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„The Rise of Independent and Critical Journalism in Times of Crisis”

Case Study on the Spanish, Greek and Romanian Media Landscape

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Patricia Ștefania Smolean, bakk. phil.

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"Slow is beautiful"

Keibo Oiwa

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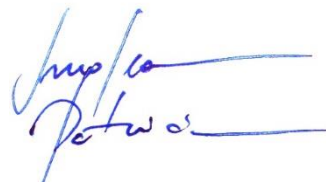
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1 Introduction

Rationale and social relevance of the proposed study

Europe is going nowadays through tough times. The crisis in Europe is portrayed by daily news circling around the world. Symptoms of the crisis are among the affected countries precarity, disorganization of labor, unemployment, poor social rights, cuts to the social wage, extreme cuts to welfare and labor. These symptoms caused the uprising of societies searching and asking for a change. The European crisis is a crisis of Europe which we share, but in different ways as it affects different systems. The one this thesis will emphasize is mainly the crisis of the so called fourth estate of democracy – the media.

In Europe freedom of the press and independent media systems are rather taken as granted. All the EU-members have in their constitution and judicial systems guarantees of the press freedom. However, the crisis has also big repercussions in the public sphere. Economically and socially conditions have a big impact on media independence and on its ability to fulfill its societal functions: the closure of the public TV station ERT in Greece due to austerity measures is one of the best examples of repercussions of the European crisis on the media sector.

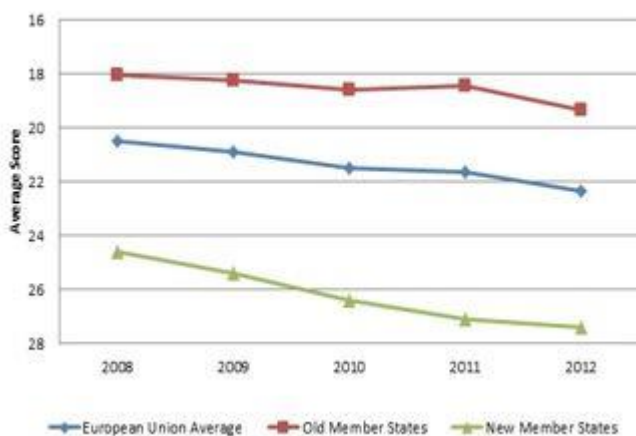


Fig. 1: Average Press Freedom Scores in the EU, 2008–2012 (Freedom House, 2013)

According to Freedom House (2013), the European Economic Crisis has therefore coincided with a decline in press freedom in the EU: “The year 2012 featured a notable deterioration in Greece and more moderate declines in Spain and other nations (...)”. Freedom House (2013) also reports that Europe’s media environment includes manifold cozy relationships

between the field of economy, media owners and politicians and show hostility toward critical reporting.

But after crisis a change is the order of the day. The crisis in countries as Romania, Greece and Spain was mainly characterized by the big civil uprisings, which recently took place.

In Romania for instance, the traditional press, which to some extent is still an instrument of the politics, failed to report the beginning of the biggest social movement in the country regarding a big ecological topic:

“Largely ignored by the most viewed TV channels for the first few days, the [Rosia Montana] protests have most faithfully been described by a new generation of independent journalistic communities such as Casa Jurnalistului, the RISE Project, as well as by freelance photographers, film-makers and activists. As a result, many protesters turned against the mainstream media(…)” (Burtea, 2013).

In this way journalism enters slowly a new phase. As the crisis grows, so does the need of people grow for a new voice. A new wave of journalists enter the press scene with new ideas and fresh journalistic projects, which support the freedom of speech, the main key of democracy, and the value of journalism as a public good. More and more journalists across Europe are already turning to alternative ways of doing journalism to counteract the decline of the print sector, which often releases journalists from constraints and conflicting interests of the large public or commercial institutions.

This thesis is therefore about the rise of the new independent and investigative journalism in times of crisis in Europe – concentrating on Greek, Spanish and Romanian press. The purpose of the thesis is to map and analyze new forms of independent and investigative journalistic projects in East and South Europe, which arose out of the distrust in the local traditional media.

The topic of this thesis is of big relevance and actuality because these new forms of journalism developed as a consequence of the European crisis in the media sector. The purpose of this thesis is to find a complex answer on how these independent, critical journalistic initiatives in Greece, Spain and Romania, are able to save journalism recover from the crisis of democratic value.

2 Literature Review

Theoretical underpinnings of the work and contributions to knowledge

Relevant for this thesis are theories on media governance, on the role of a free and independent media, on crisis and freedom of expression. Of great importance is also the analyze of the ideological frame of the society in which journalism is integrated. Non-mainstream journalism types such as alternative/counter-information/public/investigative/data/advocacy journalism will be introduced for a better understanding where the analyzed journalistic initiatives can be de facto embedded. In the chapter about “Theories for different types of journalism” also the Slow Journalism Movement was included, since some of the philosophies of the investigated journalistic initiatives are similar to those from this movement. Also of great importance is the question of sustainability of these democratic journalistic initiatives.

The initiatives will be embedded in this theoretical frame and through the field work, which will consist out of semi-structured interviews with the involved journalists, new qualitative data will be collected. The purpose of this thesis is namely to map all these initiatives in Romania, Spain and Greece, which arose during the European crisis and to analyze this trend in conformity with the until now existing non-mainstream journalism types. However there is also the assumption, that this new trend belongs rather to a new type of journalism. If so, then these findings could be a new contribution for communication science.

2.1. Media Governance

The governance concept is not necessarily something to which all scholars would agree upon. The critique sees governance as very chaotic, however other scholars agree upon and think that it needs to be expanded. For this thesis, the latter scholar perspective will be followed, which looks at governance also beyond institutions.

Media governance therefore refers to the process and the set of rules that must be met in order to coordinate the action of people towards achieving a common goal.

"Governance is defined as a political process through which decisions are taken [...], which are placed beyond the clearly defined positions of the government [...]. Governance is an interactive field in a space of multi-level power and bodies involved in the development of international policy [...] the actors may be governments, authorities, supranational organizations, civil society and other ideologies" (Sarikakis 2012).

In other words, within the governance concept both, economic and social actors have an influence on policy. The traditional thinking of the state monopoly on power was abandoned and now the state is seen as the one which cooperates with markets and social networks in the public interest. Therefore all actors act collectively and jointly to decide on key issues of their society.

Puppis (2010:135) stresses that governance is "more than a label for new forms of regulation" and that the origins of this term can be seen in different disciplines such as: economics and political science. However, the media governance can be more associated to the term governance of the political sector, because "statutory media regulation is affected by the same problems" as in the politics (Puppis, 2010:136). McQuail (2007:19) underlines that this parallel to the political sector is more significant since the media is changing so rapidly:

"convergence, commercialization and the globalization of social and cultural life as well of economic arrangements, which exert pressure towards a more extensive and differentiated form of social management." (McQuail, 2007:19).

Other media academics, such as Feintuck (1999), Schulz & Held (2004), Tambini et al. (2008) see that the traditional statutory regulation is insufficient and that new forms of media regulation have to be introduced (Puppis, 2010:136).

Scholars distinguish between narrow and broad definitions of governance.

Governance in a narrow sense refers to changing polities, politics and policies.

It “signifies a change in the meaning of government, referring to new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is governed.” (Rhodes, 1996:652-653).

The main difference is that government represents the hierarchical statutory forms of regulation and governance the new, innovative, and cooperative forms of regulation (Benz, 2004:17–18). In other words, governance “only comprises types of political steering in which nonhierarchical modes of guidance [. . .] are employed, and/or public and private actors are engaged in policy formulation” (H’eritier, 2001:2).

On the other hand, broad definitions of governance focus on collective coordination in general.

Pierre (2000: 3-4) defines governance as “sustaining co-ordination and coherence among a wide variety of actors with different purposes and objectives such as political actors and institutions, corporate interest, civil society, and transitional organizations.”

In short, media governance is about the dynamics and outcomes which take place between the entities listed before in order to create a media legal frame.

Another definition comes from Freedman (2008:14), which stresses that that media governance “refers to the total sum of mechanisms, both formal and informal, national and supranational, centralized and dispersed, that aim to organize media systems.” In other words, governance refers to all patterns of rule and explores the construction of social order and social coordination.

