthen and create new types of cross-border activities among non-state actors, they enable the constitution of a distinct and only partly digital condition variously referred to as global civil society, global publics, and commons. (Sassen 2007, 353)

Then, it is possible to treat these people as actors of civil society who are organised in a global public sphere.

2.2. Digitalized Public Sphere

Dissemination of information holds a fundamental importance in the understanding of public sphere in Habermas' theory. In *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere*, Habermas argues that the evolution of the press is the central accumulator in the development of publicity in modern society.

> The shift in the function of the principle of publicity is based on a shift in function of the public spere as a special realm. This shift can be clearly documented with regard to the transformation of the public sphere's preeminent institution, the press. (Habermas 1991, 181)

Following this logic of publicity, the press should not be seen only as a simple medium. It is an institution "effective in the mode of transmitter and amplifier" of the publicity itself (Habermas 1991, 183). Historically, the emergence and continued existence of political journals were crucial for the freedom of public opinion and political publicity (Habermas 1991, 184). Although it continually evolves in terms of its ownership structures, Habermas focused on the development of publicity in the mass media model. The relatively high capital requirements and effective publicist power of 20th century media (television, radio and movie industry) forced the establishment of the whole institution under government direction, granting publicity to the institution (Habermas 1991, 187). In an empirical sense, establishment of state-owned television like The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)[2] can be given as an example of this shift in publicity. As the capital costs became more feasible for privately owned corporations to involve in established media, it evolved into the private ownership of media in the late 20th century with the development of private ownership of advertising businesses. These processes are inherently interconnected and still carry this interconnectivity in contemporary society.

The impact of privatization and advertising businesses on media raised more liberal theories on the issue, such as the fourth estate and watchdog models. Very crudely,

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[2] Local example of this can be given with TRT. Turkish Radio and Television Association, founded in 1964, is the first and only state-owned public media broadcaster in Turkey. Today it is criticised for functioning as the media extension of the AKP-ruled government.

these models justifiably claim that media warrants freedom of speech and public supervision of government activity in democratic societies. Correlatively, the limits of a public sphere in a given society is determined by the implementation of public rights, such as free speech, access to information, freedom of assembly and organization, as well as the equal application of those rights to every member of that society (Özbek 2004, 34).

Although it is widely criticized, the classical understanding of public sphere provides "a space in which citizens can make arguments from a position of relative autonomy from political and economic power" (Townsley and Jacobs 2011, 7). While the libertarian explanation of the theory has been interpreted both in negative and positive tones, the scope of this aspect focuses on the understanding of media within the public sphere from a structural perspective. Setting aside major critiques; which deem this understanding of a public sphere in a bourgeoise category and suggest alternative approaches like proletariat public sphere, this framework focuses on the aspect of communication in a relatively libertarian setting by showing the evolution of public sphere and the media with the digital transformation of the society.

Even though this theory builds a perspective for meso level of analysis, complimentary theories like *Space of Opinion* should also be mentioned. While this theory focuses more on the aspect of content that is created by media intellectuals within the public sphere which they describe as a "chaotic interaction of several cultural fields" (Townsley and Jacobs 2011, 84), it is also clear from the description that they emphasize on the understanding of multiple publics which is very relevant to this context. Operating in this interaction, Townsley and Jacobs (2011, 13) identify the space of opinion "as an influential part of the elite political public sphere […] in which the elites of our complex societies debate serious matters of common concern".

The importance of the aspect of multiple publics manifests especially when the impact of the Internet is considered. To be more precise, a public sphere should be; a forum for different opinions, committed to equality and freedom, and must be open to the public engagement (Bohman 2004, 133-134). The third factor of 'openness' raises the

condition of (un)necessity for the face-to-face interaction. Public sphere has always required some form of technology (writing, printing etc.), and the Internet extensively meets this requirement by opening up the possibility of many-to-many communication (Bohman 2004, 134). However, this classification should not be reduced to a technological deterministic conjecture. The multiplicity of the public sphere provided by the Internet does not rely merely on the technology itself. The technology provides the necessary structure for the democratic deliberation which is realized by the agency in the end (Bohman 2004, 139). Admittedly, it does not depend on intrinsic features, but on the distributive interaction between the agency and the structure:

> Once we examine the potential ways in which the Internet can expand the features of communicative interaction, the issue of whether or not the Internet can support public spheres changes in character. It depends not only on which institutions shape its framework, but also on how participants contest and change these institutions and on how they interpret the Internet as a public space. It depends on the mediation of agency, not on technology. (Bohman 2004, 139)

As it can be seen, Bohman (2004, 140) argues that the Internet itself does not enter the existing public sphere on its own, but *becomes* one through the agency that "engage in reflexive and democratic activity".

Another theory that focuses on the agency perspective in this matter is the recursive publics approach. This perspective denies the Internet as a public sphere and describes it as a "complex and heterogeneous infrastructure" (Kelty 2013, 100). While using the term 'geeks' as the actor of this 'infrastructure', Kelty (2013, 99) defines recursive public as "a public that is constituted by a shared concern for maintaining the means of association through which they come together as a public". Although this approach evades the spherical aspect, Kelty (2013, 113) emphasizes its dynamic character that operates in the layers of the infrastructure by keeping its publicness by constant evolution and idea of continuous change. While it can be interpreted as feasible at first sight, this idea remains problematic as it describes a public that is only limited to a niche part of the society, which can be easily rendered within multiple publics approach by preserving the spherical aspect of the publicity.

In his very influential article, Dahlgren (2005) builds a bridge between the multiple publics approach and more inclusive global explanations. As he lays emphasis on the plurality of public sphere(s), Dahlgren (2005, 148) underlines the Internet's impact on public sphere as it "extends and pluralizes the public sphere". Defining the change as "cyber transformation of public sphere" (Dahlgren 2005, 151), he successfully avoids taking a side while providing a soundly structural explanation. However, Dahlgren's construct entails a significant prejudice as he argues that "a society where democratic tendencies are weak is not going to give rise to healthy institutional structures for the public sphere" (Dahlgren 2005, 149). This discussion on institutionalization is rather peculiar. In line with Dahlgren's argumentation, Bohman also brings up a similar problematization. In fact, he does not limit this problem with the democratization argument and enlarges its scope to a broader framework by taking the discussion on a problem of governance.

> The Internet and its governance now lacks the means to institutionalize the public sphere, especially since there are no functional equivalents to the roles played by journalists, judges and other intermediaries who regulated and protected the publicity of political communication in the mass media. […] As the emerging public spheres of early modernity, the potential intermediary roles must emerge from those who organize themselves in cyberspace as a public sphere. (Bohman 2004, 143)

It is possible to spot the similarities between the two arguments. Although their levels of analysis differ, both theories depend on the classical accounts of western democratization. While Dahlgren openly put forward the premise of a 'democratic society', Bohman also emphasizes the check and balance system of a west centric liberal democracy. While it is not easy to challenge these ideas from a structurally mediated viewpoint, a realistic approach requires acknowledging the conflictingly negative impact of a functionless justice system as well as monopolized media. Helping the institutionalization of public sphere aside, these institutions of the establishment harm the idea of freedom of expression, which is the central pillar of a 'healthy institutional structure of public sphere'. In its entirety, one of the main aims of this thesis is to challenge this idea and to test if democratic practices can arise from the grip of authoritarian populism.

In light of the above discussion, it is evident that the classical account of public sphere theory remains insufficient and more overarching approaches are required in order to transcend its boundaries. As Rheingold (2014, 241) argues, "we need new thinking about this important aspect of media practices - one that is anchored but not chained to Habermasian theory." Another important theory to mention in this junction is Downing's (2001) idea of radical media, in which he includes not only traditional forms of tv, radio and press; but also widens its range by including many forms of media, from graffiti to street performance, dresses and so on. Epistemologically built on the theories of public sphere and social movements; Downing also lays emphasis on the concepts of popular culture, communication network, democracy, hegemony, resistance, as well as aesthetics and audiences perspective (Downing 2001, 98). In collaboration with Downing; Ford, Gil & Stein's (2001) approach draws very close to the context of this research in their discussion of the global public sphere:

> The Internet is potentially our first global public sphere, a medium through which politics could be made truly participatory at both regional and international levels. And the Internet is the first medium through which individuals and independent collectives throughout the globe may hope to communicate, in their own voices, with an international audience of millions. Thus, the purely technical possibilities for the Internet as a public sphere are unlimited. (Ford, Gil and Stein 2001, 202)

Of course, they also mention the strong criticism to this idea, such as increasing commercialization and limited access (Ford, Gil and Stein 2001, 204); in other words, the main principles of the idea are currently debated as the digital divide.

Before finishing up this chapter, another main pillar of this work materializes in the overwhelmingly consistent theory of Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks* (2006). Shivering the arguments of liberal control mechanisms against the public sphere, Benkler stands on an anarchist ground, which is considerably convenient for this thesis' context that depends on the arguments of decentralization and freedom from the institutions of the establishment.

> The Internet as a technology, and the networked information economy as an organizational and social model of information and cultural production, promise the emergence of a substantial alternative platform for the public

sphere. The networked public sphere suggests that it will have no obvious points of control or exertion of influence. (Benkler 2006, 177)

By emphasizing its independence from government control, Benkler (2006, 185) appoints the public itself as an executive position by casting away the dependency on the body of government. He emphasizes that the democratizing impact of internet is evident when it is compared with the mass media. In his view, there is no duality of utopian freedom or extreme control but a maturing process of democratization (Benkler 2006, 215). He also shows a clear stance against technological determinism by saying, "the networked public sphere is not made of tools, but of social production practices that these tools enable" (Benkler 2006, 219). Although his construct shifts the control mechanism from establishment to the public, Benkler (2006, 212 - 213) still searches the roots for a possible change in the formation of liberal democracies as he claims that it is harder to be networked in the authoritarian setting, similar to his contemporaries Dahlgren and Bohman.

Still, Benkler's theory appoint a distinction between the models of mass-media and digital networks in terms of government control. As the innovation of digital network environment and the technologies enable "widely distributed capabilities to publish", it consequently provides the ability to resist against influence and control by the governing mechanisms (Benkler 2006, 261). Five major critiques contest the argument of democratization according to Benkler (2006, 233 - 236), which can be summed up as the loss of watchdog function, centralization, filtering, digital divide and information overload. There is a need for a brief discussion against these critiques since some of them touch on significant points that cannot be easily dismissed.

1. The loss of the watchdog function of mass media. As formerly debated, this is not an applicable critique in authoritarian regimes that monopolize the mass media into a singular entity. This issue is discussed in its historical development in the following chapters.

2. Argument of centralization. The idea is that very few digital outlets enclose the network environment. This argument may be valid for the limited scope of social

media. But a structural viewpoint can easily debunk it as the technology itself promotes and practices decentralization in every possible aspect. Unhindered escalation of blockchain technology is the best example for this context.

3. Authoritarian filtering. It is possible to argue the authoritarian regime can restrict access or entirely prevent the establishment of a networked environment. There is an entire literature that discusses this issue. The answer to these filtering mechanisms again lies in the architecture itself. There are tools like VPN services to counter the most accessible scope. As the effort to filter strengthens, mechanisms to cope gets complicated. But there is always some backdoor to create an alternative, which can be even extended to create a network environment among people themselves.

4. Digital divide. The formerly mentioned problem that discusses the capabilities to access the network. It should also be noted that this criticism is considerably advanced after the students' insufficient access to online learning platforms after COVID crisis. While this criticism is very effective for current times, one should remember that access to a computer was much more difficult fifteen years ago.

5. Information overload. As a variant of the Babel Objection, this criticism is the most pertinent against the hypothesis of democratization. There are no shortcuts or temporizations to challenge this problem. In fact, it is also possible to argue this worsens as time passes since the problem of fake news becomes more evident as the populist governments rise and strengthen every other day, and more people call the current age the age of post-truth. Another sub-chapter of this problem is the creation of echo chambers, which also cover a very problematic aspect. With its ramified outcomes, this is the most important problem of the network society and should be examined carefully.

As a fork of this problem, the domination of money also arises as the control is shifted from governing establishment to the general public. As the form of media evolves from one-directional architecture to a multidirectional one, the dependency for advertisement money forces the networked information economy to achieve largest audience possible, bringing up the problems of auto-censorship and evasion of

politically sensitive topics (Benkler 2006, 205). As a theory that is rooted in public regulation, this central problem is also one of the fundamental thresholds that is relevant for this study's context, which Benkler conceptualizes as 'lowest common denominator'.

> Intense interest and engagement by small groups that share common concerns, rather than lowest-common-denominator interest in wide groups that are largely alienated from each other, is what draws attention to statements and makes them more visible. This makes the emerging networked public sphere more responsive to intensely held concerns of a much wider swath of the population than the mass media were capable of seeing and creates a communications process that is more resistant to corruption by money. (Benkler 2006, 242)

However, this is a problem of approach on the micro scale, based on decision by every other enterprise which engages in the networked information economy. In other words, it is a matter of preference.

As stated, the problem of information overload is multifaceted and cannot be answered in one direction. The main aim of this work is to try to find a solution from an empirical case to one variant of this issue. As Ford, Gil and Stein (2001, 211) also mention, the network media is mainly funded from foundation support, and this funding is not sufficient. The lack of financial aid, which pushes the outlets to the pitfall of the lowest-common-denominator, is one of the main problematizations of this work, and it is discussed furtherly in the following chapters.

2.3. Digitalized Media

As the theoretical ground goes more specific, the aspect of digital media within public sphere should also be debated before describing the economic approach. As many authors clearly state, the democratization process is openly correlated with the expansion of public sphere and the media (McNair 2009, 219). Although his general presumption of the global decline of the number of authoritarian states is contestable, McNair (2009, 229) rightfully argues that authoritarian states' control of the media is getting more complex every day.

> How long these societies can hold out against the demands of young, internet-literate populations eager to participate in globalized media culture will depend on the sociocultural specifics of each case, and the extent to which economic success can be combined with the control of information. There is no single template for how the internet will react with and impact on the conduct of politics in different countries. But that there has been and will be reactions and impacts, everywhere the hardware is available to people, is inevitable. (McNair 2009, 229)

This line of thought is very accurate when the condition of mainstream and alternative media in Turkey is considered. But before continuing, there is a need to define the concept of alternative media and explain how it will be utilized. In its more basic form, alternative media can be defined as its challenging and critical position against the 'legacy' or, more popularly referred to as mainstream media. But an essential point to stress here is that the differentiation between the mainstream and alternative media should not be accepted as a dichotomous one (Holt, Figenschou and Frischlich 2019, 861). The mainstream is not an 'evil' entity itself, and neither the alternative media is the one true saviour against the pure evil. The main differentiations, in Turkey's context, lie within the networks of ownership, utilization of public resources by the hand of the government and openly broadcasting state propaganda. These will be revisited in the following chapters.

In Holt, Figenschou and Frischlich's successful conceptualization (2019, 863), defining the alternative media's critical position requires a relational approach, and the counter-hegemonic perspective can be considered on three levels. First, the owners of alternative media might proclaim their critical perspective. Second, the audience perception might be in line with a similar perspective, and third, it might be perceived by a third party such as political entities or associations (Holt, Figenschou and Frischlich 2019, 863).

Although this work focusses on the aspect of journalism, many tools and forms of alternative media can also be included within this framework. For example, Chadwick and Howard (2009, 1) mention the "rise of blogging as a threat to the traditional model of journalism", which turns out very important in many cases of alternative media and social movements that are associated with them. But although the lines between

blogging and journalism might get blurry, they are still there, and a content discussion like this does not fall within the issues of this research.

Another issue that is worth mentioning yet does not require a deep analysis is the audiences approach. For Stanyer (2009, 201), the transformation of journalism started with the emergence of the Internet and news platforms in the US and correlated with the rise of the world wide web (www) and dot com services. He argues, "the news markets of the pre-internet era are being reconfigured. The old geographical and technological divides are disappearing, and the once-dominant position of the main national news providers is coming to an end" (Stanyer 2009, 205 - 206), and he supports this hypothesis since the big and established media companies lose popularity within the charts of the most popular websites as the time went by.

This approach is solid and well-formulated, but the main difference with this context is that the primary attribution of power in this formulation is rooted in the audiences approach. As he openly suggests, the "audience has the ultimate say about when and how information is consumed" (Stanyer 2009, 203). A significant yet very restricted perspective since similar approaches also suggests varied perspectives. Tewksbury and Rittenberg (2009, 188), for instance, provide another view that is fully audience oriented and stress the aspect of polarization and fragmentation of audiences as the news platforms multiply. A formulation that can be extended even to the popular critique of 'echo chambers', which basically describe Internet media as a fractional force that limits like-minded people in their own networks.

While this approach is valuable and appreciated, it is crucial to stay focused on the main question, which will be evaluated on a different level of analysis than audiences approach. Though they utilize a multilevel approach to their conceptualization, Holt et al. (2019, 863 - 865) point out to four dimensions as paired by levels of analysis for the research of alternative media.

On the micro-level,

    1- The producers, "such as citizen journalists or activists".

2- The content, as the "alternative media often publish content that is politically and socially radical, counter-hegemonic or alternative in its epistemological foundations".

On the meso level,

3- Organizations, as well as their patterns of production and distribution.

And on the macro level,

4- Media ecosystems, and "their function and impact on the societal structure".

A macro analysis, in this sense, would definitely require including audiences approach in its structure. But the framework of this thesis corresponds to the meso level in this formulation since a specific organization and its production model are on the table. Of course, these levels are "embedded in a certain sociocultural context and subject to historical and political conditions" (Holt, Figenschou and Frischlich 2019, 865). Thus, the other dimensions such as content, producers and media ecosystem are also mentioned throughout the analysis. Still, they are only used to provide context and play a descriptive role. They mostly remain out from the core analysis.

