

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA

ALTERNATIVE MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

AN INTERNSHIP POLICY PAPER SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS FOR PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

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JUNE 2012

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## Contents

Acknowledgments.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Chapter 1: Alternative Media.....	8
Chapter 2: Alternative Media vs. Traditional (Mainstream) Media .....	12
2.1 The ‘Baloon’ Incident .....	14
2.2 Internet and Alternative Media .....	15
2.3 Public Journalism.....	23
Chapter 3: Alternative Media for Democracy in RA.....	27
3.1 ‘Alternative Resouces in Media’ Project .....	33
Conclusion .....	40
Bibliography .....	44
Appendix.....	46

## Acknowledgments

I sincerely thank my faculty advisor Dr. Jenny Paturyan for all her help and patience, for motivating me all the time and for being more than a professor.

## Introduction

Access to information and diverse media are essential to the health of democracy. First of all, they ensure that citizens make responsible, informed choices as citizens rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation. Information also serves as a “check and balance system” for the citizen for ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them.

The media of a country represent her politics, social institutions, governments and the civil society. A plurality of opinions is essential in developing an engaged, mutual understanding of differences and similarities between us as human beings. Media build and represent our reality and help to define who we are and even who we wish to become. This expansive exchange of information shapes relationships and forms societal boundaries. These communication channels should reflect the diversity that exists within society. Such interconnected diversity has been said to be absolutely central to a thriving democracy. To put it plainly, the importance of a diverse media to the enrichment of our daily lives simply cannot be understated (Carey 1989).

The drive for profit can result in a lack of quality, complexity, and sophistication (as e.g. yellow journalism that simplifies reality and is focused on singular examples, emotionalism, and sensationalism). Mainstream contents sometimes take on an ideological form either by reporting that is based on manipulation or by stories that are reported as important, but are not really important for society at large. In any case, such content aims to distract the recipients from confrontation with actual societal problems and their causes.

Alternative media are fundamental in providing diverse content to democratic societies. They are outside of the mainstream, articulate a ‘social order different from and often opposed to the dominant’ (Hamilton 2000), they often aim to challenge existing powers, to represent marginalized groups, and to foster horizontal linkages among communities of interest (Downing,

2001). Alternative media are distinctively different from the mainstream and have the capacity of transforming spectators into active participants of everyday dealings and events affecting their lives and most of the time they are not interested in maximizing audiences like their mainstream opposition. They usually publish information generally not seen in the mainstream media, while the contents in mainstream media is strictly defined by what is considered as popular and sellable.

This paper discusses the positive and negative characteristics of the alternative media while comparing it with the traditional/mainstream counterpart, highlights the democratic development they could bring in Armenia, while also discussing the problems Armenian society faces on its way to using Alternative media sources, the society's trust toward both types of media in the country, and brings recommendations how to increase the trust of people toward the media sources in the country.

The Internship was conducted at Internews Armenia and Eurasia Partnership Foundation, as both of the NGOs cooperate to enhance and improve access to pluralistic and unbiased information in Armenia via traditional and alternative media through the use of new information technologies. The two organizations jointly implement the 'Alternative Resources in Media' program funded by USAID. The four-year project was launched in November 2010. The program seeks to increase alternative sources of diverse news and information through an integrated program that builds civic demand for alternative content, supports its production and dissemination and enhances public advocacy on media freedom, to support Armenian media outlets to embrace the opportunities and challenges brought by technological advances and to build on traditional tools in bringing independent and quality news to the Armenian population, to help the Armenian people to become active creators of content and smart news consumers in the new information age.

Hypothesis: Alternative media usage has a positive influence on the democracy development in RA.

In order to support or to reject the Hypothesis the following 2 research questions were developed.

Research Question 1: How do the alternative media sources influence democracy development?

Research Question 2: How can the influence of the alternative media in RA be strengthened?

For the aim of answering the research questions the following research methods were used: Secondary data analysis (Alternative Resources in Media Project Internews in Armenia, Armenian Media Landscape-Formative Research for the Alternative Resources in Media Program, Caucasus Barometer Report-CRRC-Armenia), analysis of web content (Armenian online newspapers supported by Internews Armenia program) and analysis of Program talk-show Article 27.

## Chapter 1: Alternative Media

Alternative media are newspapers, radio, television, magazines, movies, Internet, etc. which provide alternative information to the mainstream media (Atton, 2003). Alternative media differ from mainstream media in the following dimensions:

- their content,
- aesthetic,
- modes of production,
- modes of distribution,
- audience relations.

Alternative media often aim to challenge existing powers, to represent marginalized groups, and to foster horizontal linkages among communities of interest (Downing, 2001).

The communications scholar James Hamilton (2000) argues that most definitions of alternative media cast mainstream media as “...maximizing audiences by appealing to safe, conventional formulas, and [alternative media] foregoing the comfortable, depoliticizing formulas to advocate programs of social change” (p. 358). Hamilton has suggested this dichotomy is oversimplified.

The radical media theorist John Downing (2001) argues, saying that to speak of alternative media in this way is almost ‘oxymoronic’. He notes, that at some point everything is alternative to something else. As with many cultural objects and practices, today’s alternative may be co-opted and fitted to become tomorrow’s mainstream.

Defined too broadly or narrowly, alternative media risks conceptual imprecision and limits the term’s usefulness. The definition of alternative media is complicated by various modifiers that are used interchangeably with alternative media such as concepts like



‘participatory’, ‘radical’, and ‘independent’. To impose the master category of “alternative” onto all of these subgroups does violence to significant nuances.

Chris Atton argues: “Alternative media...are crucially about offering the means for democratic communication to people who are normally excluded from media production.” Similarly, James Hamilton synthesizes a number of theoretical threads in the following: “Alternative media’s collective value is in their exploration of new forms of organizing more participatory techniques of media and more inclusive, democratic forms of communication.” According to this definition, alternative media allow those who are most often under- or misrepresented in mainstream media to tell their own stories through their own media. According to Atton, this media democratization process is indicated by several qualities, including non-commercial sites for distribution; transformed social relations, roles and responsibilities; and transformed communication processes.

Historically, alternative media have been a central force in social change. Gitlin (1980) was among one of the first scholars to chronicle the impact that negative mainstream coverage, and positive attention from the alternative press, could provide for a social change organization. He examined the ‘Students for a Democratic Society in America’ movement during the politically turbulent 1970s and found obvious differences in the sources used, the opportunities for activism within each media institution, the levels of transparency in coverage, the personal characteristics of reporters, the organizational structure of each media organization and the representations of power found in what was then a widely divergent press system.

More recently, the internet has complicated the binaries between alternative and mass media by lowering barriers to entry and enabling new network-based forms of media organizing.

In the broader sense of “alternative media,” this simply may mean a wider distribution for nonmainstream political points of views. In other cases, the political opportunities amplified by the internet are far more radical and democratizing.

Some recent research (most notably Atton 2002, Downing 2001, Hamilton 2006) have suggested that alternative and mainstream media should not be viewed as mutually exclusive binaries. There are fundamental differences in the models of communication used, which are the result of a complex, interwoven mix of factors that are combined to create media content. What defines all of media outlets is far more nuanced in today's technologically infused media market than was even considered possible when most of these academic and professional definitions and distinctions were created.

Everyday declining newspaper readership and influence of ideals of deliberative democracy, public journalists think the promotion of reasonable and informed dialogue among citizens should be part of the role journalists play in a democracy. Their traditional reporting practices have been changed by advocating public listening in newsgathering, by producing purposeful news, and by encouraging public debate (Dzur, 2002).

In their study Nichols S. and others (*Examining the Effects of Public Journalism on Civil Society from 1994 to 2002: Organizational Factors, Project Features, Story Frames, and Citizen Engagement*) attempts to answer how the influence of organizational factors, project features, story frames, and efforts involve community members and assess public opinion which uniquely contribute to three broad goals of public journalism: improving civic skills among citizens; influencing the policymaking process; and increasing levels of civic volunteerism.