As an analytical concept, media governance offers a new point of view. As Puppis (2010: 139) writes, media governance is a new way of describing, explaining, and criticizing the entirety of forms of rules that aim to organize media systems.

Following this pattern of thinking, media governance receives two meanings: the governance concept, which takes an integrated view on rules and an analytical governance concept, which can be used in various theoretical contexts in order to explain different aspects of the regulatory structure.

When looking at media governance as an integrated view of rules it first allows for discussing a horizontal as well as a vertical extension of government (Latzer, 2007; Puppis, 2007; Puppis, d'Haenens, & Saeys, 2007). Media governance covers statutory regulation (government) as well as self- and coregulation on the horizontal basis.

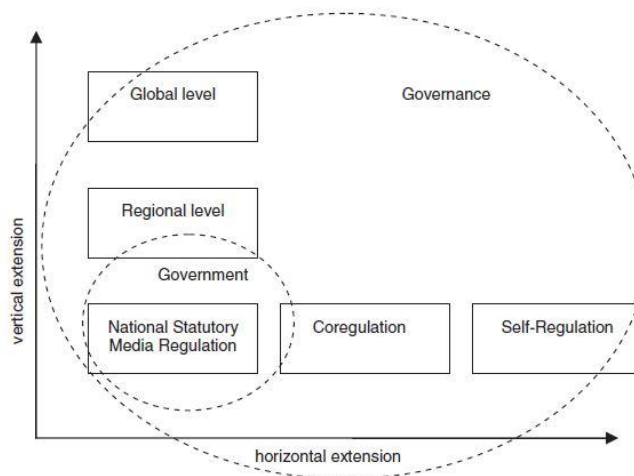


Fig 2. Media Governance as horizontal and vertical extension of the government (Puppis, 2010)

The statutory regulation refers to the state influence. Self-regulation on the other hand implies a regulation by non-state actors, meaning that the organization is the one, which organize the standards of behavior of its membership (Baldwin & Cave, 1999:63). The co-regulation refers to industry self-regulation with a state supervision (Ayres & Braithwaite, 1992:102). The self- and co-regulative institutions play a very important role in the media sector, because these

are the ones, which care of the journalism ethics in many countries and “are often presented as a solution for the dilemma of how to reconcile media regulation with media freedom “ (Puppis, 2010:139f).

The vertical extension shows the main participants on a global, regional and national level, which all play an important role in shaping the media sector. The global level includes organizations such as World Trade Organization or the United Nations Educational and the regional level is here for instance the European Union, namely organizations which also have a word to say when talking about media regulations on national level (Puppis 2010:140).

The Media Governance includes also an organizational governance. This refers to the internal rules and control mechanism. These could be for example, news organizations, which introduced internal editorial guidelines or codes of conduct, ombudsmen, or public editors. These kind of self-organization may also exist within a self-regulatory or a statutory framework (Black, 1996: 27), for instance, in the case of public service broadcasters.

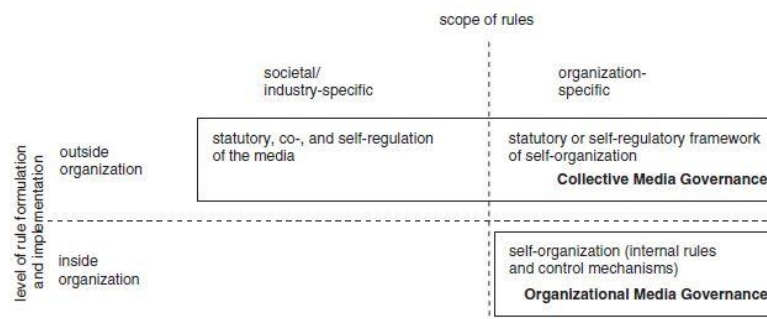


Fig 3: Collective and organizational media governance. (Puppis, 2010:141)

There is no self-regulatory design for the media sector as a whole (Latzer, 2007:345), rather it is necessary to distinguish between different media and different domains of media governance. Criteria of self-regulation are diverse from scholar to scholar. Napoli (2008:2974) points at media content, structural elements of media markets, and distribution networks; McQuail (2005:235) differentiates between the regulation of structure, conduct and

performance. Puppis (2007:67-68) on the other hand distinguishes between the regulation of organizations, ownership, funding, distribution, processes and content.

For the purpose of this thesis, the media self-regulatory governance type, which will be used, is the latter one. It is of interest to find out in the researched countries, how the new independent critical journalistic initiatives, which arose during the crisis, regulate their media organization in terms of ownership, funding, distribution, processes and content; to what extent are these new initiatives able to regulate themselves for a sustainable outcome, respectively to what extent are they able to exert the power of replication within the media system.

2.2. Press Freedom

Press freedom and an independent media system are more or less taken as granted in Europe. Press freedom is explained as the absence of state intervention in the media activities. The EU-member states have all implemented guarantees of press freedom in their constitutions. Yet, other factors, such as economical influences, historic, cultural and social conditions also have a big impact on media independencies. (Czepek, Hellwig, Nowak, 2009: 9).

Traditionally, the press freedom of a country is measured by how much control does the state have on the media. Press freedom is then constrained, when censorship is exerted or journalists pursued or killed (Czepek, 2005).

The concept of press freedom not only concerns the print sector but also the online media, social platforms and other channels, on which information are at disposal of the general public. Freedom of the press serves an important function in a democratic society. The press has to be independent from the state, but also from the economic interest. It has to provide diverse, complete and correct information to the citizens and enable universal participation in public discourses.

Present indexes also assume, that specific political requirements and the consequent regulations, like a liberal economy system and/or a democratic constitution also generate a free press.

Czepek (2009) criticizes the way the index of freedom of the press is being measured. In most cases the press freedom is measured by the “freedom from government control”. However, aspects like plurality and participation are not considered.

Czepek (2009) introduced next to classical criterias, also the participation (as in access to the media) and diversity of the content. The following criterias should also be taken into consideration when discussing the press freedom:

- Legal and structural conditions (legal protection, ownership of the media, pluralism)
- Individual journalistic freedom (freedom exercises, degree of harassment, censorship and self-censorship)
- Content pluralism as an indicator for press freedom (are specific controversial topics systematically neglected? Are opposing opinions presented? Is the government criticized?)
- Possibilities for participation (access to the media; active as producers and passive as consumers/recipients.)

Press Freedom Situation in Romania, Spain and Greece

According to the world press freedom index 2014 made by the organization Reporters without Borders, the EU-members “are becoming more dispersed in the index, a development accelerated by the effects of the economic crisis and outbreaks of populism.” Romania lost 3 places (45th), whereas Spain (35th, +1) has risen in terms of press freedom. Greece (99th, -14) is one of the most notable examples – the 2007 economic crisis hit the Greek media really hard. The few wealthy entrepreneurs who financed the national media have moved their investments into more profitable sectors, with the outcome that organization after another has announced layoffs and many journalists are now unemployed. Journalists are often the victims of physical attacks by members of Golden Dawn, the neo-Nazi party that entered the parliament in June 2012. The government’s actions have also contributed to this low index: by closing the state broadcaster ERT in 2013 the Prime Minister Samaras seemed to be cutting back on democracy to save money (Reporters without Borders, 2014).

2.3. Journalism and Neoliberalism

The following chapter discusses some ideas from Pascal Zwicky's (2012) book, "Journalistische Produktion unter neoliberalen Bedingungen – Eine konflikttheoretische Analyse von Tageszeitungen aus Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz". His theoretical work is of great importance for the present thesis, because Zwicky integrates journalism into the ideological frame of the society, in which we live in today and analyzes the conditions of functioning of this institution, which ideally has to be the voice of democracy, but is rather driven by the economic force of the capitalistic society. Based on these two contrasting forces, the institution of journalism is being analyzed with respect to the multi-faceted crisis.

The incompatibility of the media as a voice of democracy, which functions in a capitalistic society is therefore also a point, which should be taken into consideration when discussing the media crisis. Fenton (2011:65) doesn't necessarily blame the new technologies and the obvious economic problems, but rather the media crisis

"is linked more fundamentally to the practices of neoliberalism – the increasing marketization of news and the ruthless logic of an economic system that demands ever-increasing profit margins resulting in fewer journalists doing more work, undermining the provision of news in the public interest".