As the organizational aspect comes forefront, Ward and Gibson (2009, 33) use the 'equalization approach' to the inter-organizational change. They claim that social media "provide an unlimited platform" in the dissemination processes while the legacy media like newspapers and television limits the space and strengthens editorial control. Social media, in this sense, "effectively help decentralize control of the communications process". But this, of course, cannot be generalized to the whole ecosystem and depends on the specificness of the organizations that would benefit from the egalitarian structure (Ward and Gibson 2009, 34). After all, even the legacy media utilize these tools, for example, to simultaneously stream their tv broadcast on social media.

It should be noted that there is not one true 'two-dimensional' and 'over simplified' explanation for the analysis of an organization. Instead, it depends on the specific

organizations' approach to the technology, in other words, how they instrumentalize or use the medium (Ward and Gibson 2009, 35). There are three factors that are important to pay attention to while analysing this aspect:

1. Systemic and technological opportunity structures:

Overall media environment and the communication infrastructure are very important in this sense. The authors compare the United States and The United Kingdom on this topic. They claim that while radical media is much more prominent in the US because of its fragmented and spurious media environment, trusted and established organizations like BBC prevented this from happening in the UK.

> We might expect to see greater and more innovative uses of internet technology in countries with relatively fragmented and less trusted media systems, high internet penetration rates, along with decentralized, personalized, and less fixed political systems. (Ward and Gibson 2009, 36)

2. Organizational capacity: defined by time, skills, and financial aspects.
3. Organizational incentives: which cover more societal aspects of ideology, target audience, age, and status against the legacy media.

This framework covers the most significant parts and main structure of the organizational research within this study. However, there is another, and more critical approach that should be mentioned before proceeding to the next chapter. Heavily differentiating from what is built until now, Evans (2013, 89) argues that social media websites such as YouTube, are mostly "appear closer to a form of mass media than a community of interest" and they serve to a form of self-advertisement; instead of creating communities.

> Connections which are digitally mediated, as the early pioneers suggested, could have served as key tools for the creation of oppositional and novel ways of living and working together. Powerful economic forces, however, have held sway and we seem generally unable to step outside the narrow confines of our increasingly fragmented and commercialized existence under late capitalism, no matter what medium is made available to us. Most internet-based and digital 'communities' of the twenty first century appear shallow and thinly stretched

over the spaces they inhabit rather than fostering deeply felt connections of common experience and activity. (Evans 2013, 91 - 92)

Both in its tone and its importance, this is very critical. While Evans' criticism appears harsh and very pessimistic, most organizations (including the one that is relevant for this research) show the ugly reality in their nature or during the process of their advancement. But going through this heavy critique in this chapter is rather hollow before exhibiting its roots, causes and practical reflections. For this reason, this aspect is revisited in the analysis chapter.

CHAPTER III

ECONOMICAL ASPECT

Mainstream media is an extension of existing market structures and the capital. Naturally, it will reflect the interest of the capitalist class and their particular relationship with the government and state formation. Independent media breaks not only the ideological dependency but also the financial dependency on capital. Therefore sustainable and efficient independent media is only possible with financial independence.

The case study of this thesis, Medyascope.tv can be analysed within many different approaches. For example, Taştan (2018, 224) defines Medyascope.tv as a radical media, built upon the theorization of Downing (2001). Another view by Dr. Sevilay Çelenk, which was remarked on a personal correspondence with the author in January 2020, suggests that Medyascope.tv's practice can be considered a form of activism. This view is conflicting with statements from Medyascope.tv, in which they specifically object to this perspective.

Regardless of the organization's own manifest, Medyascope.tv can be analysed through both theories. Its disposition shows suitable characteristics for both radical media and social movements theories. Furthermore, these theoretical approaches would indeed provide an analytical ground for further research.

However, the most suitable operationalization for the context of this thesis is selected as the theory of social economy. This approach provides a structural perspective and a framework for the general evaluation of the organization as well as the aspect of the

locality. Its economic focus helps in consideration of the aspect of crowdfunding while preserving the integral character of a media company. On top of the theory of social economy, Benkler's (2006) approach of the networked information economy is utilized to extend this framework to complement the episteme of digitalization, which also provides the aspect of individual participation.

3.1. Social Economy

Since the concept of social economy is very recent and developing, the theory does not provide a unified definition. In his compact literature review, Uluorta (2009, 11) explains there is an ongoing debate around almost every aspect of social economy, such as its scope, size, temporality, purpose, and impact. All in all, Uluorta (2009, 11) defines the formation of social economy as a network and stresses two main stable aspects. Social economy operates outside the state and market economy, and its purpose is to ensure social reproduction.

In accordance with Uluorta's explanation, Amin, Cameron and Hudson (2002, 117 - 119) also confirm the unnecessity of "universally-valid factors cutting across varied initiatives". Social economy models are unique depending on the case and a universal definition would be very vague. Instead of a definition, they draw a framework of five factors:

1. Leadership quality
2. Goal clarity
3. Market research (locality of the problem)
4. Risk intermediation
5. The proximity of initiatives to mainstream economic dynamism

Though many approaches from the social economy literature share a similar framework, Ash Amin's formulation of social economy fits the best for this thesis's context. But even in this narrowed perspective, it is important to remember that every case is unique and should be approached accordingly.

Amin (2009, 15) argues that models of the social economy show different characteristics in compliance with the state formation of their locality. He says that while it helps "rolling back state provisions" in liberal, established welfare states such as Britain and Denmark, it already operates as a 'solidarity economy' in parallel with the private economy and the state in other welfare state formations like Canada and France.

Following up, Amin says that social economy stands for a 'post-capitalist possibility' in countries with weak market economies that follow economically left policies. On the other hand, the case differs in the developing world.

> The social economy languishes in obscurity, unsupported by the state, blending into the informal economy, frequently dependent on the energy of motivated individuals and third-sector organizations, and barely able to survive (Amin 2009, 16).

The state support, in this context, should not be understood solely in monetary terms. It includes a range of interventions which might facilitate or make things even more difficult for an organization. Some researchers, for example, interpret the state as a controlling and beneficiary body over the social economy. Fontan and Shragge (2000, 6) argues that governments use the social economy as a tool as long as their objective is limited to social integration and not chasing an authentic social change.

Of course, this approach applies to many cases worldwide, and it perfectly shows that the dependency on contextual dynamics is significant. This local dependency makes the theory even more fluid and locally distinctive (Amin, Cameron and Hudson 2002, 10). Therefore, implementing a normative approach is not very consistent since the variety of state involvement in social economy would also influence the theoretical approach to each case.

Beyond this local uniqueness, a general path to approach a case is certainly required. Defining the social economy as an "alternative system in the overall economy", Pearce (2009, 22 - 25) identifies six fundamental principles for a social economy:

- No capital accumulation (in which the profits are always re-distributed for the growth of the organization).
- Caring for human resources (training and development of human capital).
- Good governance and accountability (independency from outside influence and engaged management).
- Working for the common good (as in not causing any damage on a social and environmental level as well as on other local economies).
- Cooperation (between other organizations).
- Subsidiary (focusing on the local control and community strength and bringing the decision making to the grassroots level).

Of course, although these fundamental points are somehow straightforward, they still require further elaboration. In a social economy, the community needs to avert profit maximization. This means, instead of capital accumulation, the surplus value should be utilized for "building social capacity and responding under-met needs" (Amin, Cameron and Hudson 2002, 1), which would create new forms of work practices and strengthen the position of the relevant social economy in the overall.

As a space that fortifies the aspect of human capital, it is also expected from a social economy to provide training, experience, and networks to its subjects (Amin, Cameron and Hudson 2002, 4). This aspect stretches out to building a community as a link to realizing grass-roots social empowerment (Amin, Cameron and Hudson 2002, 7) in an organizational setup. Of course, the sense of community differs since the theory is very fluid. For example, some even define the active workers of a social economy as "political subjects" (Hogget 1997).

The social economy is also suggested to remedy social exclusion (Amin, Cameron and Hudson 2002, 16), (Geddes 2000). Social exclusion, in this context, should be understood as an umbrella term. As also pointed out by Amin, Cameron and Hudson, it is "a powerful concept encapsulating the cumulative effects of multiple disadvantage and social exclusion can be manifest in numerous, often inter-related ways: cultural, economic, political, and spatial" (2002, 17). The aspect of acknowledging the

participants to a social economy as a political subject and assuming these political subjects are also victims of political (and thus social) exclusion accords with each other. This premise provides an important pillar in discussing the case of this research. The social economy enables a local space for the excluded (from the mainstream national and, by extension, global) a "point of re-entry" to the labour market (Amin, Cameron and Hudson 2002, 18).

The act of providing a space for the politically excluded results with another phenomenon, which is the political motivations of its participants. On an idealistic level, this system is formulated around a non-hierarchical set of relations within the social economy.

> Social economy embraces a wide range of activities and a variety of organizational forms that may be non-hierarchical, using both waged workers and unwaged volunteers, and more democratic than those of the formal economy and state (Amin, Cameron and Hudson 2002, 19).

Thus, it can be summarized as the social economy encourages collectivity, emphasises human autonomy, and enhances democratic participation by decentralizing the economy on the local level (Amin, Cameron and Hudson 2002, 20).

Before proceeding to the next chapter, it should be underlined again that these formulations are a part of an unestablished and novel theory. It is very hard and unrealistic to flawlessly apply all the criteria in a practical case. While there are adequate examples of the theory, many organisations also failed. The failure can originate from many aspects such as "entrepreneurship, high dependency on public funding, chronic under-capitalization, very little job generation, unstable and under-paid employment and limited community involvement" (Amin, Cameron and Hudson 2002, 116). These aspects are revisited in the discussion chapter.

3.2. Networked Information Economy

Similar to the theory of social economy, the networked information economy approach is also an extensive theory that requires reduction to some extent in order to apply it on a specific case. Coined by Yochai Benkler (2006), the concept is derived as one of

the results of a structural change that brought by the Internet in the foundation of liberal markets and democracies. The 'networked information economy' is based on decentralized individual action, in other words, a novel model of action that depends on cooperation and coordination and is "carried out through radically distributed, nonmarket mechanisms that do not depend on proprietary strategies" (Benkler 2006, 3).

Unlike Ash, Benkler's view is strictly anarchist. He is highly sceptical against state intervention and defines the relations in a networked information economy on the basis of mutual aid. However, he does not build his formulation on a communitarian basis, but instead, he is more in line with a libertarian approach (Benkler 2006, 20 - 21). This approach is beneficial for the case of this thesis since the context entails an authoritarian state formation that tries to regulate all the economic space to strangle the autonomy into the hands of crony justice. Benkler's approach, in this sense, is much more applicable than Ash's broadscale perspective.

> Most state interventions have been in the form of either captured legislation catering to incumbents, or, at best, well-intentioned but wrongheaded efforts to optimize the institutional ecology for outdated modes of information and cultural production (Benkler 2006, 21).

As can be seen, even the affirmative action of the state might be problematic for the networked information economy. On the other hand, state oppression might also bring a positive outcome. For Benkler (2006, 27), unstable periods offer more opportunities (as well as more risks), in which the society can organize and adjust itself to combat this situation by extending the room for innovation and change.

The aspect of the inclusion of the socially excluded is also featured in the networked information economy. But different from the organizational perspective of the social economy model, the networked information economy embraces a more holistic approach and includes the actors as well as products in the equation. As the costs of producing and accessing information degrade over time, the capital-dependency of the products (that is, the information) gets lower day by day, easing the entry to the market for the unprivileged (Benkler 2006, 131). On both global and local levels, the

networked information economy appoints a degree of autonomy to the individuals. Benkler suggests (2006, 8), that the 'enhanced autonomy' of individuals is very focal, and it improves individuals on three dimensions:

1- Increase the individual capacity "to do more for and by themselves".
2- Enable individuals to take more initiative outside the relations of traditional hierarchy.
3- Allows individuals to operate outside the traditional market sphere.

On the product side, the concept of 'nonrivality' comes to the forefront. The concept points out to one of the most fundamental aspects of digital products, as their "consumption by one person does not make it any less available for consumption by another" (Benkler 2006, 36). In the digital age, all the information that is produced can be considered under this concept.

As the patterns of production and consumption drastically differ from the traditional market economy, non-market actors utilize this marginal advantage, consequently creating a pile of redundant information. However, this totality also results in the derivation of niche markets within the overall mix of the information production system (Benkler 2006, 56). A very basic example of this phenomenon might be the peer production system of Wikipedia. There are many online encyclopaedias, most of which are indecent and doomed to failure. But observing Wikipedia's achievement on a global scale is still enough to demonstrate the collusion within the wheel of information production.

The diversity of available information and niche spaces provide another layer of autonomy to the individual. "Information, knowledge, and culture are now produced by sources that respond to a myriad of motivations, rather the primarily the motivation to sell into mass markets" (Benkler 2006, 162). This outcome has its roots in nonrival and less capital dependent characteristics of the networked information economy. As it was mentioned before, individual autonomy does not only refer to solely production but also consumption of the information material. The autonomy of the individual,

thus, also includes a selection process, as the individual becomes a decision-maker on the product itself.

> These material conditions have given individuals a new practical freedom of action. If a person or group wishes to start an information-production project for any reason, that group or person need not raise significant funds to acquire the necessary capital. In the past, the necessity to obtain funds constrained information producers to find a market-based model to sustain the investment, or to obtain government funding. The funding requirements, in turn, subordinated the producers either to the demands of markets, in particular to mass-market appeal, or to the agendas of state bureaucracies. The networked information environment has permitted the emergence to much greater significance of the nonmarket sector, the non-profit sector, and, most radically, of individuals (Benkler 2006, 462).

The novelty in this formulation is very evident in the online funding systems. There are many versions that is utilized by different organizations. Most commonly, subscription services and paywalls, which provide the information to the users over monthly payments, or partially reveals the information and require a payment to continue. These models are investigated in several works, and their impact is analysed. This thesis, however, is more interested in the crowdfunding mechanism. This model also refers to multiple forms of funding. Platforms such as Kickstarter, for example, provide a service in which individuals pitch their projects with specific milestones and one-time request funding for the start-up. There are also subscription services like Patreon, enabling individuals to subscribe to a particular organization. The difference between traditional subscription and crowdfunding is the absence of a paywall. The information is already free and in circulation. Users' support of the organization is entirely dependent on personal initiative.

In their discussion of the benefits of online production, Cusumano and Goeldi also mention the marginal cost of distributing information as well as the variety of Internet business models (Cusumano and Goeldi 2013, 243). They mostly discuss the 'freemium' model, which serves partial information and hide the rest to the back of a paywall over the examples of Wall Street Journal and New York Times (Cusumano and Goeldi 2013, 253). However, even though they analyse the subscription systems, the aspect of crowdfunding slips away from their scope, and their analysis squeeze

within limited lenses of streaming services and corporate capitalism. Similarly, another view by Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2013, 380) fails to mention of crowdfunding and subscription systems and limits the income to traditional sources, especially advertising. These views, though they are more specific on the topic since they analyse digital journalism models, both remain inadequate to revealing alternative sources of income as well as defining the elaborate relation of production in this niche economy.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

The analysis chapter of this thesis focuses on the practical aspect differently from the former theoretical construct. This chapter consists of five sections. Firstly, a summary of the complex history of journalism and the hardships it encountered are briefly mentioned to provide a glimpse for the readers to grasp the media environment in Turkey. Second section analyses Medyascope.tv's tangible such as; when and how it was established, which platforms it utilize, what are its follower – viewer – subscriber numbers, as well as its financial situation.

The third section explains the methodology of fieldwork and content analysis. While the fourth section shows and analyses the findings of the research, the fifth and final section covers a discussion of the data collected throughout the fieldwork in line with the conceptual structure.

4.1. Turkey's Media Environment

Freedom of the press was very controversial and a big struggle for Turkey, even before its inception. During the first half of the 19th century Ottoman Empire [Tanzimat Era], the media environment had a cosmopolitan characteristic. The newspapers and journals were published mostly by the non-Muslim community, and Istanbul was a hub for those publications. Starting from the second half of the 19th century, an excessive censorship mechanism was imposed on the journals during the rule of Abdulhamid II. Journalists were suppressed and forced to exile to European countries due to various political reasons. The beginning of the 20th century demonstrated a

republican reconstruction of the media, built around the Kemalist ideals. Turkey implemented the Latin alphabet during this period, and literacy rates significantly increased throughout the country. There are many unique and significant events during these eras, but they substantially remain outside of the scope of this research.

More elaborate discussions of the history of political life in Turkey can be found in the accomplished works of Zürcher (2015), as well as Aydın and Taşkın (2015). More recent works, such as White's article (2017), covers the polarization in Turkey's politics as well as the impact of Islamist organizations on the process of polarization. Similarly, Tuğal (2021) competently explains recent events in Turkey with references to internal conflicts as well as foreign policy decisions, mainly focusing on the era after the 2000s. Another important work by Esen and Gumuscu (2016) also covers the same era by analysing issues like violation of civil rights, unfair elections, and politicised state institutions as evidence of their utilized concept of 'competitive authoritarianism'. Finally, Cagaptay's (2020) work should be included, which also extensively describes and analyses the era after the 2000s by explicitly focusing on Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's reign.