This brings us to an important question: What is the ideological dimension of alternative media? The ways in which alternative media challenge mainstream assumptions and rearrange

social relationships often place them under the rubric of progressive politics. By some measures, politically conservative groups and individuals dominate the blogosphere in terms of numbers and impact. Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008) constructed a typology of theories of alternative media. They distinguish between four approaches that define alternative media in different ways. First, the community media approach argues that participation of members of a community in content production and media organization is central for alternative media. Others see the provision of content by alternative media as alternative to mainstream media (large-scale, state-owned or commercial, hierarchical, dominant discourses vs. small-scale, independent, non-hierarchical, non-dominant discourses). Third, one can identify approaches that use the notion of counter-hegemonic media that are part of civil society and form a third voice between state media and commercial media. And, finally, one can identify approaches that speak of media that are relational because they link different protest groups and movements, connect the local and the global, and establish different types of relationships with the market and/or the state.

Other important questions remain. There are institutional questions of ownership, participation, and funding that expose the porous boundaries between mainstream and alternative media. For example, there is often an assumption that alternative media are small-scale, nonprofit organizations independently owned and run on a volunteer and collective basis.

The debate over the exact meaning of alternative media promises to continue. Broadly speaking, alternative media counter mainstream representations and assumptions. More specifically, alternative media suggests democratized media production that tends towards the non-commercial, the community based, and the marginalized. Moreover, technological changes like the internet will continue to destabilize our understandings about what constitutes alternative and mainstream media.

## Chapter 2: Alternative Media vs. Traditional (Mainstream) Media

Alternative media are traditionally quite distinct from their mainstream counterparts. Most of the time alternative media publish information generally not seen in the mainstream media, from a perspective generally not accepted within the mainstream press, in a way generally not found in mainstream content. ‘Alternative’ communication is important for daily life, for personal and collective politics, and for our sense of identity and belonging. This sense of belonging takes diverse forms: participation in more formal ‘politics’ as well as in the banality of daily life, for instance, the ability to have one’s voice heard. At all those levels alternative media are inclusive of and go beyond the political realm and reach the everyday life of individuals and communities. More than ever, we are living in a world of mediated experiences where the centrality and power of mainstream media are pervasive, and where the variety of the alternative spaces of mediated communication are acquiring increasing importance as means of representation of public and private ideas and action, and as their stimuli (Bailey 2007).

Mainstream media most often aim to maximize profit or sell an elite audience to advertisers for their main source of revenue. They are virtually always structured in accord with and to help reinforce society’s defining hierarchical social relationships, and are generally controlled by major social institutions, particularly corporations.

In contrast, alternative media do not try to maximize profits, do not primarily sell audience to advertisers for revenues, are structured to subvert society’s defining hierarchical social relationships, and are structurally different from and independent of major social institutions, particularly corporations. Alternative media are a part of a project to establish new ways of organizing media and social activity and are committed to furthering these as a whole, and not just their own preservation. Of course, there may be mitigating circumstances

constraining the extent to which the media source seeking to be progressive can forgo profits and surplus, avoid commercial advertising, reach beyond elite audiences, remove typical hierarchies, and actively support other like-motivated projects. Social and particularly market pressures may make it hard for people to push in alternative directions on all fronts at all times.

One of the biggest critiques of the mainstream press is that they are so entangled in the perpetual cycle of mergers and corporate acquisitions that they are locked within a hegemonic world view that does not allow for investigative enquiry. They are trapped within entrenched norms and values that predispose a certain perspective of the world, whereas alternative media, free from such ideological and structural constraints, report issues in a manifestly different manner than their mainstream opposition. This suggests that alternative media are not interested in maximizing audiences like their mainstream opposition and therefore do not succumb to the often conventional and formulaic reporting techniques of mainstream journalists (Kenix 2011).

There are no clearly delineated and agreed-upon definitions for what constitutes alternative and mainstream media. However, alternative media have historically been defined by their ideological difference from the mainstream, their relatively limited scale of influence in society, their reliance on citizen reporting and their connections with social movements. Mainstream media have been defined as situated completely within the ideological norms of society, enjoying widespread scale of influence, relying on professionalized reporters and heavily connected with other corporate and governmental entities.

While many alternative (and mainstream) media offer ideologically challenging positions, no media are situated completely outside of the ideological mainstream, carrying distinctive identities completely excluded from entrenched, elite systems of power. All media, particularly commercially minded media, exist within the same capitalistic framework that drives much of

the decisions, practices and resulting content found across the media spectrum while alternative media can construct distinct ‘alternative communications’.

Traditional and alternative media draw so heavily from practices historically thought to be the purview of the other nowadays that it is increasingly difficult to ascertain any clear demarcations of difference. Most individual media can no longer be compartmentalized within each category of what has traditionally been conceived as alternative or as mainstream (Albert 2006).

Though there are many similarities between the mainstream media sources and the alternative ones a number of researches show that in many aspects the alternative media has already surpassed the mainstream media’s abilities. First of all, as the alternative media sources heavily depend on newer and technologically more advanced techniques, they are faster than the traditional media.

## **2.1 The ‘Balloon’ Incident**

In Armenian reality, the recent ‘*Balloon*’ incident is the best example proving the speed of alternative media on internet. On May 4, during the Concert on the Republic Square hundreds of balloons exploded and there were many young people injured as a result of the incident. The first details that started spreading was not the news seen on television, but by the messages and pictures on Facebook and videos on YouTube right from the point of view of actual participants and eye witnesses of the incident. A little later the articles on the incident were put up on online newspaper pages. The articles were put up approximately half an hour after the incident, the first one being on A1plus site. The first news that were aired on the television covering the case were long after the incident was over and the victims were already transferred to different hospitals,

the news were mostly covering only the facts of when, where, the possible reason, numbers of injured people. The internet sources were also the first to provide the lists of injured people, to which hospital they had been taken to and what kind of treatment they were getting at the moment.

During the first hour of the news countless photos, articles, videos were posted and shared by networking sites. Two weeks after the incident the shares and recommendations of the article on Alplus by Facebook were over 100. As Alplus site does not have a comments section, the comments were being posted for the shared versions of the article in Facebook. The first two-three days of the incident, when the news were still surfacing, the comments were being posted very actively, mostly blaming the government for the lack of attention to the contents of the balloons, and sharing theories, that the incident was either a well thought of attention grabber, or the opposite, vote reducing action by the opponents of the Republican Party.

As mentioned above, alternative media often use newer and more advanced technology for the information spread, and one of the most important factors of new technology usage is multimedia (images, videos, audio files), which make the viewer feel more like a participant of the event. Images, videos, audio files and other kinds of multimedia not only make the contents of the article, story more interactive and visual, but also more easily consumable and, why not, more fun to use.

## **2.2 Internet and Alternative Media**

The history of alternative media on the Internet is brief; after all, the general availability of the technology itself is barely 20 years old. Even so, in this short time thousands of media projects have been created and implemented. Two of the earliest Internet- based media projects

were PeaceNet in the US and GreenNet in the UK. Both were founded in 1985 and together they formed the Association for Progressive Communications, which became the host for other organizations dedicated to social change.

The invention of the World Wide Web (WWW) in 1989 not only widened access to information on the Internet, it also improved the presentation and downloading of information. Some of the earliest alternative media sites to take advantage of WWW technology included EnviroWeb, the clearing house for all online environmental information (mainstream and alternative), and NativeNet, providing information on indigenous peoples around the world on other WWW sites, gopher sites, mailing lists and newsgroups (Dowmunt & Coyer, 2007).

Technology will continue to develop. Such changes will lead to a continued increase in visual communication. Digital cameras already document protest marches and then disseminate these moving images online. However, there is still a dominance of texting written information through mobile phones or email messages. This is already decreasing as the audiences become more reliant on visual messaging. The importance of visual imagery to the mediated communication process has continued to develop within a culture that has become increasingly visual. Media systems have gradually shifted over time away from text to visual communication.