Following this argument, it is clear, that the media crisis does not have to do just with altered market conditions, but with the total social phenomenon and the corresponding power relationships. The media crisis is therefore a result of the development aligned by the vested interests for commercial purposes.

Neoliberalism is therefore a doctrine, "[...] which absolutizes the market as a regulation mechanism of the social processes of development and decision." (Butterwegge/Lösch/Ptak 2008:11). The neoliberal practice of overemphasizing the market is often criticized, because of offering privilege to an individual cost-benefit calculation and for this less importance to values like solidarity and society (Willke 2003: 147-156). As a result of this ideology even larger gaps emerge between the elites and the civil society.

Because of this, the working environment has also changed. Bourdieu (2004) is criticizing the enhanced appearance of precarity, which he massively observed in every economy sector. He perceives this precarity as a new form of governing, which is based on everlasting insecurity and exploitation of the employees. Moreover, the neoliberal economies have an urge for short-termed profit and time pressure and for this reason, the flexibility of the employees is requested. Zwicky (2012:55) also observes an increase of unsecure respectively precarious employment circumstances in the media sector.

So – the social conflicts nowadays are definitively shaped by neoliberalism. Despite protestations to the contrary, the neoliberal ideology promotes the development of the market principles and not the public welfare, meaning that the only one, which could benefit of the neoliberalism is the ruling class. The indicator, which reinforces this argument, is the growing social inequality, which we observe even in the everyday life.

The media crisis affected by the influence of neoliberalism can be illustrated from the perspective of the conflict theory of Karl Marx. This approach can be in general terms explained through the social behavior and the social structures, in which individuals want to optimize their power and/or prosperity and/or their social status. The interests of the people are mainly shaped by the social power and authority affairs. Through these self-interest conducted actions, individuals react on the social structures. Collins (1975:57) explains the general premise of the conflict theory as follows:

“Individuals’ behavior is explained in terms of their self-interests in a material world of threat and violence. Social Order is seen as being founded on organized coercion. There is an ideological realm of belief [...], and an underlying world of struggles over power; ideas and morals are not prior to interaction but are socially created, and serve the interests of parties to the conflict.”

According to Bornschier (2007:210) individuals are related to society through their interest contrasts, so the socialization is the cause for conflicts. In contrast to this is the consensus theoretical paradigm, which emphasizes the common values and norms of the unity of the society (Bornschier 2007:195-201). Dahrendorf (1957:162) identifies in distinction to the

consensus theory four conflict theory posits: Each society is the subject to change – social change is therefore ever-present. Each society experiences conflict - social conflict is ever-present. Each element of a society contributes to its change and each society is based on pressures, which some individuals exert on others. So change involves always conflict, and conflict brings always a change. The social conflicts nowadays are in most of the cases affected by the practice and ideology of the neoliberal capitalism.

Social conflicts are for Marx particularly class conflicts. He sees the whole historic development as a history of class struggles and considers the society as a class society overall. Burzan (2015:17) recognizes four central principles of the Marxist class concept:

1. The class concept has an economic basis. Crucial for the affiliation in a class and the social power structures is the possession (bourgeoisie) or no-possession (proletariat) of capital goods. This principle determines mainly the social inequality.
2. The class theory is a conflict theory, because the contrasting interests of individuals develop a conflict between two antagonistic classes. The relation between the classes gains in importance.
3. Marx differentiates between the objective situation of a class and the awareness of the class situation. These two class conditions are the requirement for the political class behavior.
4. Social change can be explained by means of analyze of the dynamics of a class conflict.

Demirovic (2005:510) highlights that bourgeoisie and proletariat are interdependent and this relation is characteristic for the civic respectively capitalistic society. He states that the

“tragedy for both conflict parties is that they have to fight against another for the principles of their existence; they also cannot move apart from another, because they mutually need each other, as long as they are linked by the capitalistic relations of productions. [...] The actors can euphemize this conflict, deceive oneself about it or cultivate it in a distributive conflict, as in a welfare state compromise of the second half of the 20th century.” (own transl Demirovic 2005: 54).

This conflict can be very well observed on the example of Greece. The neoliberal turn from the 1970s leads to the fact, that the basal conflict is nowadays even clearer. The recent social movements in Greece against the austerity measures against the finance economic crisis, which were given by the government, EU, finance actors and the International Monetary Fund, can be seen as an indicator for this issue (Sotiris, 2014).

2.5. The crisis of the mainstream press

"As the mainstream media has become increasingly dependent on advertising revenues for support, it has become an anti-democratic force in society."

(Robert McChesney)

The topic of "crisis" has become a companion through life for most of the people in Europe and the USA since the financial collapse in 2008. These tough times in the affected countries generated conditions of precarity, disorganization of labor, unemployment. The media has been constantly talking about this topic and the effects of it on the society. However, while doing this, the media itself witnessed its own downgrade and incapacity to fulfill its democratic role.

Radical changes of the global media landscape can be observed since many years, mainly in the capitalistic market based societies. The traditional professional media is confronted with new conditions and is nowadays even more pressured by competition and costs. Blum (et.al, 2011) calls the crisis of the quality media, which can be felt mostly in the countries affected by the financial crisis, "the crisis of the lighthouses of the public communication."

The difficult economic situation, combined with the expansion of the Internet, has resulted in an unprecedented structural crisis for print media. There is a steep drop of the circulation figures and cuts of the advertisement revenues. Circulation figures are falling down with a bigger velocity than the advertisement income. This leads to precarity, disorganization of labor and a huge unemployment among journalists, which is combined with a lack of quality of the journalistic content.

The present business model of the media corporations, which brought a lot of profit for decades, is now no longer suitable for the current conditions, since almost the whole newspaper sector is under massive economic pressure.

	Fired Journalists	Drops in circulation figures
GREECE ¹	30% between 2010-2012	66% between 2008-2014
SPAIN ²	4500 between 2008-2014	67% between 2009-2011
ROMANIA ³	6000 between 2004-2010	80%-90% between 2008-2014

Table 1: Fired Journalists and drops in circulation figures of newspapers in Greece, Spain and Romania (own representation)

Greece, Spain and Romania have critical numbers regarding fired journalists and drops in circulation figures, which of course affect the advertisement revenues. Todd Gitlin (2009) offered in a speech a broad view on the structural problems of journalism. He identified five main components of the journalism crisis faced in the United States, which also can be applied in the European news media. Two are economic factors and include the precipitous decline in the circulation of newspapers and advertisement revenues. The two economic factors have badly damaged the profitability of newspapers. The third factor is the diffusion of attention from journalism due to the shifts in the media landscape. The fourth one is related to a broader crisis of authority while finally the last one, which is a perpetual crisis, concerns the inability or unwillingness of journalism to act as a watchdog for those in power. Likewise, McChesney (2003) concludes that journalism's crisis is its inability to deal with those in power, to determine truth from lies, and to present a range of informed opinions on important events. He also analyzes the crisis from a meta-level and argues that the commercialization of the media and its profit aim were basically like a bubble that has now more or less burst and let journalism sink into chaos. Due to its complexity, the latter factor will be explained more detailed in the next chapter.

All the mentioned factors simultaneously lead to a symptomatic mistrust in the media by the civil society. A recent Euro-barometer survey reveals that only 23% Greeks, 31% Spaniards and 39% Romanians trust the press news compared with an EU average of 41% (European

¹ Athens Daily Newspaper Publishers Association – Newspaper Circulation (2008-2014): http://www.eihea.gr/default_en.htm (Mai, 2015)

² Asociación de la Prensa de Madrid i 14 - INFORME ANUAL DE LA PROFESIÓN PERIODÍSTICA

³ Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent – Starea Sectorului Mass-Media in Romania 2014 – Vulnerabilitati si posibile solutii: <http://www.cji.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Mass-media-in-2014.pdf> (Mai, 2015)

Commission, 2013). For a proper functioning of democracy these framework conditions are unfortunately not appropriate.

2.5.1. Structural problems of the private institutionalizing of media

Media moves between the conflicting priorities of the profit speculation of media owners and the journalistic performance expected by the society. The consequential problems of this area of conflict are of structural nature and Croteau/Hoynes (2001:21-25) describes four substantial weaknesses respectively market problems, which are of great importance regarding media and public communication.