In more recent history, the problems and barriers to the press freedom had severely deteriorated after the military coup of 1980[3], when countless laws were made to control these domains, including the establishment of the infamous Radio and

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[3] The main driving force behind the 12 September 1980 military coup was the political clashes between right- and left-wing sections in society, along with the social, political, and economic unrest caused by these. Turkish Armed Forces seized power over government through chain of command and further closed the political parties and persecuted politicians. The chief of defence Full General Kenan Evren became the head of state, and the National Security Council (MGK) was founded under his presidency, to perform the legislative prerogative in the country. The coup resulted with major transformations in political, legal, and social arenas, many of the consequences of which still impact contemporary Turkey. The years following the coup were marked with a discourse of political war against terror and anarchy. According to official statistics, 650,000 people were arrested; 230,000 people were put on trial on military courts; 300 people lost their lives in prisons, including 171 due to torture; 48 people were hanged; and 1,683,000 people were politically profiled. Sovereignty of the universities was diminished through the establishment of YÖK (the Council of Higher Education). Following the coup, a new constitution was also put in place in 1982. Under the new constitution, the election threshold was set as 10%, decrementing parliamentary participation for many parties.

Television Supreme Council (RTÜK)[4]. Initially used as a tool of censorship by the military government, members of this organization are still being assigned by the government and constitute a significant barrier to censorship for Turkey's media in general. Kejanlıoğlu (2004) provides a comprehensive work on the transformation of Turkey's media as a whole, including the legislative roots and structure of RTÜK.

After the military coup, press unions were weakened, Islamist media became more prominent and "pro-Kurdish publications and journalists were subjected to severe repression" as well as leftist media in general. Journalists were imprisoned or simply 'disappeared' during the political atmosphere of the military coup (Yesil 2016, 28-33). During the early 1990s, media ownership structures started to change towards wealthy families started to invest in media companies as the country adopted neo-liberal policies and "media enterprises became political actors" (Yesil 2016, 36). In her article covering the media industry's transformation under neoliberal policies, Adaklı (2014, 75 - 78) also demonstrates how the ownership structures shifted, and the media is monopolized under government-imposed "deregulation" processes.

Assassinations of distinguished journalists also peaked in the era between the 1980s and 2000s. According to the Journalists' Association of Turkey (TGC), there have been 67 journalist assassinations in Turkey's history, and 45 journalists were murdered during this era (Türkiye Gazeteciler Cemiyeti n.d.). Most of those are still being 'cold cases', these journalists were targeted by 'unknown' fundamental Islamist organizations. Most notables of those journalists are Çetin Emeç, Turan Dursun, Uğur Mumcu and Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, among many others. Although the intensity of the assassinations decreased, murders continued in the 2000s, including the terrible assassination of Hrant Dink, a journalist of Armenian origin who was murdered in 2007 by an unknown chauvinist organization.

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[4] Radio and Television High Council is a public institution functioning as the higher regulation and audit council for the entire media broadcasts operating in Turkey. Members of RTÜK are selected by the General Assembly of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, among the nominees from political parties. Today RTÜK is known for its political pressure and censorship on media freedom and freedom of speech, due to the concentration of ideological motivations of its members aligning with the the conservative mindset of the government.

During the 2000s, the media ownership structures continued to change drastically. The most important was the sale of Dogan Group to the Demirören family; many big publishing houses, journals and TV channels changed hands in this period, resulting in government tied families' complete takeover of the mainstream media. According to Reporters Without Borders (2022), 90% of Turkey's national media is under government control. The same index ranks Turkey 149th out of 180 countries in the ranking of freedom of the press (Reporters Without Borders 2022). In their report, Freedom House (2022) also evaluates Turkey's freedom status as "not free". Another very extensive research on the repression of media in Turkey can also be found in a report published by Human Rights Watch (2016).

The shift in media ownership structures demonstrates an important factor in the media and overall freedom in the country. In his article Tılıç (2015) underlines the damage caused by the businessman and holding owners' taking over newspaper administrations. These ownership patterns show a great deal of anti-unionist approaches for the employees, which deem the press unions absolute in the overall press industry. Tılıç emphasizes specific events, like the leaked conversations between media company owners and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, which shows a great deal of government pressure directly from the top. He also mentions how the structure of guest commentators was changed in the mainstream media over an example of NTV, a prominent news channel in Turkey, which had a guestlist of over 100 people in 2009. But the list decreased to as little as fifteen guests since many of the former were probably considered 'problematic' by government executives (Tılıç 2015).

In the period after the 2000s, the prosecutions against journalists under cover of 'terrorism' allegations are also intensified. Though the total numbers change depending on the reporting institution, there are currently 26 journalists under arrest in Turkey, according to a report published by the Journalists' Association of Turkey in April (2022). Another report from the Council of Europe suggests as of the end of 2018, there were 130 imprisoned journalists among the member countries, and 110 of them were in Turkey (BBC News Türkçe 2019). At this point, the direct media blackouts by court orders should also be mentioned briefly. Starting from the Reyhanlı

bombing[5] in 2013, there were tons of events that were banned from broadcasting by court order. Some media blackouts do not even require a court order since the organizations themselves implement auto-censorship mechanisms. The most infamous example to this is the CNN Türk's, which is the most prominent news platform in the mainstream, publication of a penguin documentary during the Gezi Protests[6], the most significant uprising in Turkey's history.

This topic is much darker and more vast than what is told here. Many issues are left behind, including the recent assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, who is claimed to be murdered inside the consulate of Saudi Arabia in Istanbul, and whose case has been recently handed over to Saudi authorities[7]. As seen, even foreign journalists are under duress. However, it is impossible to cover everything extensively, as each case are very detailed, and requires publishing entire theses on.

The chapter solely aims to provide a background for foreign readers to grasp how hard to perform independent and critical journalism in Turkey. Under these conditions, many independent platforms are established on social media, generally led by former

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[5] Reyhanlı bombing took place on May 11th, 2013, resulting with at least 52 people lost their lives and 140 injured. Turkey's Hatay province's Reyhanlı town is five km from the Syrian border. Turkish government initially blamed the Syrian intelligence and government forces for the attack which was carried out by two bomb-laden vehicles. Allegations pointed out the al-Nusra Front, ISIS and the Syrian resistance as possible suspects as well. On the other hand, Turkish opposition circles pointed out the attack as a consequence of Turkey's foreign policies towards civil war in Syria.

[6] Gezi Park uprising is started on May 28, 2013, to protest the government's plan to remove Gezi Park in Taksim, a centrally located green area in Istanbul for a construction project. People occupied the Taksim Square to oppose the construction. The peaceful protests shortly became a national uprising. Ten people lost their lives and more than 7000 people are injured during the civil unrest. After the events, the plans for construction are cancelled and the park space have been preserved.

[7] Jamal Khashoggi (1958, Madina) is a dissident Saudi journalist who is claimed to be brutally murdered in the consulate of Saudi Arabia in Istanbul in 2018. The events that led to his death are still unknown and his case is recently handed over to Saudi authorities. For more information, please see: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45812399.

journalists and telecasters such as Ruşen Çakır, Nevşin Mengü[8] and Cüneyt Özdemir[9] and so on. They all have different structures and unique characteristics in their operation. Although this work specifically focusses on Medyascope.tv, other examples of independent media are also briefly covered in the discussion chapter.

4.2. Medyascope.tv

Medyascope.tv was officially initiated on August 20th 2015, by Ruşen Çakır, who started creating live streams from his office at Haberturk newspaper[10]. At first, Medyascope.tv was a small initiative of Çakır and a couple of his friends making commentaries on Turkey's political agenda. After six years, Medyascope.tv became one of the prominent independent media hubs in Turkey by employing more than 90 journalists and a technical crew in a professional studio environment, with more than 50 programs are being broadcasted regularly.

Medyascope.tv's success is recognized by international organizations and was awarded the International Press Institute's Free Media Pioneer award in 2016, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and TV5MONDE's Press Freedom Prize in 2017 (Medyascope.tv n.d.).

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[8] Nevşin Mengü (1982, Ankara) is a renowned journalist and anchor-woman in Turkey's independent media sphere. She started her career in the mainstream media, taking roles as editor, reporter, and/or anchor-woman. She also worked as the Tahran (Iran) reporter of One Agency for one and a half years. Today, she broadcasts regularly on YouTube, both on her own channel and her weekly program on Deutsche Welle Turkish. She recently started to collaborate on a FOX TV news discussion program "Orta Sayfa" as well. She is a public figure quite engaged in social media and well-known for her liberal worldview, and sports activities.

[9] Cüneyt Özdemir (1970, Ankara) is one of the most popular journalists in Turkey, known best for his regular broadcasts on YouTube. He had worked with well-known mainstream media platforms as television host and producer. For instance, he started his career with 32. Gün international affairs program which was presented by Mehmet Ali Birand, one of the most successful and well-known journalists in Turkey. He trained Cüneyt Özdemir into journalism in a sense. Today, Cüneyt Özdemir's YouTube channel where he regularly shares opinion videos on recent issues in Turkish politics and general country agenda, get over tens of thousands views.

[10] Habertürk was founded as Habertürk TV, a television news broadcaster in 2001 within Ciner Broadcasting Holding Company. Habertürk had started to be published as a physical newspaper as well in 2009, the last issue of which was published in 2018. Today Habertürk operates solely as a digital news platform (Haberturk.com) and TV news channel Habertürk TV. Habertürk is one of the most well-known mainstream media platforms in Turkey.

While the slogan[11] of Medyascope.tv is 'always free', Rusen Çakır (2018) repeatedly underlines that it is not 'activism' that they do in Medyascope.tv, but exclusively free, neutral and honest journalism:

> Led by myself, a journalist for 31 years, Medyascope was founded with the aim to address issues surrounding freedom of the press in Turkey, along with the vision to introduce independent journalists to the right digital tools and to provide them with a self-sufficient, easy to use and sustainable platform to reach large audiences in a swift and uncensored manner. (Çakır 2016)

Medyascope.tv is one of the unique examples of digital journalism, which incorporates several digital platforms and emphasizes a discourse of freedom instead of activism or opposition. The upcoming sub-chapter describes the form of Medyascope.tv, the types of content that it broadcasts, and social media outlets and tools they utilize.

4.2.1. Platforms and Content

Within the last two years, followers of Medyascope.tv has increased drastically on all these platforms. Among them, Medyascope.tv's YouTube channel achieved the most significant growth as the number of subscribers rose from 115.000 to 260.000.[12] Its Twitter page also nearly doubled its follower numbers as it rose from 120.000 to 230.000 in the last two years. Other platforms, which seem to support these rather than being alternatives, have not seen the same growth rates as the followers of their Facebook page rose from 16.000 to 27.000 and Soundcloud from 3.000 to 4.700. Sadly, Spotify and Apple Podcasts do not share their statistics. It should be noted that these numbers do not show a total sum of people that follow Medyascope.tv since the same people could subscribe across multiple platforms.

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[11] Original slogan of Medyascope.tv 'Çünku Özgür' can be translated literally as 'because its free'. However, the meaning becomes more accurate when it is translated as 'always free'.

[12] There are two YouTube accounts of Medyascope.tv. While the main account broadcasts everything, the second account, 'Rusen Çakır medyascope' is reserved only for the broadcasts of Rusen Çakır and has more than 173.000 (increased from 50.000 within two years) subscribers by itself.
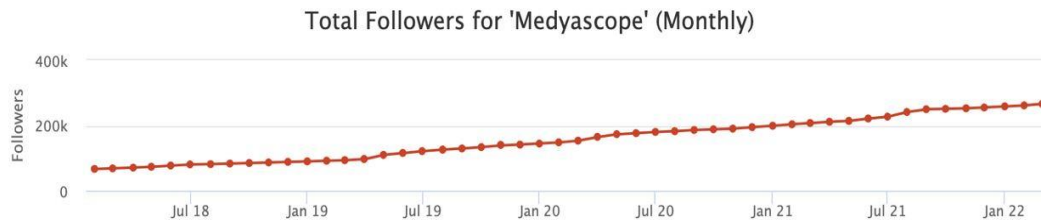
Figure 1. Total number of Twitter follower progress of Medyascope.tv (Social Blade 2022).

View numbers are also observable on YouTube. These numbers can vary greatly, depending on the reputation of producer as well as interviewee and the specific topic. For example, while the cultural broadcasts like cinema programs have between 500 and 1.500 views, Rusen Çakır's daily commentary videos on the political atmosphere of Turkey attract much more public attention. They hang between 20.000 and 50.000; and might get up to 90.000 views, especially in times of political turbulence. Other veteran journalists, such and Kemal Can[13], also get high numbers of views compared to content created by less-experienced journalists. Ironically, most viewed videos of Medyascope.tv on YouTube are the content related to the 15th July coup attempt[14] and not created by Medyascope.tv. But borrowed from other sources with proper references. Although the subscriber and follower numbers of Medyascope.tv seem to be rising, view numbers on its YouTube accounts show another picture. The following chart is created by using the data taken from the Popsters social media analytics tool.

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[13] Kemal Can (1964, Düzce) is a journalist and writer who performed roles as editor, news coordinator, deputy director manager and policy advisor in various media institutions and journals. He worked with mainstream broadcasters such as CNN Türk and NTV. He also wrote and contributed to several books on politics and governance, civil society, and social problems in Turkey. Today he has a regular column in GazeteDuvar, an online and independent journalism platform committed to universal journalism principles

[14] A failed military coup has been staged within the Turkey's army on July 15th, 2016, broadcasted on government television and Armed Forces website with an announcement of a siege and the seizure of government. F-16 planes bombed the parliamentary building in Ankara, and the Bosphorous and Fatih Sultan Mehmet bridges in Istanbul were closed. There was civil outrage on the streets against the attempted coup, together with clashes between the police and soldiers. The conflicts intensified patriotic reactions, discourses on national solidarity and eventually the support for the government. The Islamic community of the Gülen movement (a deeply rooted Islamic organization that is directed by cleric Fetullah Gülen) was held responsible for the coup attempt by the government. Many faced charges against alleged involvement in Gülen movement and the attempted coup, following the announcement of the state of emergency which lasted until July 2018.

Sadly, Popsters only provides daily view data after June 2018. The chart is adjusted to show monthly view numbers for meaningful statistics. It reveals two main things:

1- As the linear trendline suggests, the total view numbers are in steady decline.
2- View numbers peaked during three major events; the mayoral election of Istanbul in June 2019, the first COVID lockdown in early 2020 and Sedat Peker's infamous recordings[15] in May 2021.
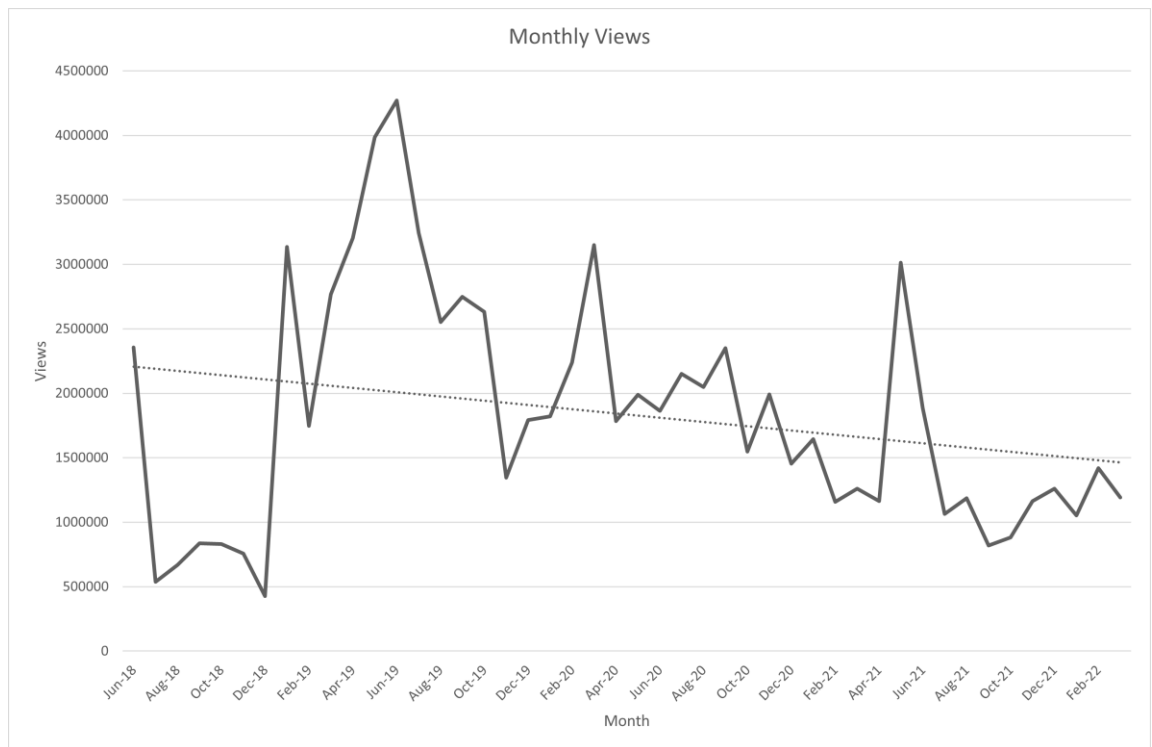
Figure 2. Total view numbers of Medyascope.tv YouTube account

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[15] Sedat Peker (1971, Sakarya) is a businessman and mafia leader convicted of founding and leading an organized crime group. He was trialed and imprisoned several times due to mafia activities relating to organized crime, threat, armed activities/bodily injury, incitement to murder, looting, false imprisonment, deforce, and so on. He recently came to the fore in Turkey's social and political agenda with his scandalous YouTube videos aired between April and June 2020. In those videos, he made a series of allegations on various public figures such as politicians, journalists, and mafia regarding critical issues in Turkish political life, in a way that endangers and annoys the politicians in power as well as other government-aligned circles.