Visual images are central to how we “represent, make meaning, and communicate in the world around us”. Indeed, scholars and practitioners are increasingly conceptualizing visual imagery as an essential reproduction of informational cues that individuals use to construct their perception of social reality. Visual imagery instantaneously affects how we perceive the message even before we read a single word. The power of visual messaging and drastic reductions in the cost of producing and receiving visual messages will translate to a more fruitful use of visual



imagery in mediated communication. Most probably the visual storytelling will be the standard in the future (Vargas 2009).

By the beginning of the twenty-first century the web was serving around 200 million regular users with more than 800 million separate web pages. A publisher such as Reuters routinely served 27,000 pages of data every second of every day. The web continues to grow at an exponential rate and news, after email and search engines, is one of the primary drivers for that growth.<sup>2</sup> Web users access news through devices that range from small hand-held machines which are principally telephones using Wireless Application Protocol technologies (WAP) to adapted television sets and desktop computers connected to an array of peripherals that include cameras, printers and scanners. CNN's *CustomNews* service is delivered through a mobile pager network. A potentially infinite number of channels is carried through this expanding array of technologies (Dowmunt & Coyer, 2007).

Alternative media have positive influence on freedom of speech, as they provide 'more space' to state someone's opinion and share news. The blogosphere and social networking sites are the most visited online communities. Some people choose to write blogs about personal experiences, some concentrate on specific subjects, but there are those who choose to share news and be the 'citizen journalists', even when they choose to write news about specific places, or specific events, that creates some kind of chain reaction, which brings to another positive characteristic of the alternative media, which is personal opinion development.

A more individual, but often no less radical, form of alternative journalism is the blog. Blogs (originally 'Web logs') are personal Web pages used for a number of purposes: to post commentaries on mainstream news; to enable discussion with and among visitors to their sites and, significantly, to originate their own news. Blogging is a less networked and less social-

movement- minded version and applies similar principles of activist reporting, media critique, discussion and dialogue among its writers and readers. They challenge several dichotomies: between what is being perceived to be public and private; between alternative and mainstream media; and between the citizen/activist and the media professional. The blog has become a focal point for much mainstream media attention, perhaps due to its personal roots, enabling mainstream journalism to develop human- interest stories around its creators.

The emergence of blogs offers individuals the opportunity to create their own news sites, though in the main these tend to personal commentary and opinion. However, in times of crisis and as circumstances permit, bloggers are able to offer us eyewitness accounts.

Internet allows all the readers and users to share their own opinion on the subject, even when they are not the creator of the material. There are all the possibilities to make the article or post more shared and read, that is commenting. When people comment on the post, it automatically gets more and more attention, and as a discussion opens, more opinions are voiced and shared. This naturally brings us to the next positive characteristic of the alternative internet media, which is the opportunity to share the information with others openly, without editors and censorship.

A sense of familiarity exists within textual or visual language. We understand the language better because we contribute to its creation. This is one of the central arguments toward including readers/writers as contributors to alternative media. Otherwise, the creators of content that might be intended as ‘liberators’ in nature, might actually be acting much more like ‘colonists’. This moves the message creator away from the center of an engaged, active debate and informed discussion toward a colonizing perspective whereby the creator is “placed either above or at the centre of things, yet apart from them” (Albert 2006). Reporters can actually document their own reality and become empowered by the process. This first-hand information also elevates the

knowledge and discussion within the larger community as it is more relevant and far more informed than an elitist perspective from outside the close network of community relationships. This process also pulls “power away from the mainstream back to the disenfranchised and marginalized groups that are the native reporter’s proper community” (Atton 2003).

Social relations are created, confirmed and exercised within communication processes. Relationships are created and societal boundaries are laid. Mutual understandings begin through effective communication. Such interconnected development is absolutely central to a thriving social network. The importance of media and communication to such a society cannot be understated (Carey 1989). In relation to news, there are examples of mainstream media drawing content from alternative news sources. Current event blogs have been found to be extremely influential in political reporting. Mainstream news coverage of issues has, at times, been driven by political news blogs. Most computer users now routinely use the Internet to source information; students and readers in most countries around the globe are familiar with electronic journals and text databases, and regular Internet users access a range of web-based documents, from online newspapers and magazines to webzines and sites promoting entities from corporations to primary schools and villages to contemporary city states (Hall, 2001).

In traditional media, distribution is a form of marketing that makes use of high-tech distribution, marketing and public relations departments, specialists and strategies, sales departments, advertisements, and distribution contracting. In alternative media, also technologies that allow easy and cheap reproduction are used. Strategies like anti-copyright, free access, or open content allow content to be shared, copied, distributed, or changed in an open way. Furthermore, one also finds alternative distributors or alternative institutions (e.g. alternative book stores or libraries) that focus on the distribution of alternative titles (Albert 2006).

Given that most people continue to draw their information from mainstream news, whether online or off-line, there are persistent and important questions as to the quality of information that citizens receive from mainstream media. Perhaps because of such growing concern surrounding mainstream media, alternative media have grown exponentially over the last thirty years – particularly on the internet. New media technologies can be used for purposes quite different from those of the existing social order, and indeed, alternative media have exploited new media technologies with an aim to radically subvert the “hierarchy of access”. The development and growth of alternative media continued upon a relatively stable trajectory until the invention of the internet, which led to an alternative media explosion (Kenix 2011b).

The power of mainstream media has led to some practical doubts that alternative media can ever be truly autonomous, given that they are intrinsically far less powerful. However, alternative media thrive when born from very individualistic, unique political and cultural events and issues (SXSW 2009). This places alternative media within a very specific space and time within culture. They exist within that context to the degree that each definition of alternative media, and indeed each example of alternative media, is also a unique theory of political change (Dowmunt & Coyer, 2007). Alternative media are intrinsically part of the process of social change (Albert 2006).

As part of that process, alternative media tend to exist within two organizational frameworks: participatory or hierarchical. Mainstream media operate almost exclusively within the latter category, but alternative media have also borrowed this professionalised format as well. When an organization operates under a passive model of instruction, the “agents of resistance,” or the actual receivers of the media message, can be artificially distanced from those who are “directing them” (Atton 2003). This prescriptive method of alternative media communication is evident

within modern forms of alternative media and can best be explained by the mass culture approach to alternative communication. Through professionalised norms and processes, it is far more likely to 'reach' a more substantial number of people and, therefore, be more effective. However, readers can also feel rather discouraged and disconnected from those who dictate behavior from an elite and hierarchical position.

That is why alternative media have learnt from the successes and failures of the mainstream to create their own opportunities by being more participatory, and less constrained by bureaucracy or commercial interests than the mainstream media and often in some way in explicit opposition to them. More voices within alternative media implicitly democratises the content. It removes the "hierarchy of access" that is endemic to mainstream media reporting processes. Alternative media that welcome a diverse range of input are "transformed into an egalitarian, devolved communicational tool for theory and for action" (Kenix 2011).

Alternative media remain less commercially minded and more ideologically driven than the mainstream media. Many alternative media can be short-lived given a lack of advertising support, but when called upon, alternative media serve an interdependent function with social movements in pushing social change. They do not exist in a vacuum. This places alternative media within a very specific space and time within culture. They exist within that context to the degree that each definition of alternative media, and indeed each example of alternative media, is also a unique part of the process of social and political change.

Outside of major search engines, networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook are among the most popular sites online. News is "about connection, conversation and community" (Vargas, 2009). A reader connects with the content, in whatever form that information delivery occurs. That information then sparks the beginning of a conversation within each reader's

personal social networks, whether that is on or off-line. When a reader engages with that material, they also join in a community of like-minded people.

Information now travels at a nearly simultaneous speed. People learn of major news stories via Twitter feeds and Facebook status updates. Users can verify sources and perspectives almost instantaneously through the Internet. The unparalleled access to information means that transparency will become the most important quality of media reports. Mainstream corporate newspapers and conglomerated broadcast networks have long relied on the credibility that their institution provided through their simple existence as credentialed authority.

The Internet drastically changed how citizens now think about the provided information. The preponderance of information available to users means that transparency is now the most important quality of news information. Transparency allows readers to examine the arguments, assumptions and values embedded within messages. “transparency – the embedded ability to see through the published draft – often gives us more reason to believe a report than the claim of objectivity did” (Weinberger 2009).