1. Capitalistic markets are, contrary to the liberal affirmations, undemocratic. The more capital one has, the higher is the influence on the market. This fundamental characteristic raises serious doubts on the qualification of capitalistic markets for the constitution of a democratic public sphere. (Habermas 2008:132f., McChesney 2008:40ff).
2. As a consequence to point 1., markets produce and reproduce social inequalities. Markets are a central mechanism for coordination of modern capitalistic societies. Because markets are based on property/no-property of economic, social and cultural capital, they tend to build more social inequalities after the Matthäus-effect. In regard to media, this would mean that "those parties with significant resources may own or disproportionately influence media content, while those with only modest means have little or no influence on what is produced" (Croteau/Hoynes 2001:22). As a conclusion to this structural problem, one can assume that media generally reflects the interests and views of the rich.
3. Media are unethical. Markets do not look after external effects, which they can impose on the society. For a non-regulated media market it doesn't matter if for instance racist or discriminating content is being delivered.
4. Markets do not necessarily match social and democratic needs. Meritorious goods are being neglected in the market model. Therefore the question that emerges is how can "democracy-relevant" journalism be financed over the market, if it's not enough requested in comparison to for instance boulevard or yellow journalism. Also the influence of the

advertisement is here to be brought into question. Light entertainment combined with consume subtle undertones are for the advertisement industry an attractive environment compared to a critical dispute with political topics or corruption. Moreover, the market-based and advertisement-funded media contributes to an individualizing of the society, in which recipients, mostly because of the new technological opportunities are addressed even more increased in an individualistic form (target-group-specific) and less as a mass or a collective. The shared knowledge horizon is smaller and this leads to a dis-unification. The tendency according to Croteau/Hoynes (2001:24) is “to produce economic benefits while simultaneously creating (or at least helping to sustain) democratic deficits”.

Following this chain of thought, Herman/Chomsky (1988) have identified the problems of the private institutionalization and of the capitalistic market principles in the media sector. They analyzed how structural factors in a democratic-capitalistic environment can systematically influence the news coverage, so that the interests of the economic and political elites are reproduced and brought into the public sphere. Herman and Chomsky (1988) developed the “propaganda model” and identified five filters, which are responsible to deliver the “right” news coverage from the perspectives of the social power elites.

Owners: Media organizations are mostly profit-orientated companies in private ownership. “In sum, the dominant media firms are quite large businesses; they are controlled by very wealthy people or by managers who are subject to sharp constraints by owners and other market-profit-oriented forces, and they are closely interlocked, and have important common interests, with other major corporations, banks and government” (Herman/Chomsky 1988:14). Media owners, the management and also chief-editors move within the circle of the social power elites and some are also part of it. Their mindset and loyalties are being formed between closed doors with influential people from the economy, politics and culture sector (Sparks 2006:125-128).

Financing: Most private media are financed to a high degree by advertisement. The dependence of the private media to the advertisement market and the accompanying influence potential of the advertisers is one of the points of criticism to the dominant regime

(McQuail 2008:292ff). It is therefore an illusion to believe that the advertisement market can maintain an independent press.

Sources: Media are increasingly dependent on the government and companies as source of information. Whilst the first reduces human resources and competences, the second strengthens and professionalizes its public relations work through the lens of journalism.

Power on the media: Corporations and governments have extensive opportunities to exert pressure on the media when its being reported in a too critical way. The influence can stretch from the indulgence among elite-friends to the feared action for libel (Harcup 2009:23-26, Herman/McChesney 2004).

Dominant interpretative frames: The plurality of opinions in the public sphere is limited by the ideological interpretative frame in the society (anti-communism, capitalism/neoliberalism etc.). The mass media cannot permit, also because of entrepreneurial reasons, to deviate from the social consensus of opinions, which is simultaneously constructed by the media. For media representatives with different world views is therefore more difficult to enter the media market. Journalists as individuals are influenced by the domination of the prevalent neoliberal reality and therefore it's unlikely that they exert substantial critics on the status-quo.

The insights given by this model can be also traced in the interviews with the media owners of the independent journalistic initiatives as critics to the current status of the media system in Romania, Spain and Greece.

2.5.2. Media organizations and ownership types

In the context of the organizational conditions of the journalistic production is of particular importance to analyze the media ownership, which is authorized on both the economic targets and journalistic line of the medium. Zwicky (2011:72ff) categorizes the media ownership into market-oriented, publisher or family and non-profit ownership.

1. Market-oriented ownership

The market-oriented media ownership is characterized by the excessive profit expectations, which automatically endangers the journalistic performances of the media (Hanfeld 2007). Habermas (2008) states, referring to the engagement of the investors in the German market and on the transition to a neoliberal institutionalization mode that “the market has once provided the stage, on which subversive thoughts of the state suppression could have been emancipated. But the market can fulfill this function just as long as the economic conformity to law doesn’t penetrate in the pores of the cultural and political contents, which are over the market widespread.”

Based on an analysis of private-equity takeovers in several media sectors from the USA, Crain (2009) perceives three essential problems, which are resulted from the engagement of finance investors:

1. The higher the investor capital and lower the owner’s capital is, the higher is therefore the level of debt. This basically leads to the fact that the survival of the company, which was taken over, is faster endangered during mismanagement or macro-economic changes, like for instance recession.
2. Aggressive strategies for profit maximizing have to be made in order reduce debts (cost-cutting mainly in the human resources area).
3. Crain (2009:227ff.) also refers to the fact that private-equity-companies implicate problems for the media regulation because of the untransparent company structures.

Considering these potential issues underlined by Crain (2009), mass media are more and more treated like commercial services and lesser and lesser like democracy-relevant cultural assets.

2. Publisher or family-ownership

Compared to the market-oriented ownership, the publisher or family ownership is more oriented to the journalistic sense of responsibility. Hamilton (2004:24) states that: “When ownership is concentrated in an individual or family, then these people may take pleasure in sacrificing some profits for the sake of the public good (as they perceive it). These owners may identify with the communities their outlets are published in and try to encourage civic participation through information provision. [...] The owner may also enjoy the recognition that goes with public service actions. Here the provision of news about public affairs may earn a reputation for altruism.”

A negative aspect of the publisher or family-ownership of media is described by Chomsky (2006) with an example of New York Times on how the Sulzberger family has influenced constantly the journalistic content, mostly in political matters – for instance the coverage line on Israel, the Cold War, civil-rights movement in the USA or homosexuality.

The phenomenon of media moguls or tycoons can be also referred to at this type of ownership. Silvio Berlusconi, Rupert Murdoch, Leonidas Bobolas (Mega Channel, Greece) or Jesús de Polanco (El País, Spain) are strong businessmen personalities, which influence their media directly based on their own political and economic basic orientation. Habermas (2008:182) thinks that the damage for the editorial independence of the media is then made, when private owners create media empires on their personal burning ambition and use their economic power to exercise political influence. Media moguls are therefore a big threat to democratic societies.

3. Non-Profit-Ownership

The owner of a non-profit media can be a foundation or a charitable rep. not-profit orientated institution or organization. Under this category there is also the employees-ownership in form of cooperatives, which follows not just economic, but also cultural and social objectives. The focus is at the non-profit compared to the family-ownership even greater on the journalistic purposes, whereas the economic ones come on second place (Stepp 2004).

However, according to Dunlap (2004) this type of ownership doesn't guarantee a journalistic quality. The lack of quality can be explained insofar that the media cooperatives do not own capital for technical innovations, which could make them more competitive on the market. Moreover, Fedler/Pennington (2003:270) made a study on the employee-media-ownership in the US and came to the conclusion that this type of journalism failed. A big majority of this type of media did not survive.

2.6. Crisis as an opportunity to change

Siles and Boczkowski (2012) offered in their review of the newspaper crisis a detailed analysis of the diverse ways in which the crisis has been understood by various empirical studies, which have provided insights into the sources and manifestations, as well as the relevance of the crisis for politics and society. The proposed solutions include economic, technological and political solutions.

Economic solutions recommend the development of new business models or the support of journalism through public subsidies (Giles, 2010, McChesney 2010 and Nichols, 2010).