4.2.2. Funding

As Rusen Çakır (2018) states, a major part of the income of Medyascope.tv is funded by different international organizations, including non-governmental organizations and state-funded agencies. On its website, four organizations are currently listed as supporters of Medyascope.tv. It has been observed that three of these foundations, which are the Chrest Foundation from the United States, Heinrich Böll Stiftung from Germany and the State-funded Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, continuously funded Medyascope.tv during the last two years. Current funders also include European Endowment for Democracy (Medyascope.tv n.d.). Among these organizations, only Chrest Foundation openly disclose its award amount, which is $65.000 in 2020 for Medyascope.tv (Chrest Foundation n.d.). Lastly, International Media Support from Denmark, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung from Germany, and Acik Toplum Vakfi (Open Society Foundation) from Turkey have also funded Medyascope.tv in 2019. Still, it seems that these funds are discontinued for the moment.

Apart from international funding, Medyascope.tv uses a crowdfunding platform called Patreon as well as YouTube's 'join' system, where followers subscribe on a monthly payment system. Patreon is an online platform that enables people to support creators in a monthly-paid subscription system. Subscribers are called 'patrons', and they decide how much money they want to donate. Currently, there are more than 6 million active patrons, funding more than 200.000 active projects in the system, and more than 2 billion dollars have been paid to the creators since its enigma in 2013. While getting a 5% fee for its service, Patreon leaves the intellectual property rights of contents completely to the creator. In this system, some creators can choose to only provide content to their subscribers (Patreon n.d.).

It is possible to see the amount of money that Medyascope.tv collects from Patreon, since this part of their income is transparent on their Patreon page (Patreon n.d.). Medyascope.tv has 1155 patrons who grant $7.300 per month as of May 2022. Medyascope.tv's advancement in Patreon supporters demonstrated a significant

growth until July 2021. Since February 2019 and July 2021, supporters of Medyascope on Patreon have risen by 272% and the funds grew by 334% (425 patrons and 2.750$ of income by then). However, since July 2021, it is possible to observe a steady decline both in the numbers of supporters and the total USD amount. Of course, this might be a result of the sudden devaluation of TRY against USD in late 2021, as well as activation of YouTube's join service, which is also a crowdfunding method and easier to use than Patreon for end users. But it should be noted that this decline is also correlated with the total view numbers of Medyascope.tv over YouTube, as shown in the second figure.
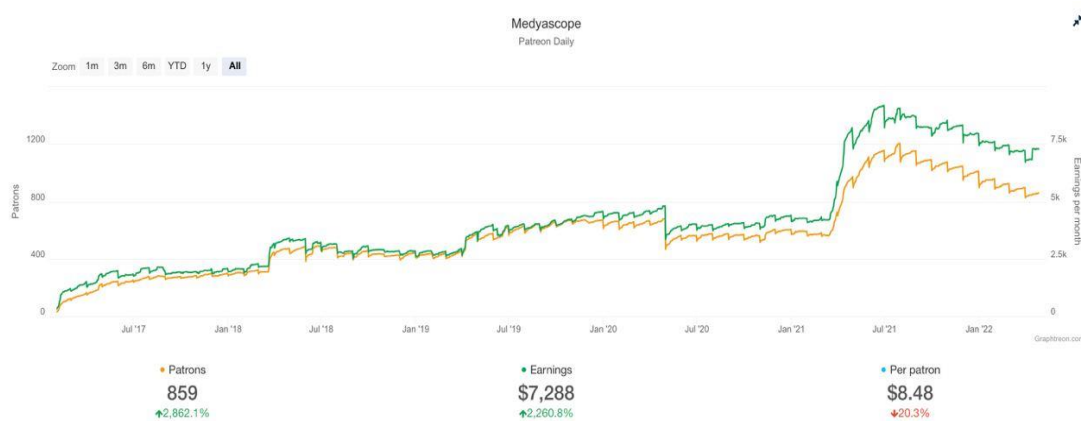
Figure 3. Chart of crowdfunding income of Medyascope.tv on Patreon (Graphtreon 2022).

On its website, Medyascope.tv has an explanation with photos of how people can support them by using Patreon. They also provide a detailed text description of all their videos on YouTube. Medyascope.tv was also accepting financial support in Bitcoin in 2019, but there is no further information about whether they ever get payment in the form of cryptocurrency. It is safe to assume they removed this form of financial support after Turkey's government ban on doing commerce with cryptocurrencies in 2021.

Çakır (2018) states that Medyascope.tv gets equipment donations from its supporters. While showing a progressive line in terms of the amount of content created, as well as studio activities and rising numbers of paid employees, Çakır explains that the funding barely covers the costs. A report from Reuters Institute confirms his statement. The

report mentions Medyascope.tv as one of the digital outlets that operate freely. However, it also points at the fact that these digital outlets do not constitute a sustainable model and "cannot afford to employ full-time, experienced reporters for investigative journalism" (Yanatma 2018, 108). For more information on the forms of digital media funding in Turkey, Karlıdag and Bulut's article (2019), comparatively shows the income sources of 35 different digital media outlets in Turkey.

4.3. Methodology

The analysis is based on the collection of several forms of information through qualitative research methods. To start with, the analysis includes information in and about many different video broadcasts of Medyascope.tv. Annually broadcasted anniversary programs of Medyascope.tv's, for example, contains valuable information about the evolution of the organization and future projections. Ruşen Çakır also casually commentate on Medyascope's vision and history in his daily broadcasted political streams. The analysis thus includes direct, informative references from this Medyascope.tv's video content as well as a cumulative interpretation of their variety. Using this method aims to trace how Medyascope.tv and its vision is identified and performed by its own content and its creators.

The research also extends to participant observation in a two-day workshop that was held in Medyascope.tv's office in Istanbul in December 2019. The author has been selected to participate in the workshop by Medyascope.tv. The event was structured as a mix of a series of presentations. There were presentations from senior journalists about the history and future of journalism in Turkey, their personal experiences as journalists, and technical briefings. During this time, the author found a chance to observe Medyascope.tv's office environment.

One central observation was about the location of the Medyascope.tv, which was in an industrial zone. The place was a two-story building, in which the recording studio was located on the entrance level, and the office was on the first floor. It was an extremely humble and modest place, and it was possible to hear industrial noises in the background. The location was authentic and clearly showing the financial

impossibilities as well as the struggle of independent media. It is also observed that employees were sympathetic about the location as some of them referred the place as "bizim sanayi" which literally means "our industry", showing the internalization and the bonds between the location and the people. It should also be mentioned, of course, that industrial noises were overlapping with the live streams, which is of course, a big problem for a media company. Since the participant observation was limited with the days of the workshop, the environment was greatly altered within the office. A further observation was also planned after the workshop, but it was unavoidably cancelled because of the pandemic restrictions. Therefore, the primary method of research has been shifted to in-depth interviews.

Five semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with four participants. The first series of interviews were conducted between 15.10.2020 and 22.10.2020 in various places in Istanbul, including the former office of Medyascope.tv. The last follow up interview was conducted online on 16.07.2021. A chain-referral sampling method has been utilized to reach critical people within the organization. The interviews took between 30 and 60 minutes, and gender diversity was considered.

One of them being in an executive position, all the interviewees were either employees or former employees of Medyascope.tv. Although some of the interviewees demanded anonymity and some did not, all the interviewees were kept anonymous to prevent future complications. The author emphasizes this since individual security is more important than academic transparency, especially in delicate topics like media freedom in contemporary Turkey. The employees are signified as 'E' (employee) while the executive responder is signified as 'D' (director) in the in-text quotations. Unique initials were not assigned to each responder since the sample in question is a very close community, and it is possible to profile the respondents through repeating labels.

4.4. Findings

All interview questions are formulated respectively to the position and experience of the responders within Medyascope.tv. For example, demographical questions are only

asked to participants who employ executive and coordinator positions in the organization. The scope of the questions and what they are trying to measure can be summed up in four main categories:

1. Fundamental information such as the demography of employees in Medyascope.tv as well as the primary motivations of the workers and directors.
2. Hierarchical structure and the extent of workplace democracy
3. Distribution mechanism of roles and work.
4. Transparency within & of the organization

Without a doubt, all the respondents underlined the most fundamental point that separates Medyascope.tv from mainstream media as the ethical standpoint of the organization, and its aim to achieve decent journalism.

> One of the main differences with the mainstream is the capital structure, there is no patronage here as we know it, and the boss here is a journalist [referring to executives of mainstream media, who are predominantly businessmen]. That is why, contrary to the mainstream, different interests and accounts does not determine the content or the selection of news in this organization. What we do here is honest and pure journalism. (D)

The stance of neutrality and objectivity also establishes the motivation behind the volunteer work of the employees. All the respondents suggested that they started working as volunteers before switching to a full-time job in the organization.

> I started volunteering when I was doing my bachelor's, a couple of days a week, to help. Then the work got intensified, and I did every kind of work there. They offered me a paid position after some time. There was no exploitation of labour, I was engaging voluntarily, and it was an exciting period. (E)

Respondents also underlined the problems of cronyism and the difficulty of finding a job in mainstream media.

> After the transformation of journalism in Turkey, after the concept of partisan journalism began to emerge, Medyascope.tv began to make a difference in this sense. There is no partisanship here but no opposition either. In other words, we are not dissidents; there is such a perception for some reason, Medyascope.tv is not an oppositional medium, an oppositional online

platform; we are a journalism platform, we see ourselves above polarization, and we believe that this is what is needed in Turkey. (D)

Employees stressed this comparative aspect during the interviews, further referencing the turbulent environment in the mainstream media.

> If I compare it with the general media environment, I am satisfied. But there is no such thing as "This is the place where I want to work" I am not satisfied in that sense. I am only satisfied because of the intensive unemployment in the industry. I see many people; whether they are graduate students or experienced journalists, there is a tendency to quit journalism for the people working in the mainstream entirely. While the average number of companies that journalism graduates could enter in the mid-2000s was 20-30, now it is four or five places. Why? Because the central media has already disappeared. Also, journalism is already a very network-based job. And even those four or five places that I mentioned you could find a job in, you enter as an intern, you work for six months or a year for free, and then they say, "we don't need you" after working six months there for nothing. (E)

There were almost identical responses for the job market in the mainstream media. Respondents even provided their personal experiences of hardships in finding a job.

> I wanted to work in mainstream media when I was a university student. But you must know 'some' people to get a job there. Who would they hire if not me as a [very prominent university in Turkey] student! Although they were unpaid positions, all the desks were full of people they 'know'. I also found someone from inside to set me up, but even then, I couldn't get an internship [in mainstream media], and nobody answered my e-mails. (E)

Even though some respondents criticized the organization from the beginning, they also accepted the hardships of having a decent job in journalism.

> I think Medyascope.tv has a lot of shortcomings; I have doubts about both the mistakes made by our institution and how much it will improve from the outside. But when I look at the bright side, I am not unemployed, and I have a job, I can publish news. of course, this is a good thing in such a period. (E)

It is evident that working for Medyascope.tv carries emotional and political drives. All the respondents heavily criticized the industry and interpreted Medyascope.tv as a refuge from the corruption of the mainstream.

> The reason we stay here despite many difficulties is because of our political awareness and the fact that mainstream will not make us happy. No one

necessarily works for Medyascope.tv, even though they want to work in the mainstream. There are many qualified people. I do think that I need to experience the mainstream media one day, but I don't feel like it, and I don't apply. Even though there are many things that I have difficulty with here, I will endure the bad conditions for a while. (E)

In line with this perspective, responses also mention the openness of the Medyascope.tv for the applicants.

> Medyascope.tv is an open place, you apply with an e-mail, and your e-mail is really considered. I seriously doubt that anyone would want to get an internship here and not get a response. […] It is [Medyascope.tv] very open to contribution from young people. There are many undergraduate students supporting and volunteering for the company right now. Especially the people who are familiar with foreign languages are making foreign news. Not all of them are getting paid because Medyascope.tv does not have money. Of course, it's not desirable, but at least it looks good on the CV. (E)

The aspect of Medyascope.tv as a place for education is mentioned in this context on the executive level.

> People who come here think that they can learn something here. Medyascope.tv is also a school for people learning news writing and editorial perspective. We [as executives] have seen everything in this sector; there is a lot we can convey to young people. The person who utilizes us well comes out of here as a journalist and can find a job anywhere. (D)

One of the most important topics that come up in every interview is that Medyascope.tv is in the middle of an institutionalization process. The responses suggest that the organization has taken this decision to grow and eventually employ more people to provide better working conditions. This process of institutionalization brought some changes to the management and production levels.

> Our audio and visual quality has increased because we have invested in technical infrastructure, we have changed the logo, we are moving the Medyascope.tv brand now, for example, we are moving to a plaza in Maslak [a business zone in Istanbul], it has been an upgrade for us, it will be a higher step in terms of brand awareness and reliability. These are essential things for the institutionalization of the brand. (D)

The organization divided production into departments, such as prime news, weekend news, the sports section and so on. A supervision structure was established for each

department. It is reported that after this system, job descriptions for various posts within the organization became more precise, and some form of division of labour was established by departmentalizing the production.

> Back then, there was no hierarchy; now, there is. The company went through a process of institutionalization. It was not a one-day process. The division of labour took effect over time. (E)

The organization became more active in its search for advertisements, and most recently, Medyascope.tv office has moved from its initial location in the industrial area to an office building in a more central place, Maslak.

This unique process of institutionalization was always central in the interviews. Regardless of the position of the interviewee, respondents accepted this process as a transformation. Almost all respondents admitted that the institutionalization process was a requirement in terms of the better organization of a division of labour as well as better coordination in the workplace.

> Now there is no such thing as an "all-equal environment." In the past, it was a non-hierarchical environment. Yes, Ruşen Abi[16] was the manager, but it was really an environment managed with a collective mind. I also remember the meetings at that time; it was an environment where you could fight one-on-one with Ruşen and get him to accept it by saying that "I will cover this news". We weren't taking orders from anyone but him, but that was not a very good thing because people were slacking. Ruşen Abi was not in a position to deal with everyone, everyone was enjoying themselves, and things were slow. It was clear that other managers were needed in the meantime. The required mid-positions got separated, and the news director and the management staff were formed. Now important decisions are taken within this management team; each group has managers to which it is affiliated. These are good, needed. The formation of the hierarchy had positive effects. It did not come to us as a severe authority or pressure; the work became more effective. (E)

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[16] Responders referred to Mr. Ruşen Çakır as "Ruşen Abi" which can be directly translated as "Elder Brother Ruşen". The use of the term 'Abi' signifies a strong sympathy and sincerity between Mr. Ruşen Çakır and his employees. It is not translated and left as it is, since word-to-word translation does not correspond to the sincerity and results with loss of meaning.

Another respondent also underlined the changing hierarchical structures after the institutionalization process. Indeed, it is possible to interpret that the organization was predominantly a more equable place before the institutionalization.

> My first year was very good; there was a more collaborative working environment, there were problems by then too, but mostly the problems were limited to financial impossibilities. At that time, our arrival and departure times would not have been very important. And things would go on without a problem. I think it was not too pressing because the money was too little anyway; at that time, Ruşen Abi was personally training his employees, and he taught me a lot. (E)

But it is possible to observe conflicting views on the outcomes of the process of institutionalization.

> They took a step towards institutionalization, but there was no change in the working terms of journalists. Hierarchical roles were determined, such a system of measures was formed, but these are things that remain on paper, this is still a place where one person makes all the decisions. (E)

There were also responses about the process being not effective as it should over the topic of clarity in job descriptions.

> My job description is not clear, I did not want it to be specific by then anyway, but now I do. By then, we were not an institutional place, [we would say] "there is no hierarchy in here." It was a place where everyone would do every job. (E)

The general criticism towards the process of institutionalization was mainly concerned with the method of it, rather than the necessity.

> What they understand from institutionalization is this: four or five new cameras, comfortable seats, a tea maker. But we are not discussing the content. Where we want to go? Who is our target audience? Neither of these are being discussed. For example, a place like Medyascope does not have a social media manager. (E)

Other reports were concerned about the changing working conditions, lack of proper planning and strict discipline after the institutionalization process.

> The wrong institutionalization, they do not do it maliciously, but they do not know how to manage a place or manage more people well. I mean, everyone

was already working; I do not think there is a need to make people work as soldiers. There wasn't a lot of news and broadcasts when I was there, but there was decent work. After a while, they started to demand more, more news, more broadcasts. You need motivation; you need a reward. Now I think we were doing less, but more qualified work and the attitude of the managers was much better. Now you start doing more work, you make more concessions to yourself, and employers are still not happy about it; they always want more. (E)

From a researcher's perspective, there is a precise rupture from an organization that is education oriented and modest to a media corporation. Though, it became evident that this process develops somewhat unsettled. The following questions were asked to the interviewee who is employed in an executive position:

How many people are being employed in the organization? How many people are working as volunteers? What is the range of age, gender and education level among employees and volunteers?

As basic as these questions might seem, they accomplished to reveal some interesting aspects related to HR management of the organization. There is no established HR department, and it was not possible to reach out to demographic data. Showing a lack of data management policy, statistics have not been kept, and it required to manually extract these numbers, which was not possible for a researcher from outside.

It is possible to reach at least some numbers from annual broadcasts of Medyascope.tv. Every August, executives of Medyascope announce yearly updates of the organization, sharing rough statistics about employees, as well as what is accomplished through the years and the future roadmap. In the last program Sedat Pisirici (2021) stated that 116 people are contributing to Medyascope, 90 of which are either paid on a monthly basis or working freelance on copyright basis. The breakout of these numbers is as follows:

- Four directors
- Three managers
- 56 journalists (42 of them are on salary and 14 on freelance)
- Five contributors (working on translation and transcription tasks)

- 45 programmers (26 of them freelance and 19 of them are voluntary)
- Three sponsored programmers

These numbers reveal a fundamentally problematic distribution of roles within the organization. Oddly, Medyascope.tv does not employ people that specifically deal with social media management. However, the whole operation is built on social media platforms and would require multiple people to be employed.