Those who create the content shape the alternative media. With very little financial restrictions and expanding platforms for dissemination, content producers, in many ways, are limited only by their own creativity. However, this free expansion of possibility also means that the categories and job descriptions that have defined and organized modern media creators will likely disappear. Some have argued that even income differentials, power, and decision making across all alternative media workers must equalize (Albert 2006).

It is difficult to fully understand the roles and responsibilities of bloggers who create alternative online media. Technological advances mean that the time and cost to produce content has substantially reduced, which has allowed many more avenues of input from a variety

producers of content. Without a wide network of sources to draw upon, the responsibilities that require additional time and funding, such as investigative journalism, will likely suffer in the future alternative media landscape. More responsibilities heaped upon news reporters that are already under severe time constraints means that some aspect of newsgathering will likely be lost. As newsrooms continue to cut their numbers, some have argued that bloggers and alternative media will help to replace the investigative abilities of a watchdog press (Vargas 2009).

## 2.3 Public Journalism

Public journalism attempts to put the ideals of democracy into the practice of journalism by making the promotion of public deliberation part of the journalist's role. This approach arose in the early 1990s, mostly among a number of regional medium-sized city newspapers in USA. One impetus to the movement was the perception that the American public had become politically alienated from government and politics. Many editors and reporters began to see the political domain as a "troubling moral environment", the pathologies of which were especially noticeable during 1988 elections' dismal turnout. The alienation was an economic problem because fewer people read papers when they are uninterested in public affairs. But it was also a personal problem since many journalists themselves felt detached as public actors and as citizens.

Another impetus to the public journalism movement was the diminished public image of the press. One 1991 study of American political attitudes widely read by journalists reported that many people saw the press as part of a political class that was disengaged from the real concerns of communities. Other large-scale surveys marked the decline in public respect for journalists and the increasing belief that "the media" were partially responsible for issueless elections and purposeless government. The problem of diminished public image focused journalists on their

own role in contemporary democracy, on their own political agency, in a way that the problem of political alienation alone would not have.

Public journalism departs from traditional reporting practices by advocating public listening in newsgathering, by producing purposeful news, and by encouraging public debate. These methods are mirror images of traditional journalistic practices that are seen as contributing to widespread dissatisfaction with the media: an overreliance on elite or expert sources for news, an emphasis on conflict between opposing sides and a short time-horizon that leaves some issues undercovered and others overly covered (Dzur, 2002).

Public journalism is arguably the most significant reform movement in journalism. Influenced by the ideals of deliberative democracy it advocates changes in techniques of newsgathering and reporting to foster more public deliberation (Dzur, 2002). Theorists and practitioners of public journalism think the promotion of reasonable and informed dialogue among citizens should be part of the role journalists play in a democracy. For political theory this movement illustrates how elements of a more deliberative democracy might be put into place. As important for political theory, it calls attention to the neglected role of journalism in deliberative democratic procedures. Public journalism presents something of a puzzle, since its advocates see journalists as central catalysts of deliberative democracy, yet contemporary theorists of deliberative democracy rarely grant the media much prominence in their models of deliberation (Bailey 2007).

A key step in promoting public deliberation according to public journalists is to reconceive what counts as news. Instead of being driven by the agendas of officeholders, party leaders, and other elite sources, news is to reflect the interests of citizens. News is more than the information that the public wants, however. Public journalists make content and narrative



choices based on what they think a citizen desiring to be engaged in public affairs would need. They see their readers as an active citizen who, under the burdens of daily life, has become passive. Public journalism does not only aim to treat readers as citizens, it assumes that readers *want* to be citizens. By and large they're sufficiently serious about making their cities, states, and country work better that they would hammer out a smart agenda, ask experts and candidates smart questions, and strive for a smart set of solutions, if only they had the time, money, access, and professional expertise of journalists (Dzur, 2002).

Research on changes in reporting spurred by public journalism is sparse, with little attention to whether certain topics or frames of reporting are particularly suited to public journalism. Although public journalism often implicitly focuses on community, efforts have addressed a plethora of issues confronting localities, including crime, diversity, education, environment, health, poverty, and, of course, elections and government. Public journalists have utilized a range of issue frames to structure their reporting, from established conflict and human-interest frames to more novel problem-solving and historical frames. However, little is known about the potency of these framing devices for civil society outcomes or whether certain topics lend themselves to successful public journalism as defined by increases in civic competence and volunteerism.

Instead, most coverage studies focus on the type of content and sources used in public journalism stories, with inconsistent evidence. Some indicate little difference in content, while others have found that public journalism efforts have a greater focus on local concerns and help citizens engage in civic activities. There is also inconsistent evidence on sourcing. Thus, it remains unclear whether certain public journalism tools, such as encouraging citizen involvement or giving citizen voices greater prominence, improves civil society outcomes.

Studies show a positive relationship between citizen focused journalism and knowledge, trust, and civic participation in elections. There is a case for public journalism efforts and broader public engagement. Studies have found an increase in political participation. There is also some evidence that public journalism increases public deliberation and civic problem solving (Nichols 2006).

### **Chapter 3: Alternative Media for Democracy in RA**

This chapter aims to explain the use of, attitudes toward, and perceptions of a diverse range of media in Republic of Armenia. Also it will try to describe The Alternative Resources in Media (ARM) program, what projects the program had implemented so far, how much they have promoted and developed the freedom of speech and usage of diverse typed of media in Armenia. The reports of Internews Armenia and CRRC-Armenia are going to be used as main sources for this chapter.

Armenia's print media are pluralistic, with a growing online community serving as the main arena for a free flow of opinion and information. However, broadcast media, especially television, are subject to significant pressure from government and economic interests.

Broadcasting legislation has been in the center of public attention since 2008, when the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the opposition-oriented A1+ television station, denied access to broadcasting since 2002, should have the opportunity to compete for a license. In an apparent response to the ruling, the government instituted a two-year moratorium on TV license competitions in September 2008. In 2010, additional amendments to the Law on Television and Radio proposed in connection with the planned digitalization of broadcasting were heavily criticized by the Armenian media community and international organizations for not ensuring open, fair, and transparent licensing. The legislation adopted on June 10 enables the National Commission on Television and Radio to revoke licenses without any justification and impose broadcasting restrictions, and also specifies that only one digital television license will be issued for each region outside the capital (Iskandaryan, 2010).

The 'Alternative Resources in Media' program aims to enhance and improve access to pluralistic and unbiased information in Armenia through the use of new information technologies,

as well as to increase alternative sources of news, build civic demand for alternative content, and enhance public advocacy on media freedom. This program is a cooperative effort led by Eurasia Partnership Foundation with Internews Network, Internews Media Support NGO, and the Yerevan Press Club (YPC).

A research was conducted as part of the Alternative Resources in Media Program. The purpose of the study is to discern the media preferences of the Armenian public, their expectations on media content, their perception of freedom of media and censorship as well as their trust in the media.

According to CRRC Report on Armenian Media Landscape 2011<sup>1</sup> when it comes to trusting the media (generally) Armenians are evenly divided. Almost half of Armenians (47%) partially or fully trust it, 48% partially or fully distrust it<sup>2</sup>. This results are seen again when it comes to specific information sources, with national television being trusted by 55% and distrusted by 42%<sup>3</sup>, making it simultaneously the most trusted and the most distrusted source of information in Armenia. More interestingly, 55% of Armenians say that national TV is not independent from the government<sup>4</sup>. Besides Armenian programs, Russian channels are popular, watched by almost half of Armenians. In comparison to television, other sources of information are used more rarely.