Technological solutions focus on the need for newspapers to adopt and adapt to new technologies (Gillmour, 2004).

The political solutions include new ways of fulfilling the functions served by newspapers (Downie and Schudson, 2010).

However these solutions assume a top-down perspective of saving journalism. In terms of the “crisis studies”, according to Siapera et. al (2015), no media scholar has looked by now at how journalists themselves perceive the crisis or what are their views and solutions to the crisis within the field of journalism.

Siles and Boczkowski (2012) suggest a new view that includes a focus on the processes that have led to the media crisis and not only its outcomes. For this reason, they propose that the future researches on the media crisis, should include the analyze of the historical and geographical contexts of the crisis, a focus on the economic, social and political consequences of the crisis and not least the use of a more diverse methodological approach to study in the crisis.

With this approach in mind, the crisis will be seen as part of a broader historical critical juncture in the media field. The notion of critical juncture has been recommended as a means to understand social change (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). Critical junctures represent mainly periods of time when structures are more fluid, decisions have not yet been taken, and

institutions and policies have not yet cristallized. McChesney (2007) adheres that critical junctures rare and brief, lasting no more than couple of decades. During these periods the range of options is greater than usual, and the decisions taken by the end of these junctures will affect society and its institutions. According to McChesney (2007), it is vital to recognize and intervene in such periods.

In order to recognize and systematize the characteristics of critical junctures, McChesney suggests that they appear when

To detect and systematize the characteristics of critical junctures, McChesney suggests that they occur when at least two of the following conditions are present:

1. Revolutionary new technology that undermines the existing system.
The new possibilities brought by the internet weakend the circulation of the traditional press, because most newspapers, also put their articles online but without any monetary barrier.

2. Discredited media contents.

The credibility of at least mainstream media has always been into question, but lately this has intensified (see Chapter 4).

3. A major political crisis.

And finally, the financial crisis which began in 2007 and has provoked a massive political crisis in all of the three countries.

It seems like that all three characteristics are present. The combination of these characteristics is according to this approach, contributing to the destabilization of the field of media. However this destabilization was the opportunity for change and accordingly to this for new independent and critical media to be born.

2.7. Theories for different types of journalism

Journalism is a very dynamic field and over time it developed in many directions and genres. If one takes a look in the garden of the communication science, will immediately notice that it is a multicolored field and that it is not always very easy to differentiate the types of journalism. The classic journalism mutated to several hybrids. This is also the case of the journalism genre, which is discussed in this thesis.

The crisis, which strongly hit Europe starting from 2008, also implied an identity crisis of the media. However, during the crisis, change was already happening in the field of media. From the traditional journalism new professional fields arose. The contours of the journalistic genres are now however more than ever blurred. As a reason is also the technological development, the economic and historical context but also the needs of the society to which the media had to adjust. Greck and Altmeppen (2012) claim that the communication science has strong roots and is accurately cut into communicator-, statement-, consumer-, impact- and media research according to the well known Lasswell formula. However, the science eye has also observed more and more media hybrids and unknown phenomena, which are poetically labeled by Greck and Altmeppen (2012) as “orchids in the media jungle, which grow on other plants in symbiosis”.

Before exploring some genres of the large palette of journalism, it is important to first illustrate what journalism is.

Barbie Zelizer (2009) claims that journalism has been always multiple. “Its multiplicity has become more pronounced as journalism has necessarily mutated.” Michael Schudson’s (2003) definition of journalism is on the other hand unitary. “Journalism is the business or practice of producing and disseminating information about contemporary affairs of general public interest and importance (Schudson, 2003:11). Although also other types of materials appear in the press, like for instance reviews, sport, lifestyle columns etc., he further argues that “it’s hard to dignify any of this as ‘publically important’”. For many academics, however, public interest journalism is what is meant by “journalism” (Le Masurier, 2014).

Already back in the 1990s has been discussed about the speed of the news, which are always put in the context of journalism. Kovach and Rosenstiel (1999:5) came with evidence of how the classic function of journalism was being weakened by the speed. This was even before the online news production, social media platforms and possibilities of networked communication appeared. These concerns are confirmed also by other scholars. The loss of accuracy and checking is a characteristic of today's dynamic news, because of the pressure to produce them in almost real-time (Hargreaves, 2003:12). Some journalists do not even leave the newsroom, or they even report stories before they happened (Davies, 2009). "Churnalism" is a new term, which describes the new practices of being dependent on PR material and news agencies (Davies, 2009:59).

The contemporary work ethic of news journalism is being described by Natalie Fenton (2010, 561) as "speed it up and spread it thin."

The following chapters offer a short description of some journalism genres, like alternative, counter-information, public, investigative, data, advocacy journalism. Characteristics from these types of journalism can be also found in the journalistic initiatives, which emerged out of in the course of the economic, but also media crisis.

2.7.1. Alternative Journalism

Alternative journalism proceeds from the discontent with the mainstream coverage but also with the epistemology of news. The critique emphasizes alternatives to conventions of news sources and representation, inverted pyramid of news texts, hierarchical and capitalized economy of commercial journalism, professional, elite basis of journalism as a practice, the professional norm of objectivity and the subordinate role of audience as receiver (Atton and Hamilton, 2008:1).

Denis McQuail (2000:160) writes that the “dissatisfaction with established media has found expression in the celebration of completely different forms, free from established systems.” He proposed the concept of “democratic-participant media” in order to explain the “many ideas expressed on behalf of the alternative, grass-roots media. McQuail (2000:160) claims that alternative journalism challenged the dominance of centralized, commercialized, state-controlled and even professionalized media. Alternative media is rather small in scale, non-commercial and often committed to a cause. Participation and interaction are the key concepts.

Atton (2002, 25) states the alternative journalism is basically done also by “ordinary people without the necessity of professional training”. At the same time, alternative journalism seeks to engage with ordinary people, as a “set of voices which have as equal a right to be heard as do the voices of elite groups” (Atton&Hamilton, 2008:126). The structures of the alternative media have been also described as forming part of an alternative or plebeian public sphere (Atton, 1999:54, 71; Habermas, 1989:xviii) or as “counter public sphere” that contain the communicational efforts of groups and organisations that challenge existing power relations (De Jong et al, 2005:11).

Atton (2009:269) also writes that alternative journalism can also be described as a provider of components of an alternative public sphere, where agendas are set and discussion is developed through the journalism of social movements. Alternative media should therefore seen as a multiplicity of public spaces, “a colorful – but at times also contentious – myriad of media initiatives as diversified as society itself.” (Bailey et al., 2008:153)

2.7.2. Counter-Information Journalism

The counter-information journalism is a more radical form of the alternative journalism, which is defined as the circulation of information which is antagonistic to the dominant ideology and seeks to be unmediated by institutions and the commodified economy. The counter-information rotates against the dominant information and its purpose is to find its own dynamic and channels of distribution. Counter-information is mainly born around the settings of social movements. It is a kind of journalism that has a dual function, and namely to socialize the views of those in the struggle and to challenge the authoritarian monopoly on the circulation of ideas and meanings.

Nowadays the dominant media discourse passes without any filter of the mainstream media and penetrates from top to down the social discourse. Counter-information journalism tries to challenge the dominant discourse and to illuminate what mainstream media obscures, the possibility of struggle and resistance and not least to promote the possibility of social emancipation. (Katalipsi collective⁴, 2013)

Indymedia is an example of counter-information journalism.

2.7.3. Public Journalism

Public or civic journalism represents a substantial shift in the perception about the role, purpose and practice of journalism and it asserts that public life is in crisis, and that journalism, as it has come to be practiced, is partially responsible. It is to some extent a reaction against a widely perceived cynicism toward politics. This concept came during the 1990s from Jay Rosen, a professor at the New York University and Davis Merritt, the editor of Wichita Eagle and primarily seeks to revitalize the public life. The main purpose of public journalism is to revitalize this field by reaching out to the public and challenges the journalists to reevaluate their

⁴ Katalipsi collective is an assembly of paid, unpaid, unemployed and students in the media, as resulted from the squat in ESIEA (The Journalists' Union of the Athens Daily Newspapers) 10-16 / 1/2009

profession with an eye toward helping the public become more active in the democratic process. Public journalism is therefore an idealistic attempt to democratize the culture of journalism. It is as well in direct opposition to the elite-centred model of journalism. Merritt (1994:24) states, that public journalism is a way of liberating journalism from its artificial constraints. The function of public journalism is not only to raise public consciousness, but also engage the public in the resolution of the problems. Public journalism can also enlarge its function according to Rosen (1991: 274) through contacts with organizations which foster public values. Therefore is the journalist no longer an observer and distributor of information, he/she is a participant in the process of democratic self-governance..