Another critical position that is lacking is a community manager, who deals with issues that arise on live broadcast chatrooms as well as general community engagement. Below, a screenshot of a live broadcast with chatroom included is available. In this broadcast, it is possible to observe a trolling activity in the live chat, in which people are spamming M. KEMAL ATATURK[17] and RTE consecutively[18]. Among them, a contributor to the channel (spottable with its green nickname) asks about if anyone was there to moderate the chat. In the following image, the same person announces that he won't continue to support Medyascope.tv because of the lack of moderation. By saying, "Medyascope, I condemn you, and I unfollow and unsubscribe the channel".

[17] M. Kemal refers to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881, Thessaloniki), the founder and the first President of the Turkish Republic. He served as the president of Turkey from 1923 until he died in 1938. He fostered secular ideology along with Turkish nationalism; introduced progressive reforms in line with Westernization and modernization. His revolutionary reforms and ideological approach impacted the Turkish social, economic, and cultural life deeply. He is considered one of the most influential political figures in history and still championed by most of the Turkish society.

[18] RTE is the abbreviation for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (1954, İstanbul), the 12th President of the Turkish Republic. Following his term as mayor of İstanbul between 1994 and 1998, he founded the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2001 which came to power without needing the support of a coalition in the following elections. After serving as a prime minister for eleven years, he became the first elected president of Turkey in 2014 and gave up the AKP leadership only to take it back through the constitutional referendum in 2017. The referendum resulted with the regime change in Turkey from a parliamentary to a presidential system. He still continues his duties as the president of Turkey to this day.

Image 1. Troll activity on Medyascope.tv live chat during a live coverage by Ruşen Çakır.
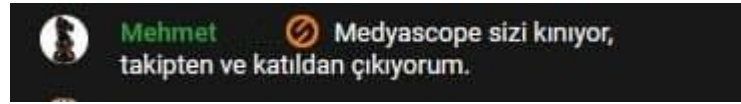
Image 2. A contributor's criticism towards the moderation of live chat.

In the follow-up interviews, it was reported that an employee had been designated to manage the live chat more recently. However, it was suggested that this task is not the primary responsibility of that employee. Both the common sense and the evidence indicate that there is an underlying problem of adaptation to the digital, as these roles related to communications and digital management are being filled as side tasks rather than full-time positions.

This aspect also extends into the organization's inability to utilize proper technology. With the current state of software, it is quite easy to create a community desk that can include both Patreon and YouTube contributors on platforms like Discord, which provide exposure to the organization for extensive feedback from contributors. This issue is further elaborated on in the discussion chapter. To return to the problematic of role distribution within the organization, the following question was asked:

Are there people explicitly dedicated to managing social media channels? If not, who does?

This question not only revealed there is no social media manager position in the organization but also that there is an ambiguity in job descriptions. There were multiple reports of employees doing more than one job, most of the time in exchange for their time off. It has also been reported that the workload is not equally distributed among the employees.

> You have the initiative in all the production stages of news [for instance], I go and make the news, shoot it, montage it, upload it to YouTube, and write the article. This is bad on the one hand, but good on the other; you feel that you are trusted, but on the other hand, you are alone doing the work of five people. (E)

Çakır states Medyascope.tv's mission is to employ as much people as possible in order to bring a solution for the corruption in mainstream media, which causes unemployment for the people that are excluded. The cluster of "excluded" is very broad, and it is mainly composed of new graduates and senior journalists that lost their jobs because of their questioning of government policies. Clearly, Medyascope.tv decided between either employing a few people with better conditions or employing more people with less desirable conditions. Although the findings show this decision supported many people when they could not find a job in their junior years, it also created a serious set of problems as the organization grew.

> My salary is extremely low; this is valid for everyone who works here. It is not a salary that can even be called a low salary; this is the breadline. It is very disturbing, but the working principle of Medyascope.tv is to give a chance to everyone. They could have reduced the staff to ten people and given much better salaries, but this is a very difficult place to find and work in Turkey. A place of real and honest journalism. That's why it is a place that keeps the staff crowded to give a chance to as many people as possible. Then you have to divide that money. That is why we work in very bad conditions, so what we are doing right now is not making money but trying to survive. (E)

Without exception, all interviewee's addressed the problem of low wages.

> The wages are very low, and Ruşen Abi has an opinion of not employing experienced journalists. Instead, he tries to give the opportunity to young people. That is why they fill tens of young people for very little wages or as interns. There is a team of 40-50 people here, but the Cumhuriyet newspaper

is published with 40-50 people, for example. This team actually needs to produce much more. (E)

Employees were strongly critical about the salaries, up to the point where they expressed many co-workers would prefer to leave if they could find another "ethically decent" media platform outside Medyascope.tv.

In a program two years ago, they told us that "our first job is to increase salaries", but they did not increase it in two years. 90% of the employees are sure that they will not increase it for two more years. Whoever can find another decent job just leaves. (E)

On top of that, it was reported that Medyascope.tv administration does not allow their journalists to get involved with freelance work outside the organization. It should be noted that the wage gap between executives and journalists is minimal, which gives some form of consolation for the underpaid personnel.

Salaries are the minimum wage; we cannot go above it. We are not in a position to compete with the mainstream media; even their advertising revenue is incredible numbers. At least we can pay salaries and get insurance for our employees. But this is not enough; we also want to increase salaries; now, we are working on a salary scale [according to seniority] and trying to create a strategy accordingly. We could employ, for example, only ten people here and pay much better salaries, but we don't want that. (D)

The problem of salaries is accepted at the executive level. There are two major pleas:

1- The organization provides more vacancies by distributing the funding among more people.
2- That the funding is limited, and the organization needs more financial sources to raise wages.

Of course, this is paradoxical. Given how much funding the organization receives, it will not be enough to raise salaries as the organization will always try to employ more people. Multiple interviewees reflected their concern on this issue as well. Concerns include the potential of the high number of employees is being wasted, as well as ongoing coordination problems and uneven distribution of workload.

70-80% of the employees work for the minimum wage; you cannot pay a minimum wage to a person and ask for three times the job. That person would do [the equivalent of] a minimum wage job, or not even if there's nothing to motivate that person. Secondly, I think they manage the economy very poorly because it is also a product of that old-fashioned mindset—for example, the recent topic of moving the office to Maslak. Okay, you do not give that money to staff, but at least renew the infrastructure, get a social media manager, etc. For example, if the microphones get broken, they are just saying, "we will see". It's funny indeed, in the end; apparently, there were some discussions among the executives on how to use the resource at hand. (E)

These debates are closely related to the overall funding mechanism of Medyascope.tv. The following questions are directed to the interviewee who is in the executive position:

What is your income from institutional funding? Why is this information not available to the public while your Patreon income is transparent?

The answer to this question was somewhat puzzling; it was reported that all the income of the organizations is transparent to the Ministry of Treasury and Finance of Turkey and could be provided to the author if demanded. However, the question was not strictly about numbers but rather the transparency of the organization to the public. It is also recorded that the employees were also not informed about the organization's financial flow.

The fiscal office knows every funding we have. we can give the numbers to you too if you want? If you are wondering, let me tell you how much money we get from the funds. We do not believe that it is necessary to put it on the page because, for example, there are institutions where we receive 3000, 4000, and some minor support. There is no need to publish all of them in detail. We have already published the leading institutions; from whom we have received money from. Sometimes we talk between us about whether to make it all public, but there is no need. At least that's what we've decided for now. But in the end, these are the money deposited in your official bank account, with such a standard contract signed. All of them come in instalments, and their audits are done. It has a severe reporting, bureaucracy and inspection process, and we pay our taxes for them. (D)

This aspect became an issue even before this thesis was written. In July 2021 (approximately nine months after the interviews), there was a public debate about

Medyascope.tv's sources of international funding from NGOs (Cumhuriyet 2021). Medyascope.tv responded to the accusations with the argument that the information was public all along. This was technically correct since the funding in question was in fact, publicly available on the related NGO's website. However, including the debated one, detailed information on funding resources is not available on Medyascope.tv website except for the names of the NGOs. When the question of why this information was not available through Medyascope.tv's website, the answer was that the executives had taken the decision that it was "unnecessary" to announce them as they took many fundings in different proportions.

The problem of transparency also extends to intra-organizational practices. Employees are not being informed about each other's salaries, as well as there is no established system for determining wages. Though, this issue is also addressed by the executive as there will be a policy implemented to determine wages on more objective criteria.

It was also acknowledged that the organization is heavily dependent on outside funding and could not survive for long without them in its current disposition.

> We are currently an organization that can only operate with outside funding because we do not receive advertisement income. Our current YouTube website etc, revenues are not enough to carry out an operation of this scale, maybe in two or three years. Of course, the basic expectation of all these funding institutions from us to be able to stand on our own after a point. (D)

Responses from the employees on the same topic were rather pessimistic.

> This is an organization that cannot survive if the funding is cut, one way or another, it has no continuity. but I think it will continue for ten more years, just the same. (E)

Another set of questions that relate to funding was directed to the executive:

Has the organization's funding been cut unexpectedly before? Do you have a backup plan to set in motion in such a situation? What will be the first items to cut back if such a situation occurs?

The organization has never been in a position where funding is unexpectedly interrupted and does not have a backup plan for such occasions. It is reported that the first item to cut would be laying off personnel, which also adds a layer of contradiction to the vacancy dilemma.

> We don't have a contingency plan, Medyascope.tv has an annual budget, we can predict next year, but we haven't planned for the following year yet. Salaries are not high here anyway; everyone gets very small amounts. But our goal should, of course, be to increase the wages we can give to the personnel, for this we need to increase our income. We know that outside funding doesn't last forever. We're looking at revenue boosters. Should we set up a sales department? How can we make more money on YouTube etc.? (D)

Multiple responses have also been recorded, which points to coordination and management problems within Medyascope.tv. Lack of technological adaptation and backup planning, as well as uneven distribution of workload, can be shown as examples of these problems.

Another important problem is mobbing, which is also directed as a question to the responders. Multiple reports have been made regarding both hierarchical mobbing cases as well as mobbing between peers.

> I was lucky compared to others in terms of mobbing, but I witnessed it happening. Especially about the arrival and departure times of new entrants. Or requesting more work etc. It has not happened to me personally. (E)

Some of these cases extend to even be considered harassment.

> When a new manager came, the place turned into a military camp. I was exposed to mobbing for at least eight-nine months. I was going home and having nervous breakdowns. I was making the news, but my news was not being published. There were also people who were pressured even more than me. This was causing self-confidence problems in people. (E)

Reports also suggest that in such extreme cases, decisive action has been taken by the management team, and the victim is protected in a quick manner.

> I can say that the behaviour of a manager, which amounted to mobbing, has been resolved by the management in favour of the victim without any further problems (E)

Other and milder cases, however, show normalization of mobbing in the workplace.

> These are people who have worked in the mainstream for years, people who are very much in the media industry; of course they know that there is mobbing, but they do not think that mobbing is such a big problem. They are approaching as if there is mobbing everywhere. (E)

The last set of questions are related to governance mechanisms, and they were asked to measure decision-making processes as well as to investigate workplace hierarchy further:

How do you select which news to be published? Is it possible for an employee to take the initiative, or a supervisor is always needed for confirmation? Is editorial review always required before publishing news?

Answers to this question indicate that personal initiative and input are taken into consideration. Confirmation is always needed, so it is not possible to speak of autonomous decision making. The decisions are being made in daily meetings and finalized by the news directors of the related department.

> We hold a news meeting at 10 am every morning; all employees attend, and assignments are made here depending on the day's agenda. In addition, all our reporters have their own topics; everyone specifies what they will follow and do. Sometimes the suggested news may not be accepted; it's not that we don't like the news, the news came out that day somewhere, or it is not suitable for that day, or we do not want it, we may not feel the need. All of these are decided at daily morning meetings. […] The agendas are already gathered before the meeting, and it is almost clear what to do. If the reporters believe that another news topic should really be covered and they can convince me, I can persuade the editor-in-chief at the meeting to make the news. (D)

In order to further elaborate on how the selection of news is decided within the organization, the question of whether the ratings of broadcasts are important is directed to the respondents.

> I wish the rating was critical even a little bit. Even if we do not go beyond the principle, we do not spend a lot of effort to make people watch something; valuable content is getting wasted with few views. They don't care about the rating so much that the programs don't even have a proper advertisement or title. If you have made a very good video, even the time and day you put that

video online is important on social media; no attention is paid to this; they post it early in the morning saying, "let's put it up." Due to the busyness of the day, we do this a little sloppy so that it will get out of the way. There is almost no worry about viewership numbers. There are programs made just because they have archival value. (E)

The discussion on decision making mechanisms revealed an interesting and important outcome, that is the "old-fashioned mindset" of organizations' management. This issue is also discussed during the interviews when the topic of remote working practices was mentioned due to force majeure of the pandemic conditions. Firstly, the transition to remote working is explained at the executive level.

We have integrated working from home due to the pandemic. We handled it quickly; we sent non-essential personnel right after the first incident was announced in Turkey, and within one week, we resolved the issue and sent everyone home. We gave internet connection to the directors. Actually, there is no need for an office physically; we saw that clearly. But I come to the office every day regardless, I cannot work from home; this is not such a job; journalism is not such a job to work from home; you must pursue the news. (D)

A follow-up question, whether the organization would keep a mixed modal of remote working after the pandemic, was directed to fully grasp the future prospects of the organization.

We are old-fashioned, both Ruşen and I are a little old-fashioned, but we have seen that, in this new generation, these things do not work like that. You can't tell the new generation of young people that, for instance, we don't say come at 8, we say come at 10, but still, they can't keep up. I've never even been sick in my life; I've never been late for a job or meeting. That's why I was surprised here when I heard people say, "I couldn't wake up". This is literally used to be a reason for dismissal. But it means this is the new generation; we adapt ourselves. The meeting is at 10:30, for example. This is very similar to working from home practices. After all, as long as the content comes, it doesn't matter where it is made from, but coming to the office is also a good thing for people. Work is done in the office, and there is socialization between the personnel as well. We keep up with the era; we don't look through blinders. (D)

While the "old-fashioned perspective" is acknowledged on the executive level along with a defence of keeping up with the era, some responses from the employees were highly critical about this aspect.

Since the founders of Medyascope were former journalists, that old mindset always stays in place. They apply exactly what they saw in the past. What they understand from new media is, "OK, I'm broadcasting from YouTube therefore I am new media". We are now doing what television does; the only difference is that we do it on YouTube, and this is "new". I don't think it's new. For example, the prime news bulletin was discussed a lot. How many people watch a 45-minute prime news bulletin on Medyascope? Probably three. Why are we doing it then? Just because. (E)

The same respondent also mentioned the insufficiency of using available digital tools to further strengthen the communication of Medyascope.tv with its follower base.

Why don't we create spaces that connect the reader with the audience? For example, why don't we do something like this on WhatsApp? Just because. That's how they experienced it before. [Follow up questions were directed if this topic is open for deliberation within the organization.] It is discussed, of course, but at the end of the discussion, the decision-making mechanism is not something that works very democratically. (E)

Finally, there were two completely different anticipations about the future of the organization. On the executive level, it is possible to say that future prospects were confident and determined.

We need to institutionalize in journalism if we want to make money, if we want to give people more money, etc. There are many formulas for this; for example, my dream for Medyascope.tv is that there would be a civil society arm completely focused on education. (D)

However, some responses from the employees were much more personal and carried emotional aspects.

More important than the low wages, this occurred in my mind: I felt like this place would never value me. (E)

Another response, which is less personal than the last one is also very pessimistic about the future of the organization, or any chance for a structural change.

Right now, I feel like this is the case here; there is no possibility of going further here; there is no such possibility. But of course, opening such a space in the media, that is, broadcasting live from Periscope, showing that journalism is possible by using new media tools, or trying to create an alternative to this business without advertising income, somehow shows a way, tries something. All of these are very positive, of course. (E)

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This last quotation is especially important as it is also correlated with the following discussion chapter of the thesis. Without being as pessimistic as the respondent's comment, the author also agrees with the initial innovative perspective, which is deserted as the organization moves forward.

4.5. Discussion

Following a similar arrangement with theoretical and conceptual background, Medyascope.tv is evaluated firstly through the aspect of its digitalization. Then, its organizational dynamics and their coherence with the theory of social economy is discussed.

As Ünal (2017, 86 - 87) reports, the use of Periscope for journalistic purposes is an important aspect while analysing Medyascope.tv. It was a pioneer in using the platform, and this kind of structural innovation is rooted in the relative success that Medyascope.tv has achieved. The use of Patreon also strengthens this innovative approach. Although Çakır initially did not have great expectations from crowdfunding, as Ünal (2017, 96) also mentions. It is still possible to claim that crowdfunding was relatively successful as it provides at least a stable income.

The problem at this point surfaces as this innovative approach is discontinued. Although Medyascope.tv started its broadcasts with Periscope, one of the most niche social media platforms, it did not continue to explore novel digital tools like Telegram, Tiktok and Discord, but instead, kept on with more exposed platforms such as YouTube, Twitter etc. Using these platforms is not a mistake in itself, but limiting the scope of an organization with these popular platforms is a serious limitation. The lack of exploration of novel platforms and tools invalidates the distinctness of Medyascope.tv and, in a sense, puts it in a position of traditional media since they all catch up with these platforms and provide a similar mode of broadcasting. The only difference from traditional media at this point became the product, as in the content that is created and disseminated by Medyascope.tv

In terms of the content created by Medyascope.tv, it varies and remains relevant for many marginalized communities in Turkey's society. There are many programs and broadcasts that specifically focus on women's rights and issues of LGBT+. Other 'marginated' topics such as The Kurdish question[19], academics in distress[20], various topics concerning refugees, and visibility of people outside of government imposed religious space are also frequently visited and mentioned regularly on different programs. These aspects are positioning Medyascope.tv in a very tight spot, as some of them might be considered dangerous to even mention in the political atmosphere of Turkey. As it is mentioned in previous chapters, there are also regular interviews with the heads and representatives of opposition parties, who literally cannot find any place on mainstream media. In a sense, surviving the political pressure and keeping up with these broadcasts might be the most significant success of Medyascope.tv.