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<sup>1</sup> The study consisted of both quantitative and qualitative components, and was divided into four parts: representative quantitative study of the general population using face-to-face interviews with a structured questionnaire, comparison of survey data with Yerevan Press Club monitoring data on media preferences of the audience (media demand) and media supply, eight focus group discussions among specific populations, 33 in-depth interviews with representatives of the media industry. For the quantitative study 1420 face-to-face interviews were conducted with the respondents in ten administrative regions of Armenia and Yerevan (January-February 2011). Out of these respondents, 39% were men and 61% were women.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix, Table 1

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix, Figure 1

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix, Table 2

When it comes to other sources of information, large numbers of Armenians either do not use them, or do not know whether they are trustworthy or not. That makes it difficult to judge what the most trustworthy sources outside of national TV and interpersonal relationships truly are. Over two-thirds of Armenians (67%) either do not use online newspapers or do not know whether they are trustworthy, along with 64% for social networking sites. However, Armenians that have an opinion on the trust-worthiness of online sources are very likely to say that these sources are trustworthy. Furthermore, of those that do read online news a large majority trusts or somewhat trusts the sources that they read (83%) and they are satisfied with the content (78% satisfied)<sup>5</sup>. The second most trusted source, personal contacts<sup>6</sup>, which are trusted by almost half the population.

Two thirds of Armenians do not read a newspaper, three-quarters have not listened to the radio in the last twelve months, and three quarters have never accessed a social networking site. About two thirds of Armenians either have never used online information sources, or don't know whether to trust them. However, amongst those that do use them, trust is much higher<sup>7</sup>, as is satisfaction with their content<sup>8</sup>.

However, the situation may be changing. Not only do almost all Armenians have mobile phones, many are using them to access the Internet. Furthermore, a third of Armenians have a personal computer, and a quarter have an Internet connection, showing that these technologies are being adopted rapidly, though mainly in the capital. For Internet users, the primary activity is social<sup>9</sup>, and 60% of Armenians Internet users have a social network profile, which most visit at least daily. This, coupled with the fact that Internet users trust and are satisfied with online news

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix Table 3,4

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix, Figure 1

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix, Table 3

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix, Table 4

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix, Figure 2

content, and also use social networking to share information, suggests that the adoption of new media technologies in Armenia could lead to a dramatically different media environment in the future.

Consumption of news via the Internet is currently not common in Armenia. Though according to the study, 28% of Armenian households have an Internet connection 82% of Armenians do not use formal newspaper websites on the Internet as a source for news. However, some Armenians using social networking sites name these as a frequent news source. Nonetheless, 75% of Armenians have never used a social networking site for news consumption and 84% have never shared news content on one.

For the many Armenians that do not use the Internet (57% of Yerevan residents, 67% of regional city dwellers, and 86% of rural residents), the primary barrier is limited access to either a computer or a mobile phone<sup>10</sup>. The second most important reason is age, which 20% gave as an explanation for not using the Internet<sup>11</sup>.

Online content of Armenian newspapers is dominated by discussions about sports, followed by Armenian government activities, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, international news, culture, and regional news, according to the Yerevan Press Club's February-March 2011 content analysis. Online-only news sites, on the other hand, first focus on regional issues, then international news, the activities of political parties in Armenia, and then Armenian government activities.

Armenia's media is rated "not free" by leading international watchdogs (Freedom House, 2011)<sup>12</sup>. Since 1993 little has changed in the freedom of the media Armenia. Compared to the neighbouring countries, Armenia's media is freer than the media in Azerbaijan, but worse off

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix, Table 5

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix, Figure 5

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix, Figure 4

that Georgia. And as is can be seen in the graph, the situation in Georgia becoming better and better with every years, while in Azerbaijan, on the contrary, the media is becoming more and more ‘not free’, while Armenia’s results remain almost the same, though, as it can be seen from the graph, the pressure is already declining a little.

Apart from that, national TV receives a mixed reaction, with 36% of people believing that it is independent and 55% believing that it is not independent from government or business interests (see Figure 2). According to the 2010 Caucasus Barometer, about 59% also felt that major TV channels are not independent from the government<sup>13</sup>.

Armenians are mostly unsure of the independence of online sources, as most of them don’t use internet sources. Almost two-thirds of Armenians (61%) could not offer an opinion on the independence of online newspapers or social networking sites. However, Armenians that did offer an opinion were much more likely to believe online sources to be independence of government and business influence

Popular online news sites include news.am, Aravot, tert.am, A1+, Haykakan Jamanak, Chorrod Ishkhanutyun, and Azatutyun, although all of these sites are read by less than 3% of the total Armenian population. However, news.am and Aravot are read by nearly a quarter of those that read online news.

Almost two thirds of Armenian Internet users have a profile at a social networking, with the Russian site Odnoklassniki being the most popular of those. Most Armenian social networkers<sup>14</sup> use the sites for communicating with friends (88% of users) rather than meeting

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix, Figure 3

<sup>14</sup> Focus group participants who are university students echoed these interpersonal needs as well as the Internet’s utility as an information source, especially in their studies. They felt that there is no alternative to the Internet for fast, efficient information. Furthermore, the students felt that the information which they receive from the Internet is credible. Students also use the Internet as a source of entertainment.

new people. When asked about the most important functions these sites, 51% of users said to communicate, 24% said to keep in touch with friends, and 13% said to get information.

According to the focus groups conducted for this project, the Armenian blogging community is small and bloggers know each other well. According to the focus group participants, the primary motivation for writing blogs is self-expression and, secondly, for discussing political topics. Specific topics include Armenian-Azerbaijani relations and Armenian-Turkish relations, the environment, foreign relations, social-political issues, and issues related to political parties.

The Armenians that write blogs are also heavy readers of other blogs. Blogger focus group participants use blogs as primary non-filtered information sources. Moreover, the analysis and commentary that blogs provide is valuable to blog readers. Blogs can serve as an alternative information source and most often, offer an alternative analysis. One of the focus group participant explained, “now (2011) it is common to say that blogs are an alternative media, but at that time (2007) blogs were the only media because all other media published only official press releases or were closed.” One participant mentioned the lack of unfiltered news content as the motivation to start blogging because there was a lack of “intermediate neutral information” about the Armenian-Turkish normalization process.

Blogs were a source of alternative information (for those that used alternative information) during the events leading up to and following the March 1, 2008 mass protests. University student focus group participants mentioned the role of blogs during those events, when it was difficult to find information, and blogs were a source of news. In the survey, 6% of those that used alternative media said that they used blogs.



The Armenian government ordered a 20-day state of emergency during which media outlets were not allowed to broadcast any political news except those issued by official state press releases. Interestingly, the 2011 study found that two-thirds of Armenians (67%) had no problem using traditional media following the March 1 events. Those who did have problems (17%) turned to the Internet for information, using news sites (37%), Twitter (12%) and chats (12%).

Although only a small number of Armenians write blogs, Armenian bloggers in the February 2011 focus group noted that the popularity of Facebook has helped increase blog readership audiences because blog authors link blog posts to their Facebook profiles and Facebook friends that may not have otherwise read the blog material will become aware of it and turn to it for information in the future. Furthermore, with a larger audience for discussion on Facebook, some bloggers noted that discussion of material was occurring more often on Facebook now than in the comments section of their blogs. At the same time, Facebook is perceived as “less serious” than blogging.

### **3.1 ‘Alternative Resources in Media’ Project**

For the purpose of Alternative Media usage development Internews Armenia for the project of Alternative Resources in Media (ARM) has implemented grand amount of work and resources, by creating Multy-Media Initiative (MMI) Center, Infotun-s, developing online publishing sites, conducting seminars and workshops that allow citizens to get relevant information about alternative (specifically internet) media usage.

The ARM training program aimed to educate professional journalists and citizens who want to become citizen journalists and, by opening blogs, become socially active individuals. To

achieve this aim they opened a Multi-Media Initiative (MMI) Center, worked out its concept, set goals and identified tasks, created a timeline of upcoming activities and trainings, renovated a room for seminars, and purchased up-to-date equipment including computers and flip cameras. MMI Center organized 26 seminars for 403 people during in 2011. These seminars included media trainings, trainings for citizens (info activists and NGO representatives) and onsite consultations for professional media.