2.7.4. Investigative Journalism

Örnebring and Stetka (2013) put together a broad definition of investigative journalism by analyzing the literature, which mainly delivered a great degree of scholarly consensus on what the key elements of investigative journalism are.

Örnebring and Stetka (2013) suggest the following definition:

Investigative journalism is “sustained news coverage of moral and legal transgressions of persons in positions of power and that requires more time and resources than regular news reporting.”

So, investigative journalism is a sustained, systematic and often long-term kind of investigative work, which is about moral and legal transgressions, meaning wrongdoings of some legal type. These violations are made by people in powerful positions, mainly from political and economic spheres of the society. These violations may be systemic, but investigative journalism demands an individual or set of individuals that can be held responsible. The purpose of this type of journalism requires organizational and economic demands, it requires more time and resources than other forms of journalism.

2.7.5. Data Journalism

Data Journalism is according to a qualitative study made in Germany (Spiller, Weinacht, 2014) a branch of the investigative journalism. The journalists working in this field consider themselves “watchdogs of the society”. Data journalism is different than the traditional journalism because in this field the visualization of the data is very important and the results of the investigation are transparent. This journalism field is rapidly growing and the essence of it, is the collection, analysis and preparing of the digitalized information with the purpose to be transformed in a journalistic piece. Therefore, journalists work in teams with computer programmers and graphic designers.

2.7.6. Advocacy journalism

Advocacy journalism has a long history and it has been also known as radical journalism, critical journalism, activist journalism or social justice journalism (Burns, 2014). The term advocacy journalism describes the use of journalism techniques to promote a specific political or social cause. Advocacy journalism can be used to shove certain governmental systems, political institutions and political actors. Advocacy journalism is also used to address social development issues and concerns (Waisbord, 2004:371-375).

Dave Berman, which writes for the Indy Media Centre, claims that if there is a meaningful change to be created, “advocacy journalism will be the single most crucial element to enable the necessary organizing.” (Berman, 2004)

2.7.7. Slow Journalism Movement

Slow Journalism has emerged from the slow movement, which is a subversion revolution of the dominance of speed in our everyday lives (Parkins and Craig, 2006). The movement began as a protest in Rome in 1989 against fast food and the president of this movement, Carlo Petrini, states that this movement is not just opposed to fast food, but is also a “a critical reaction to the symptoms of incipient globalization” (Petrini, 2001:8).

The slow journalism started to become a developing trend in the field of news journalism focusing on in-depth investigations and contextual journalism, rather than breaking news

(Edge, 2015). The journalism also operated at different speeds of creation, circulation, of time spent in consumption. By understanding “slow” in a temporal sense, then slow journalism was from early ages already operated in form of the investigative journalism, the long-form narrative journalism, new journalism. However, Slow Journalism is referred to more than the temporality in production (Le Masurier, 2015).

Susan Greenberg (2007) was the first to use the term of slow journalism. She argued that the long-form nonfiction had the potential to:

“end the dominance of our “fast news culture... We get basic news cheaply, on air and online. In the middle is traditional print journalism, the sector is losing readers. At the luxury end, there should be a growing market for essays, reportage and other non-fiction writing that takes its time to find things out, notice stories that others miss, and communicates it all to the highest standards: slow journalism” (Greenberg, 2007).

Slow Journalism should also be transparent by crediting all sources, being clear about what is original journalism and what is reproduced PR copy, being clear about how the information is being obtained, and in online journalism by linking readers to sources documents, background research and other relevant stories (Rosen, 2010a).

Academic and journalist Mark Berkey-Gerard identified a temporary working definition by tracking references to slow journalism in the public discourse:

Slow journalism “gives up the fetish of beating the competition. Values accuracy, quality, and context not just being fast and first. Avoids celebrity, sensation, and events covered by a herd of reporters. Takes time to find things out. Seeks out untold stories. Relies on the power of narrative. Sees the audience as collaborators.” (Berkey-Gerard 2009)

Megan Le Masurier, which is one of the few media scholars, that investigated this new journalistic field, states in an interview that slow journalism is a reaction to huge media organisations. She continues,

"The smaller scale of slow journalists' enterprises, I think involves people in a way they don't feel involved in large media organisations. So it's a kind of alternative media, without being necessarily politically alternative" (Al Jazeera, 2015).

3. Methodology

“Science, my boy, is made up of mistakes, but they are mistakes which it is useful to make, because they lead little by little to the truth.”

— Jules Verne, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*

3.1. Research Design

This study basically poses the question on how times of crisis in Greece, Spain and Romania managed to change the view of the citizens on the traditional media and how the new independent critical journalistic initiatives emerged out of the people’s distrust in the conventional media. It is of interest to find out what is the motivation to run such projects, how these businesses are being run or how sustainable these initiatives are. Furthermore, this thesis also tries to figure out to what extent is the work of these journalists compared to a particular public good, which can maintain the democratic line of a state?

Main Research Question

What kind of new journalistic projects arose during social movements and times of crisis in Greece, Spain and Romania?

Secondary Research Questions

- How are these being organized, structured?
- Who is working for these kind of projects?
- To what extent are these projects sustainable?

In order to be able to answer to these research questions, the design of this study will be based on three different pillars:

1. Desk review (see Chapter 2)
2. Background and historical research on the media context, in which these projects arose

The background and historical research are for this topic of great importance. Nowadays important social changes are taking place in Europe. The trigger of these changes is mainly the financial crisis, which hit Europe starting from 2008. This phenomenon has not only financial and social repercussions, but also changes on different levels like for instance the media system and the journalism culture. Therefore new independent and investigative media from three different countries – Spain, Greece and Romania, which arose during this difficult time, will be investigated. It is therefore necessary to know the exact context in which these projects developed in order to be able to draw valuable conclusions about the meaning of this kind of journalism for democracy, media systems, new communicative spaces and societies.

These three countries had various triggers for the birth of the thematized journalistic projects. All these contextual information will provide a solid framework for the expert-interviews which will be conducted.

- Secondary data was collected from documents and reports such as following:
 - Reports and statistics about the General Media Landscape in Spain, Greece and Romania.
 - Reports on Media Freedom in Spain, Greece and Romania
- 3. Field work and semi-structured interviews with the owners/editors/journalists to receive in-depth information about the context and the outcome of these projects

The conducted interviews are semi-structured, which gives the researcher the possibility to be flexible during the discussion with the interview partners (Brennen, 2013). The interviews are based on a pre-established set of questions, which can vary depending on the flow of the discussion. The interview questions can be found in the Appendix at the end of the thesis. This kind of interview allows also follow-up questions to research more deeply into some of the topics or issues addressed, or even to clarify answers given by the respondent.

The interviews are being conducted with experts – owners/editors/journalists of the new independent and investigative journalistic projects from the researched countries. An expert interview is according to Kruse (2014) no separate form of interview, but an applied form of the guided interview. The interesting part of this kind of interview is its audience: the experts, which are basically representing some conducts, perceptions or knowledge systems of some groups of particular expert or particular field. (Gläser/Laudel, 2004)

More specifically, the interview participants have been selected after a long research on the media landscape in Spain, Greece and Romania. The social uprisings happening in these countries gave however a strong insight into the new independent and investigative journalistic projects. The projects were selected by the following criteria:

- Alternative
- Independent
- Investigative
- Treating in a critical way sensible themes like the crisis for example
- Their purpose is Social Change

Journalists conducting these kind of projects in Spain, Greece and Romania were contacted via e-mail and were asked for interviews. 80% of them replied back, were positive about the fact that this topic is being researched and accepted the interviews for this study. Additional to that, they have also recommended further interview partners. The participants which have been de facto interviewed are the following:

SPAIN

The interviews have been conducted during November 2014 – January 2015.