Still, a more profound discussion is required to systematically assess Medyascope.tv's compatibility with the theory of social economy. Formerly provided, six main criteria are used for this assessment.

- No capital accumulation: It is hard to reveal if the organization accumulates capital or not since the financials are not public. Thereby it becomes apparent that a lack of transparency also accompanies the question of capital accumulation. However, both

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[19] Having a long political history starting from the Ottoman Empire era and the ethnic policies employed in the starting years of the Turkish Republic, the Kurdish question still poses a key struggle in Turkish democratization. Defining citizenship through Turkish ethnic identity, Turkification policies, restrictions and bans on Kurdish language and culture all contributed to the evolution of the issue to this day. Kurdish populations thus engaged in several uprisings as well. However, 1990's marks an important turn in the intensification of armed conflicts between Turkey's army and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party), which is recognized as a terrorist organization not only by Turkey, but also by many developed countries and international bodies such as USA, EU, UK and so on. Since then, conflicts surge in the South-eastern part of Turkey, as well as with increased political repression imposed on Kurdish politicians and mayors, journalists, activists, etc. under the AKP rule.
For more information, please see: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20971100

[20] More than 2000 academics in Turkey published an open letter titled "We Will Not Be a Party to This Crime!" on 11 January 2016 as a reaction to the human rights violations and civil deaths caused during the conflicts in the predominantly Kurdish regions of Turkey. The letter demanded reawakening of the 'peace process' aimed at solving the Kurdish question, starting with the removal of curfew in conflicted cities. After the publication of the letter, academics have started to be dismissed from their jobs under terrorism charges. They were then linked with the charges related to the attempted military coup of July 15th, 2016, as well.

personal observations and interviews suggest that the resources are directed to the development of the organization. Although the type of these developments is not very befitting, it is still not likely that the resources are used to accumulate personal capital.

- Human resources management: While the income of Medyascope.tv remains insufficient for employing experienced investigative journalists, this circumstance resulted in a positive impact as it protected the organization from outside influence and enabled the creation of its own intellectual tradition. Medyascope.tv's role as a 'school of journalism' came up many times during the interviews, as well as it is mentioned in various broadcasts by the executives. Newly graduated journalists are recruited more often, and the organization maintains a certain rotation in the recruitment process, letting the junior journalists switch to other – mostly bigger or traditional – organizations. It is also suggested that the future plans of Medyascope.tv might include dividing the organization into two parts, which would enable focusing on production and education aspects simultaneously.

- Good governance and accountability: There are two aspects to this item. The first aspect is engaged management, and the second one is the organization's independency from outside influence. Both items are applicable to Medyascope.tv. Both the interviews and observation suggest that the executives of the organization are highly engaged, both as managers as well as content creators for the organization. For example, all the interviews indicated that Ruşen Çakır is the most hardworking person in the organization, which is also observable as he has recorded daily broadcasts since the genesis of the organization. The part of independency is also applicable, as it is mentioned before, which creates the biggest challenge for the organization as well.

- Working for the common good: This one is straightforward. It is not hard to claim that an organization that is trying to sustain independent journalism in an authoritarian country where journalists are arrested on a daily basis is working for the common good. The aspect of providing employment is also very important in this sense, as Medyascope.tv creates jobs for the recently graduated people in a country where youth unemployment is above 27% (International Labour Organization 2020).

- Cooperation between other organizations: This item is controversial on different levels. Although Medyascope.tv is the pioneer in the online independent journalism environment, there are currently many other journalists involved within this space and broadcasting on a daily basis. Medyascope.tv had close ties with Ünsal Ünlü's broadcasts, for example. His videos took place on Medyascope.tv's website, but not as a united content. These broadcasts had de-facto support of Medyascope.tv and were not included as exclusive content. While this might be a positive factor as it keeps the space decentralized, it was also possible to keep this engagement closer as well as include other independent journalists like Nevşin Mengü in a broader umbrella setting and could continuously support it. This criticism is not completely directed to Medyascope.tv, but to the overarching ecosystem of independent journalism space in Turkey. Another critique in this sense, which can be directed to Medyascope.tv this time, might be the barrier that the organization created for its workers, denying the right to freelance for external press agencies.

- The last item for the evaluation concerns the community strength and grassroots-level decision-making mechanisms, which remains the most problematic among others. The workers are included in the daily press meetings, and they are provided with a ground to speak up. However, it is observed that these meetings are not optimized to increase workers' involvement in the decision-making mechanisms, which creates an extremely limited ground for workplace democracy. A bigger criticism in this sense is the complete lack of ground for participation for the supporters and the wider audience. YouTube comments and live chats during the broadcasts are ridiculously inefficient for providing consumer feedback. There are some irregular programs that try to provide this space to the audience, but they are also very limited and do not create room for improvement and active audience engagement. Worst of all, there are very easy solutions to these problems, which are even embedded in the platforms that the organization utilize. The lack of know-how and dismissal of key roles within the organization create this massive problem which is a bottleneck for the overall development of the organization.

An important point to discuss at this juncture is the previous ethnographic research of Kulaber, which she commenced in 2017. Kulaber's work is not previously mentioned because it was necessary to present the findings of this thesis in order to engage in this discussion. Similar to this thesis, Kulaber also comes to find out about both the lack of community engagement as well as the "lack of discussion" [within the organization], among many other findings. Regrettably, she has not pursued these problems further except for some remarks.

> I don't think that if all the members come together discuss and share opinion with Ruşen Çakır, it will be ignored. However, the team doesn't come together about discussions and individual suggestions are neglected. At this point, it is acceptable that Ruşen Çakır is a quite busy name and he cannot allow time for such discussions rather than broadcasts. Some team members come up with an idea as a solution. Provided that between the ages of 30-40 years of professional journalism experience, a few more names attend the organization, it would be better to build a bridge (Kulaber 2017).

Obviously, this proposal was partly commenced by Medyascope.tv, since what is explained above is very similar to the process of institutionalization that the organization undertook. That is, establishing mediators between Ruşen Çakır and inexperienced journalists within the hierarchy of the organization. However, it resulted with a regression rather than an improvement.

Regardless, her work still provides great ethnographic insight about Medyascope.tv, both as a preliminary document which affirms the initial hypothesis of non-hierarchical character, as well as the modesty of the organization in general. She also points out the Internet's character and calls for further research on the process of digitalization that Medyascope.tv experienced. Hopefully, this thesis might present such work as it is much more focused on the connections between the digital, social and economic aspects.

Finally, it is also important to briefly explain some other examples of independent media as they are mentioned a couple of times in the former chapters. The two most comparable channels within the independent media are the ones created by Nevşin Mengü and Ünsal Ünlü. Ünsal Ünlü's channel is a one-man operation and, therefore,

structurally collides with the scope of this thesis. However, its audience overlap with Medyascope'.tv's and the method of online broadcasting is similar. Nevşin Mengü, on the other hand, performs a small operation with regular backing in terms of technology, design, and content; of which conditions are unknown to the author. Its audience and broadcast methodology, though, again overlap with Medyascope.tv's and therefore comparable in some aspects.

Regarding the item of community engagement, both examples show a superior stance against Medyascope.tv. Ünsal Ünlü maintains a personal dialogue with his audience throughout the episodes. On his daily broadcasts, he reads comments from the community and combines them with his commentary and news content in a dialogue. He also organizes frequent broadcasts that target answering questions of the audience. On the offline side, he participates in meetings with local communities and keeps a close communication with his audience on a physical level. Nevşin Mengü also maintains a focused community engagement during the broadcasts by incorporating an enormous amount of community feedback, and gives personal responses to the audience. Her broadcasting style as an anchor-woman mixed with cranky commentaries provides a rather personal and flexible space for the audience, in contrast to Medyascope.tv's more formal space.

There are many other platforms that operate in a similar setting but do not fulfil this work's scope in different aspects. As a much more popular anchor-man, Cüneyt Özdemir also uses a similar branding to Nevşin Mengü and Ünsal Ünlü, with a small operational team and limited community engagement. Yavuz Oğhan also tries to manage an independent operation on YouTube, as well as his failing attempt of online newspaper "Gazete Pencere" since it is intrinsically copying digital versions of mainstream newspapers. 140journos, on the other hand, might be considered as innovative in its roots but practically evolved into a corporation that publishes political advertisements instead of journalism content. The novelty 140journos created was similar to the Medyascope.tv in its early years. They utilized Whatsapp as a news platform, which was also a pathbreaking approach in utilizing social media. The constant change of their main platforms (from Twitter and Facebook to Whatsapp, and

then Youtube) made them more dynamic. But in the end, corporate decisions seemed to deprive it of its dynamism, and it became stable as a political documentary platform on Youtube.

The essence of the novelty, in this sense, is the use of technology for a creation of a space. Instead of using social media as a mere tool, both Medyascope.tv and 140journos proactively utilized its spatial aspects in their early years. All the other examples, as well as the current disposition of Medyascope.tv and 140journos, manifest a reactive approach instead of a proactive one. Çakır's admittance as "Medyascope.tv is the new mainstream media in Turkey" actually comes into existence but in a negative sense. They all use rusty and "mainstream" digital platforms and do not push forward for uncharted territories, while it was the main essence of their relative success.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The main research questions that are explored in this thesis are formulated around the digitalization of a local organization, Medyascope.tv. Firstly, the digitalization of society, public sphere and media are explained. This epistemology reveals the sociological roots of the thesis. Without that foundation, the research would be limited in the scope of organizations and could easily slip into the realm of business administration. On top of that background, models of social economy are presented since it also requires the examination of the organizational aspect.

In this framework, the question of how Medyascope.tv utilizes digital tools and spaces are analysed. The fieldwork not only revealed the incapacities within the digital spectrum, but also some notional failures during the process of institutionalization. Started as an organization that is highly disruptive to the traditional form of media production, it is possible to claim that Medyascope.tv relapsed into those forms that are fundamentally contradictory to its genesis. In consequence, it became another mainstream media outlet within Turkey's digital sphere in terms of its organizational context.

Before final remarks, there are three big limitations that should be touched upon. First, the author can not stress how damaging was the COVID pandemic upon this thesis. Because of the pandemic restrictions, the entire research method had to change. Not being able to observe the workplace enough when the topic of workplace democracy is so vital was greatly impairing for the entire thesis. Secondly, an audience perspective could be provided to involve the other side of the screen, thus making the

thesis more engaging for the reader by widening the general approach beyond the limits of the intra-organizational perspective. Finally, it would be better to focus less on Medyascope.tv and include other independent media initiatives, which would shift the scope of the research from meso to a macro level. Yet, it would provide more consistent outcomes with a comparative perspective. This might still be a fruitful path for the researchers that take on the quest for further research in the field.

Upon these, this research includes six years of consistent online monitoring of the content and the author's personal interpretation of the organization's evolution. The author must emphasize that a research journey that started with egalitarian assumptions that are purely based on an idealistic vision resulted in a disappointment that is profoundly upsetting to the author.

Content wise, Medyascope.tv is still one of the main pillars of free speech in Turkey's media. Though in overall, Medyascope.tv does not create the space for public deliberation, or to say the least, its attempts remain extremely feeble. It only tries to elaborate on the existing media channels like creating short videos for YouTube and organizing Twitter spaces, but these do not carry the novelty of using alternative platforms like using Periscope initially. Instead, they remain as mere attempts to improve the platforms where Medyascope.tv already operates on a regular basis.

When did things start to get problematic then? The answer to this question is somewhat clear to the author. The organization's decision to become more institutionalized can be considered an important break in this sense. Even though the manoeuvre might be justified, its methods and the general path of this phase of institutionalization were shaped around as a reproduction of the establishment in terms of digital innovation and space creation. As the centralization and hierarchy intensified, the organization slowly lost its flexibility to adapt in the ever-changing environment of the digital sphere. Workers' inclusion in the decision-making process' got limited, the poor use of digital tools created a bottleneck for the audience, and the organization did not even provide a solid and sustainable ground for feedback. The absence of key roles such as

social media and community managers as well as researchers choked the organization to bring up these mechanisms, and overall, it went into regression.

As it is stated before, the transparency issue is also one of the main problems Medyascope.tv has been facing. During this research, the organization suffered greatly from the transparency issue as a defamatory campaign is committed by many government-supported media outlets, questioning the legitimacy of Medyascope.tv's international funding. These allegations were mostly debunked; however, it further revealed the issue of transparency as it would not become an issue if these funding sources were more open to the audience and regularly updated.

It is clear that independent media relies on crowdfunding as well as outside funding from non-governmental organizations. Overall, the space of independent media in Turkey shows a decentralized character. Yet, the financial framework it operates in is highly centralized and directly connected to existing economic structures. In the long term, independent media can only be sustained with independent financial facilitation.

This thesis contributes to the fields of digitalization, as well as the utilization of social economy within a framework of political sociology and communication. In this context, further research might reveal alternative forms to facilitate financial independence in a sustainable, robust, and decentralized manner.

For better or worse, Medyascope.tv still operates in a rather dangerous arena with the political content it publishes. Beyond the criticism of this research, its positive outcomes such as providing job opportunities and its contribution to free speech cannot be ignored. Along with the crowdfunding model that Medyascope.tv adopted as a pioneer, these two main aspects were the main drives in the emergence of this thesis. As it is clear now, since various crowdfunding models are being utilized in the sphere of independent media in Turkey, crowdfunding mechanisms are very useful and applicable. Although it is overarching the scope of this research, it is also possible to argue that these methods of community funding will be much more relevant in the future as the Internet technologies progress. Beyond the veil of speculative markets of cryptocurrency, blockchain technology provides the necessary tools in different ways

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of community involvement. The experiments in these emerging technologies are not limited to community funding but also stretch out to methods of community governance and even community ownership. This thesis and the example of Medyascope.tv clearly shows the importance and efficiency of implementing these experimental and novel technologies into delicate issues that might bring very positive and progressive outcomes in areas such as freedom of speech in an authoritarian setting.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMITEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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29 Eylül 2020

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Helga Rittersberger-Tılıç

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız Uğur DÜLGER'in *"Dijital Gazetecilik'te Sosyal Ekonomi Modeli'nin Sürdürülebilirliği"* başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve **277-ODTU-2020** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
İAEK Başkanı

B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Demographic questions:

- How many people are employed in the workplace?

- How many people work as volunteers?

- How is the age / gender / education level distribution of the employees?

2. Funding questions:

- What is your income from institutional funding?

- Why is the amount of institutional funding information not available to the public while your Patreon income is transparent?

- Have the organization's funding been cut unexpectedly before? Do you have a backup plan to set in motion in such situation? What will the first items to cutback if such situation occurs?

3. Questions on content creation and hierarchical structure:

- How do you select which news to be published?

- Is it possible for an employee to take initiative or a supervisor is always needed for confirmation?

- Is editorial review always needed before publishing news?

- Are the view numbers and ratings considered in the decision-making processes of which content to be produced?

4. Questions on management and workplace democracy:

- Have you had to lay off an employee? How / by whom was the decision made?

- How do you decide on hiring new people?

- Are there people dedicated specifically to for managing social media channels?

- Are employee salaries transparent?

- According to what / by whom are the salary rates determined?

- Have you had problems with your co-workers?

- How are these problems resolved by management?

- Is there a sharp hierarchy between management and employees?

C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Toplumun dijitalleşmesi ile çoğulculuk, katılımcı yönetişim ve bilgiye eşit erişim kavramlarının ön plana çıktığı görülmektedir. Ancak popülist hükümetlerin yükselişi ve dijital teknolojileri kullanmalarıyla birlikte bu gelişmelerin olumsuz etkileri de olduğu göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır. Bu olumsuz sonuçlar dezenformasyonun yaygınlaşması, yalan haber ve dolayısıyla post-hakikat rejimi olarak kendini göstermektedir.

Bu tez üç ana bölümden oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölüm, dijitalleşme tartışması için teorik bir arka plan sağlar. Bu bölüm Manuel Castells'in ağ toplumu fikri üzerinden dijitalleşen toplumu, Habermasçı anlayışla dijitalleşen kamusal alanı ve son olarak dijitalleşen medyayı açıklar. Bu bölümdeki teorik yapı, tezde tartışılan konular için bir arka plan oluşturmakta, dolayısı ile hayati önem taşımaktadır.

Ağ toplumu teorisini ortaya atan Manuel Castells, teknolojik dönüşümü bir devrim olarak tanımlamaktadır (Castells 2010). Ancak herhangi bir değişim, ister uzun ister kısa bir dönemi kapsasın, diyalektik bir ilişki içinde değerlendirilmeli ve toplumsal olarak tanımlandığı ölçüde tarihsel bir süreklilik içinde ele alınmalıdır.

Yapısal bir özellik olarak İnternet sınırsızca genişleyebilen ve açık bir sistemdir (Castells 2010). Popüler önyargının aksine, İnternet mutlaka bir hizmet sağlayıcıya veya herhangi bir yönetim organına ihtiyaç duymaz. Birden fazla aktör, aynı protokolü kullanarak birbirine bağlandığı sürece bir ağ kurulabilir.

Daha açık olmak gerekirse, devrim ne cihazlarda, ne de kıtaları birbirine bağlayan kablolardadır. Devrim, küresel bağlantı fikrindedir. Cihazlar ve teknolojiler, İnternet'in genişlemesine ve popüler kullanımına yol açmıştır. İnternet'in mevcut üretim biçimlerine bu kadar kolay adapte olabilmesinin ve kendi üretim biçimlerini yaratabilmesinin ana nedeni budur.