A significant group of local trainers now have the skills and abilities to practice multimedia journalism, as well as work experience, motivation to work and interesting ideas on how to organize similar trainings for journalists and non-journalists. For instance, several participants, who used to be traditional journalists, now actively use the multimedia skills they have gained at the training in their new job, in addition to their work as multimedia journalism trainers. Other participants are now leading more in-depth technical seminars on blogging, creating multimedia stories, language features for different platforms: how to write for the Internet, technologies of working with photos and videos, editing, etc.

However, acting journalists in Armenia often do not treat local specialists seriously in the role of trainers. Specialists from abroad are needed for training Armenian trainers on the newest topics. The combination of local trainers who understand the Armenian context and international experts with foreign experience creates the best results in seminars for local specialists. IMS aims to follow this style of activity for the upcoming year.

Besides the lack of highly qualified trainers in Armenia, IMS also faced the problem of short-sighted media managers who, realizing the present low quality of Armenian journalism, often hamper their own journalists who express interest in participating in professional development programs. They justify their refusal mainly by citing lack of staff to cover for

journalists attending trainings. IMS has been working continuously to convince media managers- through the quality of their training programs and enhanced capabilities of participating journalists-that these trainings are indeed worthwhile. IMS has steadily been making inroads with formerly reluctant outlets in this regard.

Unfortunately, some of the participating journalists have not yet realized the important role of the multimedia journalism and the strength of its influence on their daily and professional lives.

The MMI Center also organized 11 trainings for 98 NGO staff members and civic activists. These trainings were the first of their kind in Armenia and aroused the interest of NGO leaders and citizen journalists throughout the country. Each seminar included both theoretical and practical parts.

During these seminars the participants learned how to create a blog, prepare a multimedia story, and looked into the role that citizen journalists and “information activists” can play in campaigns to solve social problems. Trainers also taught participants how to conduct effective online searches for information relevant to their cause, how to prepare it in an easily consumable format, and how to distribute it widely via major social networks.

At the end of each training all the participants were required to create their own blog or profile page in a social network and post their first multimedia project on it. Now that the trainees have the basic skills to create multimedia products on their own, they need to focus on improving the quality of these materials in order to attract a broad audience. The MMI Center provides ongoing consultations online to help trainees do this.

Even though not all the training participants continued to maintain their own blog, they began actively participating in discussions on other blogs and engaging with others through the Internet, exchanging information and taking part in various online campaigns.

Over the year 2010-2011, the Armenian Internet took on a significantly more important role both as a platform for information dissemination and as a field for public discussions on pressing issues.

Since 2009 every year BarCamp Yerevan has been organized. BarCamp is a “non-conference” in the sphere of information technology or “IT,” new media and Internet. A “non-conference” is the unofficial, informal part of the conference supporting open discussions and a free exchange of ideas and opinions. On June 4-5, 2011, IMS held a two-day BarCamp for advanced bloggers at the American University of Armenia that was attended by more than 1,000 participants from various organizations: bloggers, new media professionals, IT specialists, companies involved in online and digital technologies, journalists and journalism students, as well as other interested groups.

Participants delivered 30-minute presentations on IT-related issues along 3 parallel “tracks.” Knowledge of skills and platforms that were shared during the conference by foreign participants, who are more experienced in the field, will allow Armenian developers and citizen activists to create innovative, sustainable, and user-friendly online products that have the power to attract broad audiences and bring the public into the online information space.

The MMI Center organized a Multimedia Summer School to help professional journalists improve their skills in use of multimedia technologies to disseminate information. Nine journalists from various media outlets in Armenia were selected on a competitive basis to

participate. The participants attended an advanced theoretical course in multimedia as well as practical sessions prepared and delivered by leading experts in the field:

The major topics covered during these sessions included: Journalism in society, Regulation and self-regulation, Ethics, Critical thinking, European Convention of Human Rights, Privacy, Ethics on the internet, Copy-rights and copy-wrongs, How to protect publications from libel accusations, Internal policies and user guidelines, Multimedia: a response to changing behavior among audiences, Genres and formats, Visual language of modern media, Wiki-guidelines in journalism.

Other than seminars and workshops, Internews Armenia also created special programs to insure the citizens' awareness of new developments online. E-Club is a weekly TV program intended for Internet users and those who are expected to become users. Its regular features aim to inform audiences about innovations in online and new media, familiarize viewers with new e-tools, present unique experiences of active users, give ratings of the most popular websites, etc. 28 episodes were produced and broadcast during 2011.

After the first season of programming, the managers of every one of the stations that air the program asked ARM to continue its production, because regional stations have no other programming dedicated to modern technologies, and they do not have the capacity to produce such program themselves.

Along with its media development aims, ARM focuses intensely on community engagement. The initial strategy worked to strengthen EPF-created community resource centers (InfoTun-s) in the regions, creating nodes of ARM activities throughout the country. These centers aim to boost public awareness of what constitutes good journalism, encourage citizen participation in producing news and information, and serve as telecommunication hubs in each

community. During 2011 5 InfoTun-s were created (in Armavir, Gyumri, Vanadzor, Goris and Martuni) where 500 people were trained.

A series of Outreach New Media Trainings for secondary school students and teachers throughout the region introduced the basics of social networking and provided step-by-step guidelines for creating Facebook accounts and registering blogs.

The program views the possibility of alternative source spread not only by the internet, but also by television. Article 27: Right to Freedom of Expression talk show series was launched in 2009. The series were launched to openly discuss sensitive issues related to freedom of expression on TV using locally or internationally produced documentaries on freedom of expression. Topics included national security, right to freedom of assembly and freedom of information, submissive daughters-in-law, contemporary art, implicit infiltration of poetry into everyday life, diplomatic role of rock-and-roll in the Armenian reality and protection of property rights. Over time, the range of topics widened, encompassing a variety of other issues, such as Armenia-Turkey rapprochement, Armenia-Azerbaijan relations, youth leadership and young people's perspectives on these issues.

To ensure a wide spectrum of views on the discussed subjects, journalists, representatives of government agencies and civil society, experts, professors and students are invited to participate in the talk shows. They give voice not only to the people of the capital but also to those in the regions of Armenia who are usually deprived from the opportunity to publicly express their views. The channel that took up EPF's call was Yerkir Media TV.

In 2009, 12 guests took part in each talk show, however since 2010 EPF changed the format, limiting the number of invitees to six people.

The format of Article 27 presupposes a video material or a documentary that is no longer than 15 minutes accompanied by a discussion that lasts another 45 minutes. All shows are broadcast twice by Yerkir Media TV, recently also via satellite, and rebroadcast by Hamaspyur regional TVs network in five regions of Armenia.

According to the rating by AGB Nielsen Media Research Company, only in Yerevan the talk shows had 3,000 viewers on average per airing, while some topics could bring the number up to 17,000 in the capital alone. Another set of talk shows on Armenia-Azerbaijan internet media and bloggers' 'war', Armenia-Turkey media bias study, Freedom of Expression Day (May 3), European values in Armenia, education and youth leadership, corruption, civic leadership, and other issues were aired last year.

## Conclusion

While media is considered to be a part of the civil society arena, media overlaps other functional areas of democracy and governance. For example, support for media may yield results in governance activities, particularly those related to decentralization, anti-corruption, and citizen participation in the policy process. The rule of law may be further institutionalized by support for an independent media that keeps a check on the judiciary, reports on the courts, and promotes a legal enabling environment suitable for press freedom. Free and fair elections conducted through transparent processes require a media sector which gives candidates equal access, and reports the relevant issues in a timely, objective manner.

Alternative media have learnt from the successes and failures of the mainstream to create their own opportunities – and all media continue to exist within a pervasive commercial system dictating, to a large extent, many of the future directions in mediated communication (Kenix 2011).