- **Critic – “Investigation Newspaper”, Sergi Picazo** (Barcelona) – Journalist, editor of the political section of the online newspaper “d’El Punt Avui”, associate professor of Journalism at the UAB Barcelona, coordinates with Roger Pala the annual project “media.cat”. He participated in the elaboration of the documentary series “After Peace”. He is one of the coordinators of the Catalan new media project CRITIC with focus on investigative journalism (Critic, 2015). Interview was taken on the 11.11.2015 at ECOS – a hub of cooperatives of small companies and NGO’s located in Barcelona - Casp Street, Nr. 43.
- **La Directa, Jesús Rodríguez** (Barcelona) – member of the newspaper La Directa, used to take part of the 15-M movement. Interview was taken in Madrid at the office of La Directa, Carrer Riego 37.
- **Diagonal, Gonzalo Gárate Prieto** (Madrid) – member of the newspaper Diagonal, used to take part of the 15-M movement. Interview was taken in Madrid at the office of Diagonal, Fe street Nr. 10.
- **El Diario – “Journalism despite everything”, Victor Saura** (Barcelona) – Victor Saura is working as a journalist at El Diario and teaches History at the University of Barcelona. He experienced the closure of two newspapers in Barcelona (Diari de Barcelona and Iberia-Universal). Now he works for El Diario – an independent and investigative newspaper in Catalonia. Interview was taken via Skype on the 9th of December 2014.
- **La Marea – “Newspaper for investigation and analysis”, Thilo Schäfer** (Madrid) – Thilo Schäfer is a freelancer financial journalist. He works for Börsen-Zeitung in Germany and is initiator of the project La Marea (independent investigation magazine edited by the cooperative MásPúblico) in Madrid. Interview was taken via Skype on the 12th of January 2015

GREECE

The interviews have been conducted during May 2015 – July 2014.

- **Press Project, Dimitris Bounias** (Athens) – Dimitris Bounias is an Athens-based freelance journalist, a contributing reporter for New York Times and editor in chief of ThePressProject International. Interview was taken in Athens on the 7th of May 2015
- **Efimerida Syntakton – Nicholas Voulelis** (Athens) is director of Efimerida ton Syntakton (The Journalist's Journal). He used to work for many years, decades in fact, in an executive position in newspapers, radio stations, magazine and the national news agency. The interview was conducted over email in June 2015.
- **InfoWar - Aris Chatzistefanou** (Athens) is a journalist who has worked for the BBC World Service in London and Istanbul and for several newspapers and radio stations in Greece. He is the author of three books on current affairs. Chatzistefanou also produced three successful documentaries (Debtocracy, Catastroika and Fascism Inc.) and counts as the first documentarist in Europe, which financed his documentary over crowd-funding. The interview was conducted in May 2015 in Athens.
- **Prof. Emmanouil Heretakis** (Athens) – is teaching at the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, Communications & Mass Media. Prof. Heretakis gave valuable insights about the media system in Greece. The interview was conducted in May 2015 in Athens.

ROMANIA

The interviews have been conducted during March 2014 – June 2015.

- **Casa Jurnalistului - Vlad Ursulean** is one of the best Romanian independent journalists. He used to work also with international media like Al Jazeera and The Guardian and created a network for independent journalists in Romania, called Casa Jurnalistului (The Journalist's House). The interview was conducted on Skype in June 2015.
- **Romania Curata – Mihai Gotiu** is one of the Romanian investigative and advocacy journalists, which wrote the most about the issue of Rosia Montana and the

corruption, which was felt among the politics but also press. He was not only writing about corruption but also empowering the civil society to do something. He also wrote a book about “The Business at Rosia Montana”, in which he documented the story of the gold mine company from its beginnings.

My purpose was also to conduct interviews with the owners of the following initiatives: **Unfollow from Greece and Rise Project from Romania**. Unfortunately it was not possible to conduct the interviews, however, I have still included them in the empirical part, since they are valuable initiatives, which do great work and which also emerged out of the crisis.

After conducting the mentioned interviews, written transcriptions have been made. (see Appendix).

The most appropriate method to analyze and interpret the qualitative data for this research was the **Qualitative Content Analysis**. The method is based on naturalistic inquiry that helps identifying themes and patterns and involves rigorous coding. Abrahamson (1983) claims that content analysis can be productively used to examine practically any kind of communication materials, including “open-end survey questions, interviews, printed media” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Qualitative content analysis is frequently applied “to answer questions such as what, why and how, and the common patterns in the data are searched for” by using a consistent set of codes to organize text with similar content (Heikkilä & Ekman, 2003, p. 138). One unique characteristic of qualitative content analysis is the flexibility of using either inductive or deductive approaches or even a combination of both approaches in data analysis. The difference between the two approaches consists on how initial codes or categories are developed. In the inductive approach, which will be used for this research, codes, categories, or themes are directly drawn from the data (Kondracki, Wellman, & Amundson, 2002).

The data will be analyzed with the program Atlas. TI after one of Mayrings (2000) approach for qualitative content analysis – the inductive category development, which consists of the following:

1. Formulating the research question,
2. The development of inductive categories from material,
3. The revision of categories,
4. The final working through text/text reduction, and
5. The interpretation of results. (Mayring, 2000: 4-5)

The selected categories from the conducted interviews for this thesis are therefore the following:

Categories for Spain/Greece/Romania

S/G/R 1. Crisis General

S/G/R 2. Crisis of the Journalism

S/G/R 2.1. Working conditions

S/G/R 2.2. Changes in the profession

S/G/R 3. Comments on Freedom of Expression

S/G/R 4. Media Governance (policies, media laws)

S/G/R 5. New Initiatives

S/G/R 5.0. History/Context of the birth of the project

S/G/R 5.1. Type of journalism

S/G/R 5.2. Funding

S/G/R 5.3. Finance/Payments

S/G/R 5.4. Organization/Hierarchy

S/G/R 5.5. Themes

S/G/R 5.6. Journalist's & Collaborator's Profile

S/G/R 5.7. Sustainability

S/G/R 5.8. Audience

S/G/R 5.9. Extra Features

S/G/R 5.10. Working instruments

S/G/R 5.11. Sources

S/G/R 5.12. Working Place

S/G/R 5.13. Business Competition

S/G/R 5.14. Cooperations

S/G/R 5.15. Motivation

S/G/R 6. Problems of alternative media

S/G/R 7. Chances of alternative media

4 Findings



Fig.4 : Logos of all independent critical journalistic initiatives from Spain, Greece and Romania (own representation)

In the following section, the media context of each country will be described with examples. The crisis of the media will be exemplified through common practices in Greece, Spain and Romania in terms of ownership, censorship, manipulation, working conditions, freedom of the press, power relations between media, economy and the state.

This is also the section where the mapped new journalistic initiatives will be described and embedded in the respective media context. These initiatives have a rather critical approach to dominant narratives and are immediate products of the crisis.

The interviewed journalists from Spain, Greece or Romania feel that the economic crisis and of course the media crisis was basically a chance for these type of independent, critical journalistic initiatives. An interview partner states that the crisis years basically represent the “spring of new critical projects” (Garate, 2014), which now keep rising and refreshing the media landscape. They have similar motivations for starting these initiatives. The range of products start from quality general but also niche press, magazines, documentaries and radio productions.

The main reason was the discontent about the official press, which is facing now a structural and identity crisis. The most interviewed journalists have been unemployed because of closing of several newspapers or on political reasons. The fired people were practically the alternative voices of the official debate, which was mostly imposed by political or economic factors.

These journalistic initiatives try to bring a strong contribution to enhance the fragile media landscape and to compensate the loss of the function of the press and namely the delivering of in-depth and genuine and critical information for the readers.

The critiques and inputs brought by the interview partners are of great value, because in this way, it is possible to examine how journalists understand themselves and criticize the setting in their field, as well their visions on the future of journalism. The interviewed journalists from Spain, Greece and Romania, were the ones which were directly affected by the crisis in the media and at the same time were also the ones which played a role in making use of the situation and starting to reshape the journalism field. They gave insider information, which could not be found in the official sources, since some of them were victims of the media system and its owners.

4.1. Media Context – Spain

"The key is that a media project is an intellectual and not a financial plan with an intellectual excuse."