Küresel ölçekte siyasi dönüşümün geleceği için bağımsız medya oldukça önemlidir. Merkezi yapılar ve bunların bilgi akışları üzerindeki ağır tahakkümü, sürekli genişleyen ve gelişen dijital teknolojiler ile birlikte başarısız olmaya mahkumdur. Bu evrimle paralel olarak, sermayenin de çok uluslu teknoloji devi şirketler etrafında toplandığı görülmektedir. Bu durum, ekonomik bir yaklaşımı göz önünde bulundurmayı gerekli kılar.

Dolayısıyla bu tez, dijital araç ve mekânların kullanıl(ama)masına yönelik bir eleştiri olarak da değerlendirilebilir. Çalışma, tek bir organizasyona odaklanmış olsa da, çevrimiçi topluluk katılımıyla alakalı olan ve buna dayanan birçok kuruluşa da bir bakış açısı sağlayabilir.

Öncelikli araştırma konusu olmamasına rağmen, kitlesel fonlama olgusu, 2017 yılında başlayan bu araştırmanın ortaya çıkışındaki itici güçlerden biridir. Bu arada, sayısız kuruluş ve kişi kitle fonlaması uygulamasını uyarlamıştır. Bu durum, tezin başlangıçtaki öngörüsünü doğrularken, aynı zamanda yalnızca bu yöne odaklanmayı bilimsel olarak gereksiz kılmış ve nitel bir yaklaşım kullanılmasına zemin oluşturmuştur. Bunun da ötesinde, 2020'de ortaya çıkan COVID pandemisi ile birlikte tüm dünya dijital bir kamusal alanın önemini fark etmiş; aylar boyunca, sadece çevrimiçi bir ortamda çalışmaya, eğitim almaya, alışveriş yapmaya ve sosyalleşmeye mecbur kalmıştır. Dolayısıyla bu süreç, insanlara her işin fiziksel katılım gerektirmediğini göstermiştir. Nitekim bu zorunlu yaşam biçimine uyum sağlayabilen kişi ve kuruluşlar kısa sürede başarılı olmuş ve dünya çapında birçok şirket pandemi kısıtlamalarının kaldırılmasından sonra bu 'yeni' çalışma biçimini uygulamalarını benimsemiştir.

Ana akım medya, mevcut piyasa yapılarının ve sermayenin bir uzantısıdır. Doğal olarak, kapitalist sınıfın çıkarlarını ve onların hükümet ve devlet oluşumuyla olan özel ilişkisini yansıtmaktadır. Bağımsız medya sadece ideolojik bağımlılığı kırmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda sermayeye olan finansal bağımlılığı da kırar. Bu nedenle sürdürülebilir ve verimli bağımsız medya ancak finansal bağımsızlıkla mümkündür.

Bu nedenle, tezin ikinci bölümü, ekonomik yön üzerine odaklanmaktadır. İlk olarak, saha araştırması için analitik bir zemin oluşturmak amacıyla, Amin Ash'in fikirleri çerçevesinde sosyal ekonomi teorisi ortaya konulmuştur. Daha sonra, dijitalleşme yaklaşımı ile sosyal ekonomi arasındaki bağlantıyı daha da güçlendirmek için Yochai Benkler'in ağ tabanlı bilgi ekonomisi teorisi açıklanmıştır.

Bu tezin örnek olay incelemesi Medyascope.tv birçok farklı yaklaşımla incelenebilir. Örneğin Taştan (2018) Medyascope.tv'yi, Downing'in (2001) kuramsallaştırması üzerine kurulmuş "radikal medya" kavramıyla tanımlamaktadır. Ocak 2020'de yazarla kişisel bir yazışmada dile getirilen Dr. Sevilay Çelenk'in bir başka görüşü, Medyascope.tv'nin bir tür aktivizm olarak değerlendirilebileceğini öne sürmektedir. Bu görüş, Medyascope.tv'nin aktvizm bakış açısına özellikle itiraz ettiği açıklamalarla çelişmektedir.

Kurumun kendi beyanından bağımsız olarak, Medyascope.tv her iki teori üzerinden de analiz edilebilir. Organizasyon yapısı, hem radikal medya hem de toplumsal hareketler teorileri için uygun özellikler göstermektedir.

Ancak, bu tez bağlamında en uygun çerçeve, sosyal ekonomi teorisi olarak seçilmiştir. Bu yaklaşım, yerelliğin yanı sıra organizasyonun genel değerlendirmesi için yapısal bir bakış açısı sağlar. Ekonomik odak, bir medya şirketinin bütünsel karakterini korurken, kitle fonlaması yönünün dikkate alınmasına yardımcı olur. Sosyal ekonomi teorisine ek olarak, Benkler'in (2006) ağ tabanlı bilgi ekonomisi yaklaşımı, bu çerçeveyi dijitalleşme epistemine tamamlayıcı olarak genişletmek için kullanılır.

Tabii ki, bu yaklaşım dünyadaki birçok vakaya uygulanabilir ve bağlamsal dinamiklerin önemini oryaya koyar. Bu benzersizlik durumu, teoriyi daha da akıcı ve yerel olarak ayırt edici kılmaktadır (Amin, Cameron ve Hudson 2002). Bu nedenle, devletin sosyal ekonomilere müdahalesindeki çeşitlilikler de her bir duruma yönelik teorik yaklaşımı etkileyeceğinden, normatif yaklaşımların uygulanması tutarsız olacaktır.

Bu yerel benzersizliğin ötesinde, bir vakaya yaklaşmak için genel bir yol haritası da gereklidir. Pearce (2009), sosyal ekonomiyi "tüm ekonomide alternatif bir sistem" olarak ele almak için altı temel ilkeyi tanımlar:

- Sermaye birikimi

- İnsan kaynaklarına özen

- Yönetişim ve hesap verebilirlik

- Ortak yarar için çalışmak (diğer yerel ekonomilerin yanı sıra sosyal ve çevresel düzeyde zarar vermemek gibi)

- İşbirliği (diğer kuruluşlar ile arasında)

- Tamamlayıcılık (yerel dayanışma ve topluluk gücüne odak)

Tabii ki, bu temel noktaları ayrıntılandırmak gerekmektedir. Bir sosyal ekonomide, topluluğun kar maksimizasyonundan kaçınması gerekir. Bu, sermaye birikimi yerine, artı değerin yeni çalışma pratikleri yaratacak ve iş dünyasının konumunu güçlendirecek olan "toplumsal kapasite inşa etmek ve yeterince karşılanmayan ihtiyaçlara cevap vermek" (Amin, Cameron ve Hudson 2002) olarak kullanılması gerektiği anlamına gelir. Beşeri sermaye yönünü güçlendiren bir alan olarak, bir sosyal ekonomiden topluluğa; eğitim, deneyim aktarımı ve ağlar sağlaması beklenir (Amin, Cameron ve Hudson 2002).

Bu formülasyonların, yeni ve gelişen bir teorinin parçası olduğunun tekrar altı çizilmelidir. Pratik bir durumda tüm bu kriterleri kusursuz bir şekilde uygulamak gerçekçi değildir. Teori için çok yeterli örnekler varken, başarısız olan birçok kuruluş da karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Başarısızlık, "girişimcilik, kamu finansmanına yüksek bağımlılık, kronik bir biçimde sermaye yetersizliği, düşük istihdam, istikrarsız ve düşük ücretli istihdam ve sınırlı topluluk katılımı" gibi birçok yönden kaynaklanabilir (Amin, Cameron ve Hudson 2002). Bu yönler, tezin tartışma bölümünde detaylı olarak incelenmektedir.

Sosyal ekonomi teorisine benzer şekilde, ağ tabanlı bilgi ekonomisi yaklaşımı da spesifik bir vakaya uygulamak için bir dereceye kadar indirgemeyi gerektiren kapsamlı bir teoridir. Yochai Benkler (2006) tarafından ortaya atılan kavram, internetin; liberal piyasaların ve demokrasilerin temelinde getirdiği yapısal değişimin sonuçlarından biri olarak türetilmiştir. Ağ tabanlı bilgi ekonomisi, merkezi olmayan bireysel üretime, başka bir deyişle, işbirliği ve koordinasyona dayanan yeni bir üretim modelini yansıtmaktadır ve "özel stratejilere bağlı olmayan, radikal olarak dağıtılmış, piyasa dışı mekanizmalar aracılığıyla gerçekleştirilir" (Benkler 2006)

Holt vd. (2019), alternatif medya araştırmaları için dört boyuta dikkat çekmektedir. Buna göre, araştırma:

- Üreticilerin karakteri (örneğin vatandaş gazeteciliği, aktivizm) üzerine yapıldığında mikro düzeyde,

- Organizasyon yapısı, üretim ve dağıtım yöntemleri üzerine yapıldığında mezo düzeyde,

- Medya ekosistemleri ve bunların toplum üzerindeki etkileri üzerine yapıldığında ise makro düzeyde olarak ele alınmalıdır.

Bu anlamda bir makro analiz mutlaka izleyici perspektifini de bünyesine dahil etmeyi gerektirecektir. Ancak bu tezin çerçevesi, belirli bir organizasyon ve onun üretim modelini ele aldığından, bu formülasyondaki mezo düzeye tekabül etmektedir. Elbette bu düzeyler "belirli bir sosyokültürel bağlamda yerleşiktir ve tarihsel ve politik koşullara tabidir" (Holt, Figenschou ve Frischlich 2019). Dolayısıyla içerik, yapımcılar ve medya ekosistemi gibi diğer boyutlara da çalışma boyunca değinilmiştir. Ancak bunlar sadece bağlamı desteklemek için kullanılmışlardır. Tanımlayıcı bir rol oynarlar ve çoğunlukla temel analizin dışında kalmaktadırlar.

Tezin analiz başlığı, önceki teorik yapıdan farklı olarak pratik yöne odaklanmaktadır. Bu başlık beş bölüm oluşmaktadır. İlk olarak, okuyucuların Türkiye'deki medya ortamını kavramalarına imkan sağlamak için, Türkiye'de gazeteciliğin karmaşık tarihi

ve karşılaştığı zorluklardan kısaca bahsedilmiştir. İkinci bölüm, Medyascope.tv'nin; ne zaman ve nasıl kurulduğu, hangi platformları kullandığı, takipçi – izleyici – abone sayıları ve finansal durumunu ele almaktadır. Üçüncü bölüm, alan çalışması ve içerik analizi metodolojisini açıklamaktadır. Dördüncü bölüm araştırmanın bulgularını gösterip analiz ederken, beşinci ve son bölüm, alan çalışması boyunca toplanan verilerin kavramsal yapı doğrultusunda tartışılmasını içermektedir.

Basın özgürlüğü, Türkiye coğrafyası için tarih boyunca çok tartışmalı ve büyük bir mücadeledir. 19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğundan başlayarak, gazeteciler çeşitli siyasi nedenlerle baskı altına alınmış ve Avrupa ülkelerine sürgüne zorlanmıştır. 20. yüzyılın başlangıcı, Kemalist idealler etrafında inşa edilen medyanın cumhuriyetçi bir yeniden inşasını göstermektedir. Türkiye bu dönemde Latin alfabesine geçmiş ve ülke genelinde okuma yazma oranları büyük ölçüde artmıştır. Bu dönemlerde birçok benzersiz ve önemli olay vardır, ancak bunlar büyük ölçüde bu araştırmanın kapsamı dışında kalmaktadır. Genel olarak bu tez, siyaset sosyolojisi ve iletişim disiplinlerine katkıda bulunmaktadır. Çalışma alanı, dijitalleşme ve medya çalışmaları bağlamları etrafında şekillenmektedir. Tezin araştırma soruları, önem sırasına göre şu şekilde sıralanmıştır:

Medyascope.tv, elindeki teknolojileri, dijital araç ve alanları nasıl kullanıyor?

Medyascope.tv hangi anlamda geleneksel medyanın uygulama ve deneyimlerinden ayrışıyor? Bir devamlılık veya kopuştan söz etmek mümkün mü?

Medyascope.tv neden kitle fonlaması kullanıyor? Kitlesel fonlama, bağımsız medyanın sürdürülebilirlik sorununa bir çözüm sağlayabilir mi?

Bu sorular üzerine inşa edilen hipotez, bir kamusal alan olarak İnternet'in göreli özerklikte, yeni üretim biçimleri ve stratejilerine olanak tanıyarak, otoriter bir ortamda bilgi üretmeyi mümkün kıldığı şeklinde formüle edilmiştir.

Medyascope.tv, Habertürk Gazetesi'ndeki ofisinden canlı yayın yapmaya başlayan Ruşen Çakır tarafından 20 Ağustos 2015 tarihinde resmen başlatılmıştır.

Medyascope.tv ilk başta Ruşen Çakır ve birkaç arkadaşının Türkiye'nin siyasi gündemine ilişkin yorumlar yapan küçük bir girişimi olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Altı yıl sonra, Medyascope.tv düzenli olarak yayınlanan 50'den fazla programıyla profesyonel bir stüdyo ortamında 90'dan fazla gazeteci ve teknik ekip çalıştırarak Türkiye'nin önde gelen bağımsız medya merkezlerinden biri haline gelmişir.

Medyascope.tv'nin başarısı uluslararası kuruluşlar tarafından tanınmakta ve 2016 yılında Uluslararası Basın Enstitüsü'nün Özgür Medya Öncüsü ödülüne, 2017 yılında Sınır Tanımayan Gazeteciler (RSF) ve TV5MONDE'nin Basın Özgürlüğü Ödülüne layık görülmüştür.

Medyascope.tv'nin sloganı "çünkü özgür" iken, Rusen Çakır (2018), Medyascope.tv'de yapılanın 'aktivizm' değil, yalnızca özgür, tarafsız ve dürüst habercilik olduğunun önemle altını çizmektedir.

Medyascope.tv'nin içeriği ağırlıklı olarak Türkçe dilindedir. Ayrıca, haftalık İngilizce ve Fransızca haber yayınları da bulunmaktadır. Medyascope.tv, geçmişte, orijinal içeriği Arapça ve Kürtçe olan programlar da yayınlamıştır. Buna ek olarak, bazı programlar ve yazılı materyaller de Almanca'ya çevirilerek yayınlandığı da görülmüştür.

Medyascope.tv, ilk olarak, Medyascope isimlendirilmesine de ilham kaynağı olan Periscope platformundan çevrimiçi video yayınlarıyla başlamıştır. Şu anda Medyascope.tv tarafından ana canlı yayın platformu olarak YouTube kullanılmaktadır. Siyasi tartışmaların canlı yayınları, haber programları ve röportajlar Medyascope.tv tarafından oluşturulan ana içeriklerdir. Platformu nasıl kullandıklarına bağlı olarak, YouTube'un Medyascope.tv programları için de bir arşiv işlevi gördüğünü, bu anlamda yayınlanan tüm programları barındıran açık bir arşiv olarak ana akım medyadan farklılaştırdığını söylemek mümkündür.

Medyascope.tv ayrıca altı çevrimiçi platformdan daha yararlanmaktadır. Bu yayınlardan bazılarının sesli versiyonları Soundcloud, Spotify ve Apple Podcast üzeriden yayınlanmaktadır. Metin bazlı haber ve gelecek programların duyuruları, bu

platformların özelliklerine göre ağırlıklı olarak yaygınlaştırma amacıyla kullanılan web sitesi, Facebook sayfası ve Twitter'dan yayınlanmaktadır.

Analiz, nitel araştırma yöntemleri aracılığıyla çeşitli bilgi türlerinin toplanmasına dayanmaktadır. Başlangıç olarak, Medyascope.tv'nin birçok farklı video yayınında söz edilen bilgileri içerir. Örneğin Medyascope.tv'nin her yıl yayınlanan yıldönümü programları, organizasyonun gelişimi ve geleceğe yönelik projeksiyonlar hakkında değerli bilgiler içermektedir. Ruşen Çakır da günlük olarak yayınlanan ve güncel siyaset üzerine yorum yaptığı yayınlarında Medyascope.tv'nin vizyonu ve tarihi hakkında bilgiler vermektedir. Bu nedenle analiz, Medyascope.tv'nin bu video içeriklerinden alınmış, doğrudan bilgilendirici referansların yanı sıra, bunların kümülatif bir yorumunu da içerir. Bu yöntemin kullanılması, Medyascope.tv'nin ve vizyonunun kendi içeriği ve yaratıcıları tarafından nasıl tanımlandığını ve gerçekleştirildiğini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

Araştırma ayrıca 2019 yılının Aralık ayında Medyascope.tv'nin İstanbul'daki ofisinde gerçekleştirilen iki günlük bir atölye çalışmasında yapılan katılımcı gözlemi de içermektedir. Yazar, Medyascope.tv tarafından atölyeye katılmak üzere seçilmiştir. Atölye, çeşitli sunumlardan oluşan bir program olarak yapılandırılmıştır. Deneyimli gazeteciler; Türkiye'de gazeteciliğin tarihi ve geleceği, gazeteci olarak kişisel deneyimleri ve teknik konular üzerine sunumlar yapmıştır. Yazar bu süre zarfında Medyascope.tv'nin ofis ortamını gözlemleme fırsatı bulmuştur.

Atölyenin ardından ayrıca bir katılımcı gözlem daha planlanmıştır, ancak pandemi kısıtlamaları nedeniyle kaçınılmaz olarak bu plan iptal edilmiştir. Bu nedenle, ana araştırma yöntemi derinlemesine mülakat yöntemi üzerinden yeniden yapılandırılmıştır.