Again, it is important to remember that alternative media generally, although not exclusively, remain less commercially minded and more ideologically driven than the mainstream media. They continue to operate in ways that are often distinct from mainstream media. Perhaps buoyed by these remaining distinctions, many continue to steadfastly argue that marginalized groups, which have historically found a more friendly reception in the alternative press, should not bother attempting to gain representation in mainstream media given that these media operate in ways completely opposite to traditional alternative media practices (Albert 2006). Those making this argument continue to adhere to a long-held philosophical dichotomy between media conglomerates, which reflect conservative political ideologies that support government and big corporations, and independent, alternative media, which embrace liberal



perspectives and citizen interests. As such, mainstream media simply can't be relied upon to portray any truth about those outside of corporate interests (Kenix 2011).

As the research shows Alternative Media does have a positive influence on democracy development in a country as it directly develops the citizens' freedom of speech perception, their willingness to participate in discussions, readiness to be a contributor of news

Within the context of supporting democratic transitions, the goal of media development generally should be to move the media from one that is directed or even overtly controlled by government or private interests to one that is more open and has a degree of editorial independence that serves the public interest. If the media is to have any meaningful role in democracy, then the ultimate goal of media assistance should be to develop a range of diverse mediums and voices that are credible, and to create and strengthen a sector that promotes such sources. Credible sources enable citizens to have access to information that they need to make informed decisions and to participate in society.

Ultimately, media literacy education must aim to produce people who have an understanding of the media that includes knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses, biases and priorities, role and impact, and artistry and artifice. It shows that media literacy is a life skill and the sooner the average citizen arms himself/ herself with it, the better it would be for the society and the civilization.

A media sector supportive of democracy would be one that has a degree of editorial independence, is financially viable, has diverse and plural voices, and serves the public interest. The public interest is defined as representing a plurality of voices both through a greater number of sources and through the diversity of views and voices reflected within one medium.

Continuous development of alternative media in Armenia is one of the most crucial goals that should be followed as noted in Chapter 2 there is only little percent of population that uses internet (which considered as the primary source of alternative news in the research). For the development of Alternative media usage first of all people should be exposed to internet usage not only in the sense of social networking sites, but also news sites, online newspaper sites, online publication sites. The more the people are exposed to other means of getting the information they need, the more they will turn to the one that is faster and more trusted by them, and again, as saw in the previous chapter, those who actually use internet to get information from, trust online news more than the ones the watch on TV or read in the newspapers.

Educating people how to be a civil journalists, how to produce, create and successfully communicate the information and educating people how to make the best use of the alternative news sources: *Social Media and Multimedia Content Creation Workshop*, where the participants learned about the main blogging platforms and their differences, writing for the Internet, techniques for creating online content, and content visualization tools.

Multi-Media Initiative Center, MMI Center organized 26 seminars for 403 people during the last year. During these seminars the participants learned how to create a blog, prepare a multimedia story, and looked into the role that citizen journalists and “information activists” can play in campaigns to solve social problems. Trainers also taught participants how to conduct effective online searches for information relevant to their cause, how to prepare it in an easily consumable format, and how to distribute it widely via major social networks.

Building more trust toward the media is also one of the most important steps to continue working on. As it could be seen from Chapter 2, most of Armenians consume the news from the Television, which is at the same time the source that is least trusted by them. While people who

use internet to get their news from trusted online publications and are eager to contribute themselves. If the education and exposure of people to internet is implemented right, the trust toward media would significantly rise, and hopefully several years time, people, who used to turn to television and their friends for the news, will be reading the blogs of their friends and neighbours to get the news they need and not only the blog, but also the comments and opinions of other people who will be reading the same blog and raising their point of view, by that creating discussion and a free flow of information from one source to another.

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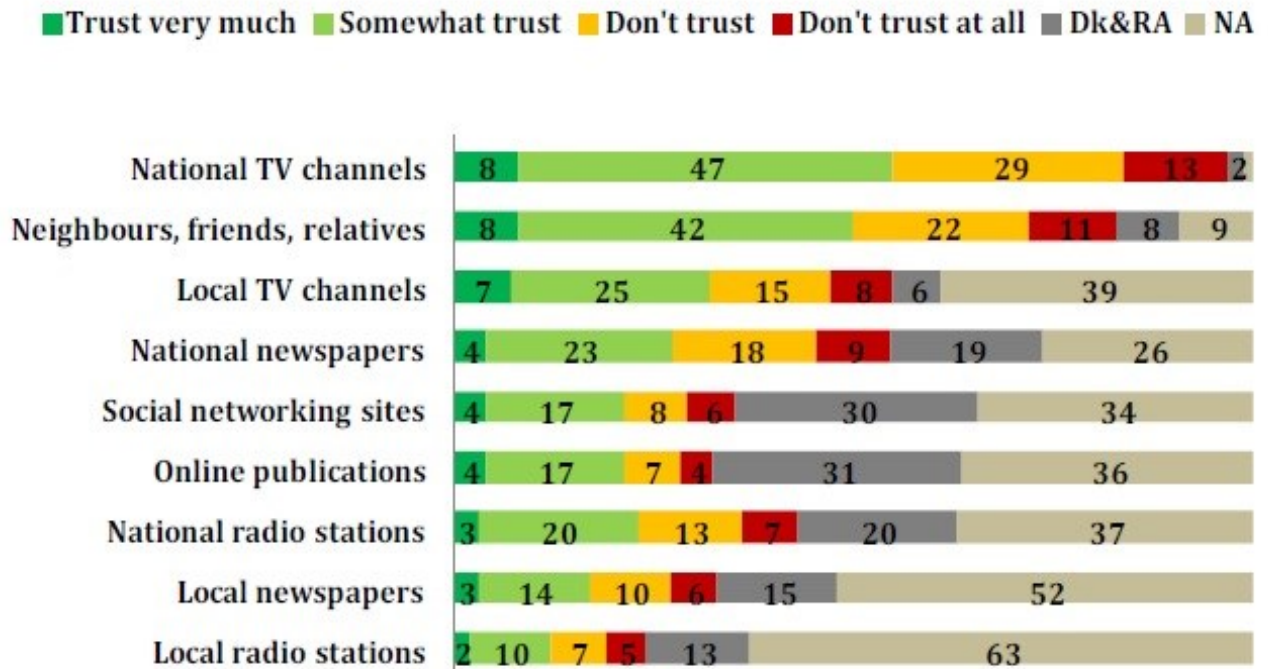
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## Appendix

Table 1: Trust in the mass media (%)

Fully trust	5
Somewhat trust	43
Somewhat distrust	30
Don't trust at all	18
DK	3
RA	1

Figure 1: Trust toward different sources of information



*Table 2: Caucasus Barometer 2010: TV independent from the government (%)*

Completely agree	6
Somewhat agree	18
Somewhat disagree	37
Completely disagree	22
DK	17
RA	1

*Table 3: Trust in Online News (%)*

Trust very much	8
Somewhat trust	75
Somewhat don't trust	14
Don't trust at all	1
DK	1

*Table 4: Satisfaction with content of online news (% of respondents, who access online news)*

Strongly satisfied	9
Somewhat satisfied	69
Somewhat dissatisfied	19
Don't satisfied at all	2
DK	1