Dört katılımcı ile beş yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşme yapılmıştır. İlk röportaj dizisi 15.10.2020 ve 22.10.2020 tarihleri arasında Medyascope.tv'nin eski ofisi de dahil olmak üzere İstanbul'un çeşitli yerlerinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Son olarak ek görüşme 16.07.2021 tarihinde çevrimiçi olarak yapılmıştır. Organizasyon içindeki kilit kişilere ulaşmak için zincirleme referans yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Görüşmeler 30

dakika ile 60 dakika arasında sürmüş ve cinsiyet ve hiyerarşi çeşitliliği dikkate alınmıştır.

Biri yönetici pozisyonunda olmakla birlikte, görüşülen kişilerin tümü ya Medyascope.tv'nin çalışanları ya da eski çalışanlarıdır. Görüşülen kişilerden bazıları gizlilik talep edip bazıları etmese de, gelecekte oluşabilecek karışıklıkları önlemek amacıyla görüşülen tüm kişilerin isimleri gizli tutulmuştur. Yazar, özellikle Türkiye'de medya özgürlüğü gibi hassas konularda, bireysel güvenliğin akademik şeffaflıktan daha önemli olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Metin içi alıntılarda çalışanlar 'E' (employee/çalışan) olarak gösterilirken, yönetici 'D' (director/yönetici) olarak gösterilmiştir. Söz konusu örneklem çok küçük bir topluluk olduğundan ve tekrar eden etiketler aracılığıyla görüşmecilerin profillerini çıkarmak oldukça mümkün olduğundan, her yanıtlayıcıya benzersiz baş harfler atanmamış, veriler karma olarak sunulmuştur.

Tüm röportaj soruları, yanıt verenlerin Medyascope.tv içindeki konumlarına ve deneyimlerine göre formüle edilmiştir. Örneğin, demografik sorular yalnızca kuruluşta yönetici ve koordinatör pozisyonlarında çalışan katılımcılara sorulmuştur. Soruların kapsamı ve neyi ölçmeye çalıştıkları dört ana kategoride özetlenebilir:

1. Medyascope.tv'deki çalışanların demografisi gibi temel bilgiler.

2. Hiyerarşik yapı ve işyeri demokrasisinin kapsamı.

3. Rollerin ve işin dağıtım mekanizması.

4. Kurumun şeffaflığı.

Medyascope.tv'yi ana akım medyadan ayıran en temel noktanın, kurumun etik bakış açısı ve dürüst habercilik hedefi olduğu kuşkusuz tüm katılımcılar tarafından vurgulanmıştır. Kurumun tarafsızlığı, çalışanların gönüllü çalışmalarının arkasındaki motivasyonlardan birini de oluşturmaktadır. Tüm katılımcılar, kuruluşta tam zamanlı bir işe geçmeden önce gönüllü olarak çalışmaya başladıklarını öne sürmüşlerdir. Katılımcılar ayrıca ana akım medyada kayırmacılık sorunlarının ve iş bulmanın

zorluğunun da altını çizmiştir. Bazı katılımcılar kurumu başından beri eleştirse de, gazetecilik alanında düzgün bir iş sahibi olmanın zorluklarını da kabul etmektedirler. Medyascope.tv için çalışmanın duygusal ve politik dürtüler taşıdığı da görülmektedir. Mülakata katılanların tamamı sektörü ağır bir şekilde eleştirirken, Medyascope.tv'yi ana akımdaki kayırmacılığa karşı bir sığınak olarak tanımlamaktadırlar. Bu bakış açısına uygun olarak yanıtlar, Medyascope.tv'nin başvuran herkese açık bir yer olduğundan da bahsetmektedir.

Her röportajda gündeme gelen, en önemli konulardan biri Medyascope.tv'nin bir 'kurumsallaşma' sürecinde olduğudur. Yanıtlar, kurumsallaşma kararının, kurumu büyütmek ve nihayetinde daha iyi çalışma koşulları sağlayarak daha fazla insanı istihdam etmek için alındığını göstermektedir. Bu kurumsallaşma süreci, yönetim ve üretim seviyelerinde çeşitli değişikliklere yol açmıştır. Bu değişikliklerle farklı departmanlar ve her departman için bir denetim yapısı oluşturulmuştur. Organizasyon içindeki çeşitli pozisyonlar için iş tanımlarının daha kesin hale geldiği ve üretimi bölümlere ayırarak bir tür iş bölümünün oluşturulduğu bildirilmektedir.

Kurumsallaşma süreci ile birlikte Medyascope.tv, reklam arama konusunda daha aktif hale gelmiş ve son olarak ofislerini, sanayi bölgesindeki ilk konumundan daha merkezi bir yer olan Maslak'taki bir ofis binasına taşımıştır. Bu benzersiz kurumsallaşma süreci her zaman mülakatların merkezinde yer almıştır. Görüşülen kişinin pozisyonu ne olursa olsun, katılımcılar bu süreci bir dönüşüm olarak kabul etmektedirler. Hemen hemen tüm katılımcılar, iş bölümünün daha iyi düzenlenmesi ve işyerinde daha iyi koordinasyon açısından kurumsallaşma sürecinin bir gereklilik olduğunu kabul etmiştir.

Görüşmelerde kurumsallaşma sürecinden sonra değişen hiyerarşik yapıların altı çizilmiştir. Nitekim, kurumsallaşma öncesinde Medyascope.tv'nin ağırlıklı olarak daha eşitlikçi bir yer olduğu yorumunu yapmak mümkündür. Kurumsallaşma süreci ile alakalı olarak birbiriyle çelişen görüşleri gözlemlemek mümkündür. Kurumsallaşma sürecine yönelik genel eleştiri, sürecin gerekliliğinden ziyade yöntemine yönelik olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Görüşmeciler, kurumsallaşma

sürecinden sonra değişen çalışma koşulları, planlama eksikliği ve katı disiplin konusunda endişelerini dile getirmişlerdir.

Bir araştırmacının bakış açısından, eğitim odaklı ve mütevazı bir organizasyondan bir medya şirketine keskin bir dönüşümden söz etmek mümkündür. Ayrıca, bu sürecin oldukça istikrarsız bir şekilde geliştiği ortaya çıkmıştır. Sorulara verilen yanıtlardan, kurumun demografik verisine bile ulaşmanın çok zor olduğu, yerleşik bir insan kaynakları planlamasının bulunmadığı görülmektedir.

Eksik olan bir diğer önemli pozisyon, canlı yayın sohbet odalarında ve genel topluluk katılımında ortaya çıkan sorunlarla ilgilenen bir topluluk yöneticisidir. Takip eden görüşmelerde, canlı sohbeti yönetmek için yakın zamanda bir çalışanın görevlendirildiği bildirilmiştir, ancak bu görevin o çalışanın ana sorumluluğu olmadığı öne sürülmüştür. İletişim ve dijital yönetimle ilgili bu roller tam zamanlı pozisyonlar yerine yan görevler olarak doldurulduğundan, asıl sorunun dijitale uyum sağlamak ile alakalı olduğu yorumu yapılabilir. Bu uyum problemi, aynı zamanda kurumun uygun teknolojileri kullanamamasında da görülmektedir. Yazılım teknolojilerinin şu anki durumuyla, bir çok platformda kuruma maddi ve içerik olarak katkıda bulunanları dahil eden bir topluluk masası oluşturmak oldukça kolaydır. Ancak kurum, takipçilerine bu olanağı sağlamamaktadır. Kurumda sosyal medya yöneticisi pozisyonu olmamasının yanı sıra, iş tanımlarında da bir belirsizlik olduğunu da ortaya çıkmıştır. Çalışanların birden fazla iş yaptığı ve iş yükünün çalışanlar arasında eşit dağılmadığı da bildirilmiştir.

Yöneticiler tarafından Medyascope.tv'nin misyonunun, ana akım medyada dışlanan kesimlerde mümkün olduğunca çok kişiyi istihdam etmek olduğu belirtilmiştir. 'Dışlananlar' kümesi çok geniştir ve çoğunlukla hükümet politikalarını sorgulamaları nedeniyle işini kaybeden deneyimli gazeteciler ve yeni mezunlardan oluşmaktadır. Açıkça, Medyascope.tv ya daha az sayıda kişiyi daha iyi koşullarla çalıştırmak, ya da, daha zor koşullarda yüksek sayıda kişiyi çalıştırmak arasında bir karar vermiştir. Bulgular, bu kararın pek çok genç gazeteciye istihdam sağladığını göstermektedir. Ancak bu durum, organizasyon büyüdükçe farklı sorunları da ortaya çıkarmıştır.

İstisnasız tüm görüşmeciler düşük ücret sorununa değinmektedir. Çalışanlar, birçok iş arkadaşının Medyascope.tv dışında 'etik açıdan uygun' başka bir medya platformu bulmaları halinde ayrılmayı tercih edeceklerini ifade ederek, maaşları şiddetli bir biçimde eleştirmektedir. Bunlara ek olarak, Medyascope.tv yönetiminin, gazetecilerinin kurum dışına telif ile iş yapmasına izin vermediği bildirilmiştir. Yöneticiler ve gazeteciler arasındaki ücret farkının çok az olduğu ve bunun da düşük ücretli personel için bir tür teselli sağladığı belirtilmiştir. Bu tartışmalar Medyascope.tv'nin genel finansman mekanizmasıyla yakından ilgilidir.

Bir başka sorun, Medyascope.tv'nin yenilikçi yaklaşımının sona ermesi olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Medyascope.tv, yayınlarına en niş sosyal medya platformlarından biri olan Periscope ile başlasa da; Telegram, Tiktok ve Discord gibi yeni dijital mecraları keşfetmeye devam etmemiş, bunun yerine YouTube, Twitter gibi hali hazırda kullandığı platformlar için içerik geliştirmeye yönelmiştir. Bu yaklaşım başlı başına bir hata değildir, ancak içerik kapsamını bu popüler platformlarla sınırlı tutmak yeniliğe ve gelişmeye karşı ciddi bir engel oluşturmaktadır. Yeni platformların ve araçların kullanılmaması, Medyascope.tv'nin başta ortaya koyduğu farklılığı ortadan kaldırmış, geleneksel medya ile aynı konuma gelmesini sağlamıştır. Bu noktada geleneksel medyadan tek fark, Medyascope.tv tarafından oluşturulan ve yayınlanan içeriğin kalitesinde ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Medyascope.tv tarafından oluşturulan içeriklerde Türkiye toplumunun marjinalleştirilmiş birçok grubu yer bulmaktadır. Özellikle kadın haklarına ve LGBT+ sorunlarına odaklanan birçok program ve yayın bulunmaktadır. Kürt sorunu, barış akademisyenleri, mültecilerle ilgili çeşitli konular ve hükümetin dayattığı dini alanın dışında kalan insanların görünürlüğü gibi konular da sık sık ekrana gelmekte ve farklı programlarda düzenli olarak bahsedilmektedir. Bu yönler Medyascope.tv'yi politik açıdan zor bir noktada konumlandırmaktadır, çünkü bu konulardan bazılarının, Türkiye'nin siyasi atmosferinde anılması bile tehlikeli olarak değerlendirilebilir. Önceki bölümlerde de bahsedildiği gibi, ana akım medyada kelimenin tam anlamıyla yer bulamayan muhalefet partilerinin başkanları ve temsilcileriyle de düzenli olarak

röportajlar yapılmaktadır. Medyascope.tv'nin en büyük başarısı, bir bakıma siyasi baskı karşısında bu yayınları sürdürebilmek olarak görülmektedir.

Bu çerçevede, Medyascope.tv'nin dijital araç ve mekânları nasıl kullandığı sorusu analiz edilmiştir. Saha çalışması sadece dijital yelpazedeki yetersizlikleri değil, kurumsallaşma sürecindeki bazı kavramsal başarısızlıkları da ortaya çıkarmıştır. Medyascope.tv'nin geleneksel medya üretim biçimine son derece meydan okuyan bir kuruluş olarak yola çıkmasıyla, kökeniyle temelden çelişen biçimlere geri döndüğünü söylemek mümkündür. Sonuç olarak Medyascope.tv, kurumsal bağlamı açısından Türkiye'nin dijital alanında bir başka ana akım medya kuruluşu haline gelmiştir.

Son sözlerden önce, değinilmesi gereken üç büyük sınırlama vardır. Pandemi kısıtlamaları nedeniyle, tüm araştırma yönteminin değişmesi gerekmiştir. İşyeri demokrasisi konusunun bu kadar hayati bir önem taşıdığı araştırmada işyerini yeterince gözlemleyememek, tezin tamamı için büyük ölçüde yıpratıcı olmuştur. İkinci olarak, ekranın diğer tarafını dahil etmek için bir izleyici perspektifi sağlanabilir, böylece genel yaklaşımı kurumsal perspektifin sınırlarının ötesine genişleterek, mikro düzeyde bir analiz eklemek de mümkün olabilir. Son olarak, Medyascope.tv'ye daha az odaklanmak ve araştırmanın kapsamını mezo düzeyden makro düzeye kaydıracak diğer bağımsız medya girişimlerini dahil etmek de, özellikle doktora tezi seviyesinde oldukça verimli bir araştırma olup, karşılaştırmalı bir bakış açısıyla daha tutarlı sonuçlar sağlayabilir.

Bu araştırma, içeriğin altı yıllık tutarlı çevrimiçi takibi ve yazarın kurumun evrimine ilişkin kişisel yorumlarını da içermektedir. Yazar, tamamen idealist bir vizyona dayanan eşitlikçi varsayımlarla başlayan bir araştırma yolculuğunun, yazarı derinden üzen bir hayal kırıklığıyla sonuçlandığını vurgulamalıdır.

İçerik açısından Medyascope.tv, Türkiye medyasındaki ifade özgürlüğünün temel direklerinden biri olmaya devam etse de, kamuoyuna yönelik bir tartışma platformu sunmamaktadır. Yeniliğe yönelik adımlar, YouTube için kısa videolar oluşturmak ve Twitter sohbet alanları düzenlemek gibi, mevcut medya kanallarını güçlendirmeye

çalışmakla sınırlı kalmaktadır. Ancak bunlar, başlangıçta Periscope kullanmak gibi alternatif platformlar kullanmanın yeniliğini yansıtmamaktadır.

Organizasyonun kurumsallaşma kararı bu anlamda önemli bir kırılma olarak değerlendirilebilir. Burada alınan karar haklı gerekçelere dayanıyor olsa da, yöntemleri ve bu kurumsallaşma aşamasının genel yolu, dijital yenilik ve mekan yaratma açısından geleneksel medyanın yeniden üretilmesi olarak şekillenmiştir. Merkezileşme ve hiyerarşi yoğunlaştıkça, kurum dijital alanın sürekli değişen ortamına uyum sağlama esnekliğini yavaş yavaş kaybetmektedir. Çalışanların karar alma sürecine katılımı sınırlı hale gelmiş, dijital araçların yetersiz kullanımı izleyiciler için bir darboğaz yaratmış ve organizasyon, geri bildirim için güvenilir ve sürdürülebilir mekanizmalar sağlamamıştır. Araştırmacıların yanı sıra, sosyal medya ve topluluk yöneticileri gibi kilit pozisyonların kurum bünyesinde varolmaması da oldukça önemlidir. Daha önce de belirtildiği gibi şeffaflık konusu da Medyascope.tv'nin karşı karşıya olduğu temel sorunlardan biridir. Bu araştırma sırasında, hükümet destekli birçok medya kuruluşu tarafından Medyascope.tv'nin uluslararası finansmanının meşruiyetini sorgulayan bir karalama kampanya yürütülmüş, kurum daha öncesinde yeterli şeffaflığı sağlamadığı için bu tartışmalardan zarar görmüştür. Bu iddialar çoğunlukla çürütülse de, finansman kaynaklarının izleyicilere daha açık olması ve düzenli olarak güncellenmesi durumunda bu sorunların yaşanmayacağı da açıktır.

Genel olarak, Türkiye'deki bağımsız medya alanı, merkezi olmayan bir karakter göstermektedir. Ancak, faaliyet gösterdiği finansal çerçeve oldukça merkezidir ve mevcut mali yapılarla doğrudan bağlantılıdır. Uzun vadede bağımsız medya ancak bağımsız finansal kaynaklarla sürdürülebilir. Bu tez, dijitalleşme alanlarının yanı sıra sosyal ekonominin siyaset sosyolojisi ve iletişim çerçevesinde kullanımına katkı sağlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, daha fazla araştırma, finansal bağımsızlığı; sürdürülebilir, güvenli ve merkeziyetsiz bir şekilde sağlayacak alternatif biçimleri ortaya çıkarabilir.

Sonuç olarak Medyascope.tv, yayınladığı içeriklerle hala oldukça zor bir alanda faaliyet göstermektedir. Bu araştırmanın eleştirileri bir kenara, kurumun sağladığı istihdam ve ifade özgürlüğüne katkısı gibi olumlu çıktılar göz ardı edilemez. Medyascope.tv'nin öncü olarak benimsediği kitle fonlaması modelinin yanı sıra, kurumun ifade özgürlüğüne yaptığı katkı bu tezin ortaya çıkmasındaki ana itici güçlerden biridir. Bu araştırmanın kapsamını aşsa da, kitlesel fonlama yöntemlerinin gelecekte İnternet teknolojileri ilerledikçe çok daha ön planda olacağını iddia etmek de mümkündür. Bu açıdan, blokzincir teknolojisi, farklı topluluk katılımı yöntemleri için gerekli araçları sağladığının işaretlerini vermektedir. Ortaya çıkan bu deneysel teknolojiler, kitlesel fonlama ile sınırlı değil, aynı zamanda topluluk yönetişimi yöntemlerine ve hatta topluluk mülkiyetine kadar uzanmaktadır. Bu tez ve Medyascope.tv örneği, bu deneysel ve yeni teknolojilerin hassas konulara uygulanmasının önemini ve verimliliğini, ve aynı zamanda otoriter bir ortamda, ifade özgürlüğü alanında olumlu sonuçlar getirebileceğini açıkça göstermektedir.

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