Figure 2: Internet Activities

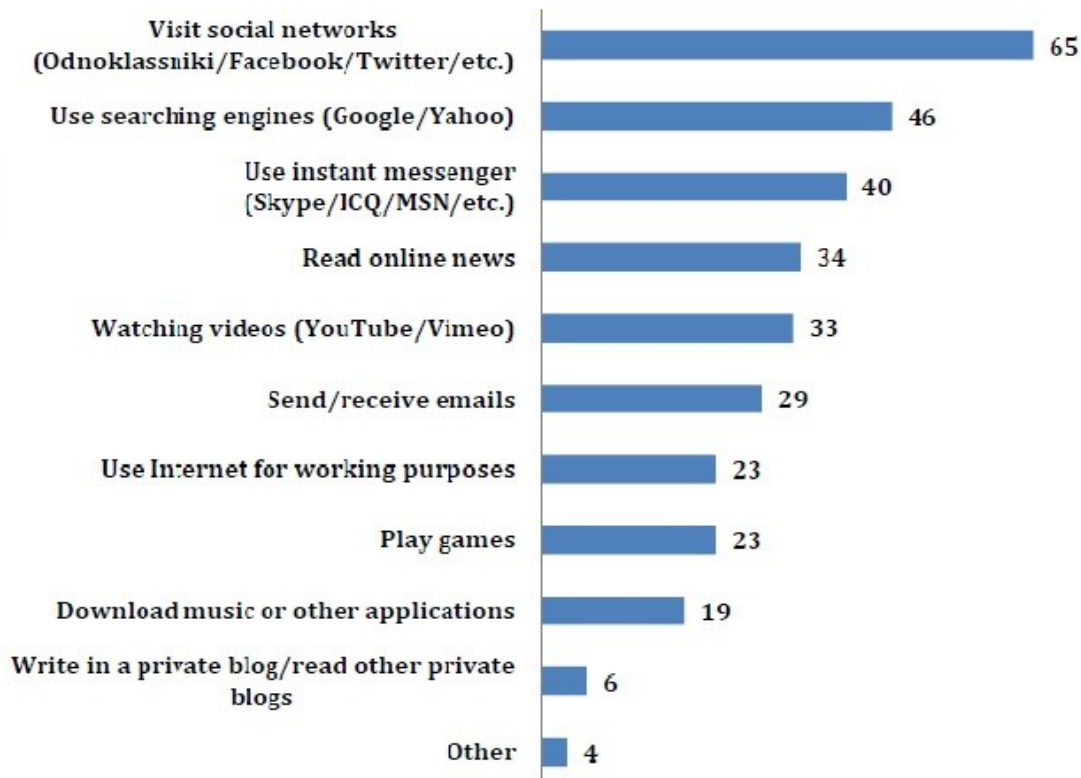


Table 5: Reasons for not using the internet by the Settlement type (%)

	Overall	Yerevan	Urban	Rural
Limited or no access to a computer/mobile phone	33	24	38	36
Age reasons/seniors	20	23	17	20
No interest	11	4	16	13
Not enough time	10	16	9	6
Internet or computer too difficult to use	8	9	6	10
No need/not useful	8	14	6	7
High prices for the Internet	7	8	5	8
Other	1	3	2	0
DK	0	-	1	0



Figure 3: Perceived independence of media sources from government/business

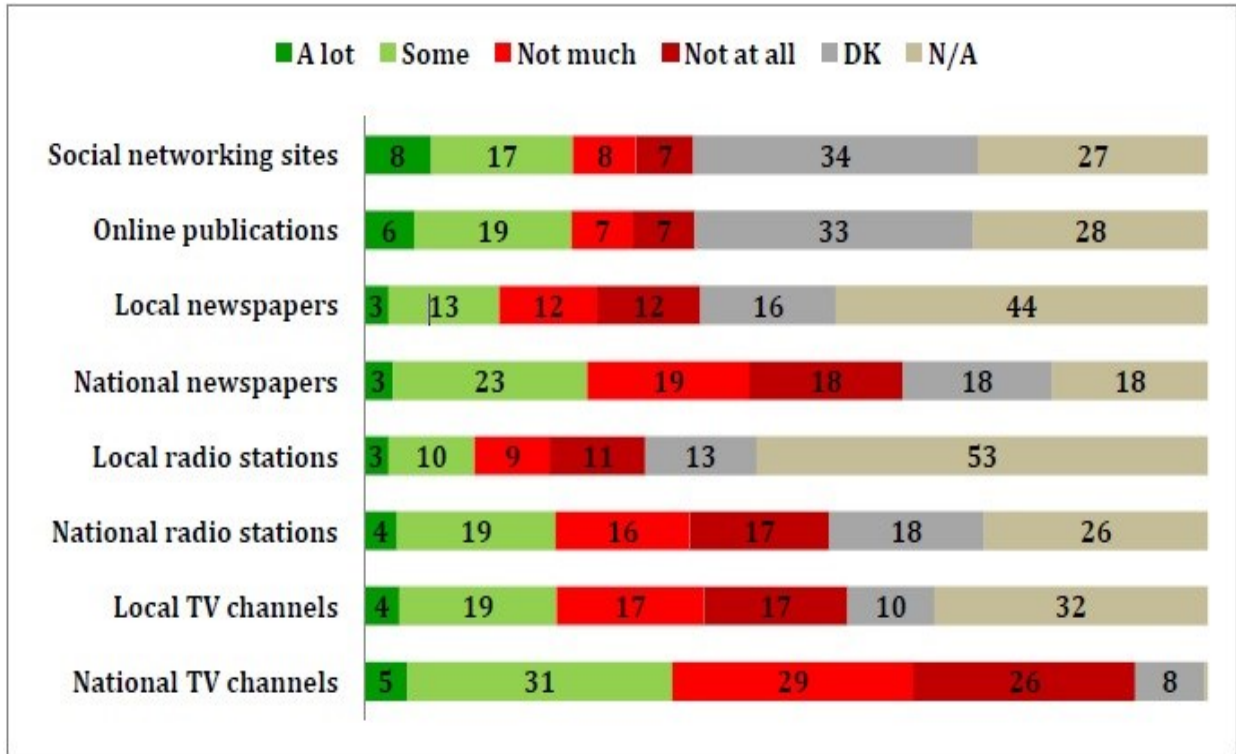


Figure 3: Freedom House Freedom of the Press

(0-30 = Free, 31-60 = Partially Free, 61-100 = Not Free)

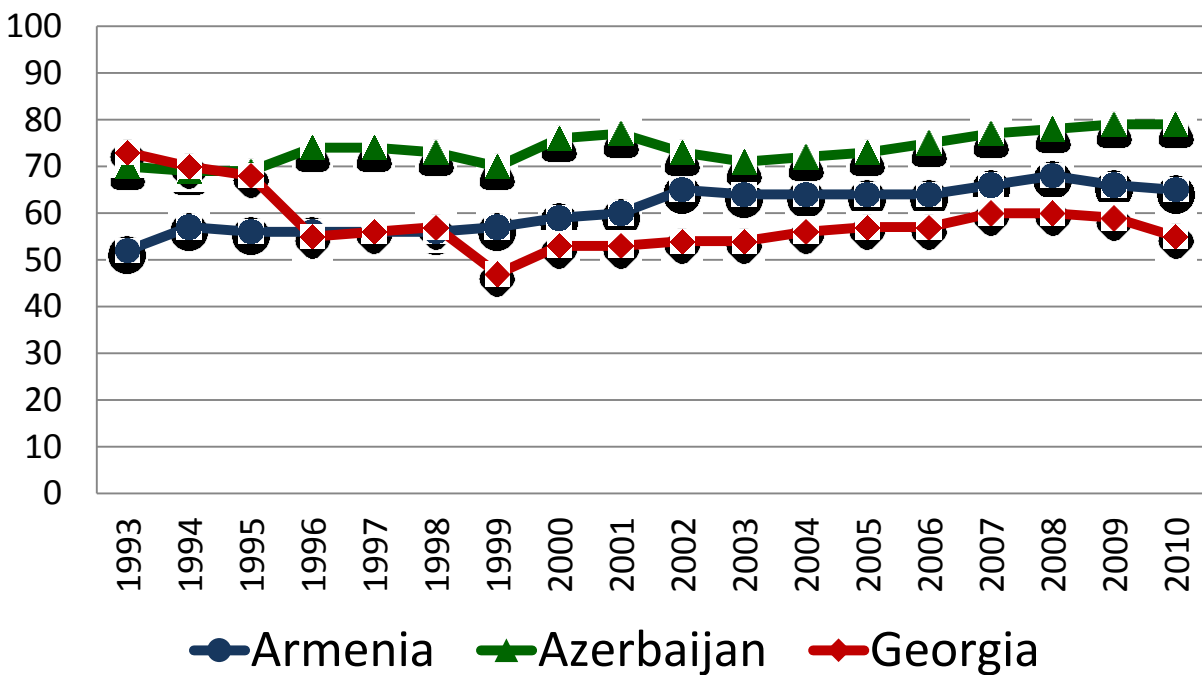


Figure 5: Reasons for not using the internet