Media context and print media sector

What Gabriel García Márquez described as “the best job in the world” faces nowadays a crisis of democratic value. The Spanish press started its transition to democracy after the death of General Francisco Franco in 1975. During Franco’s dictatorship the government was in full control of the press and media. Dissent was not tolerated and censorship was exercised. After 1975, the press gained its freedom and with it the ability to develop and take the role of a modern European democracy. However, after the economic crisis hit the country, Elsa González, president of the Federation of Spanish Journalist Association, stated that “this is the worst crisis Spanish journalism has endured so far” (Cala, 2013). Journalism in Spain is suffering of an acute identity crisis, precarity and mistrust of its readers.

The Report of the Journalistic Profession published by the Madrid Press Association (2013), notes that between 2008 and 2013, 284 Spanish media outlets closed and the overall income of the media industry (TV, radio, newspapers and magazines) fell by 31% between 2008 and 2012. Publications that disappeared until 2013 included approximately 180 magazines, 31 daily newspapers and 11 free publications. Madrid Press Association estimates that more than 11.000 journalists and media professionals lost their jobs between 2008 and 2013. Spain has the highest level of unemployment in the Eurozone and has one of the highest public deficit levels (Intereconomics 2013). Elsa González comments on this situation that “with this level of unemployment, with effectively fewer media outlets, and this level of uncertainty, means we’re losing democracy.” (Kane, 2012). She also states that “the biggest enemy of independence is unemployment and precariousness” (Cala, 2013).

The interviewed journalists from Barcelona and Madrid explained that the economic crisis of the press was driven by the fact that since the circulation rates fell down, the media owners have trusted everything to the advertisers, which themselves drastically reduced the expenditures. This basically led to precarious working conditions in the mainstream media with even less fix contracts and introducing more flexible contracts, the stuff was smaller, so the

remained employees had to do more work, which of course led to a lack of quality in the content. The salaries were also reduced by 50%-60% (Rodriguez, 2014).

There have been during the crisis also some corporate changes in terms of media ownership. Because the big mainstream media was very much in debt, according to Victor Saura from eldiario.es (2015) and Thilo Schaefer from La Marea (2015) now almost the entire mainstream press is owned by the banks in Spain. The reason for this is the fact that many media outlets started to take loans from the banks and due to the inability to pay the debts back, they are now trapped and lose therefore their independence. For instance the largest media company, PRISA (the newspaper El País belongs to it), was struggling 2010 with very high debts, around €4.8 billion. An investment company based in New York accepted to inject around €1 billion into Prisa, but in return for majority control (Minder, 2010). This phenomenon leads to a crisis of authority of the journalism and enables the power triangle between economics and media to develop even more.

In terms of freedom of expression, there are two views among the interviewed journalists. First, the view on this phenomenon is rather positive. A rise of the freedom of expression has been felt among the journalists, which are especially working for the new independent alternative journalistic initiatives. They feel that there is either way nothing more to lose and the new technologies offer the journalists a chance to use social media as a multiplier of stories on corruption cases (Rodriguez, 2014). This opinion is also shared by Victor Saura from eldiario.es.

“Well, as I said, I believe, thanks to social networks - there is more freedom of expression right now! Simply because it is no longer possible anymore to hide information. There is a lot of information running upside down. But when there is a big case you cannot ignore it anymore, so that in a way it is positive, but in the same time, as I told you in the traditional media because of crisis there is more fear and yeah that's something which is affecting the freedom of expression.” (Saura, 2015)

On the other side, according to Rodriguez (2014) the precarity of the journalists made it more difficult to act as a watchdog of the ones in power. He states that journalists are more

dependent on the reaction of the media owners and tend to auto-censure themselves. So the economic crisis brought along a downfall of the freedom of the speech. At the same time, journalists have less resources to search for qualitative sources and contrasted information. Moreover there is an increase of information coming from news agencies.

“In the big media obviously the fear to lose your job after have watched that thousands of colleagues have lost their jobs in the last 5-6 years could make you more scared and could do that you more obey the power or your director or your head in the newsroom and perhaps in the big media they have fear.” (Rodriguez, 2014).

Otherwise, another issue against the freedom of speech is the fact that Spain adopted 2014 a law on public safety, that includes a fine of up to 600,000 euros for taking or circulating images that damage the honour, image or safety of security forces. In a country, where social movements conquered new communicative spaces and delivered huge input for public debate, this new law is a violation against the democracy of the press.

The apocalyptical frame of the Spanish press is supplemented also by the high mistrust of the civil society. According to data from the Centre of Sociological Investigation (Cortell, 2013), journalists received a public approval of 59 out of 100. The poor rating is justified by David Corral, the president of the Publications Commission of the Madrid Press Association, due to the lack of independence and rigor of information, the poor image transmitted by programs that are supposedly information and debate-based, and the perceived gap between journalism and societal problems (Cortell, 2013).

As an added difficulty to the current media environment, according to the 2013 Report on Journalistic Profession (Madrid Press Association, 2013), more than 5.000 journalism students graduate from Spanish universities each year, while Bernardo Diaz Nosty, journalism professor at the University of Malaga, refers to the “academic bubble”, which deteriorates the journalist’s social prestige and independence. The pressures coming from the publishing industry have also weakened the watchdog role of the journalists, turning them into lapdogs at the service of corporations and politicians. Journalism became in this sense an extension of those in powers, instead of feeding the civil society. Bernardo Diaz Nosty adds that this reality

is more global than local and it is a crisis of the values of democracy and leads to a degradation of journalism (Gimenez, 2011).

At the same time, at least 300 journalistic initiatives and new titles have been created by journalists during the economic crisis. The digitalization age made the transition to a new media landscape possible. According to the General Media Study, EGM in 2012, the number of people who claimed to have read online newspapers exceeded 12.5 million people, 7% more than the previous year. This is good news for the press sector and it means that journalism remains in demand. In a debate about the future of journalism in Spain, four prominent journalists also pointed this idea. For Ignacio Escolar, the editor of eldiario.es “never has so much been read as now” and “it is not journalism, but journalism business models that are in crisis” (Cortell, 2014).

4.2. Analysis of the Spanish journalistic initiatives



Fig.5: CRÍTIC Logo

“Without information there is no liberty. Without a critical sense there is no democracy. The great moment came to issue a new newspaper.”

(Joan Manuel Tresserras)

CRÍTIC is a Spanish digital journalistic initiative, specialized on investigation and critical analysis. They publish each week in-depth reports on political, economic or social topics. The digital newspaper also publishes opinions, analysis and interviews. There is also an offline magazine issue, which includes the topics of great interest. The journalists working for this newspaper are organized in a cooperative, meaning that the hierarchy is a horizontal one. This project is being financed over crowd-funding, meaning that the publishers refuse to financially commit except to their readers, for which this paper is being published. The editors are professionals which worked before for the Grup Periodistes Ramon Barils. Critic sees itself as a slow medium, which wants to avoid the “fast food” news and “journalism tweets”. Each week in-depth reports on current political, economic and social topics will be released. Their devise is “eat little, digest well”. (Critic, 2014).

Sergi Picazo is journalist, editor of the political section of the online newspaper “d’El Punt Avui”, associate professor of Journalism at the UAB Barcelona and coordinates with Roger Pala the annual project “media.cat”. He participated in the elaboration of the documentary series “After Peace”. He is one of the coordinators of the Catalan new media project.

Picazo gave very interesting insights about his new initiative, which started in October 2014 and is based in Catalonia, Barcelona. The location of the Critic office is also a statement and follows the philosophy of the newspaper. They are located in a cooperative, called “Structure de Economia Solidaria” and is a solidary economical network.

“because we find that being with other social companies or cooperative companies or another projects who are very interesting for us it is going to be helpful for us, we can work together in different things or other projects could appear.” (Picazo, 2015)

Critic publishes just one article a day in the online version of the newspaper, which is supposed to be an investigation. They say about themselves, that they do not want to be labeled as “alternative”, they want to fight with the big media. Their objective is therefore to become a big and successful medium. For this they need the support of a big community in Catalonia, who is interested in critical independent investigative journalism.

At the same time, they also say that they are not independent, but they depend on the people for which they write.

“But we prefer to depend on our readers than to depend on the big companies or the money of the Catalan government.” (Picazo, 2014)

Critic is financed by donations and subscriptions. Before the initiative was launched, Critic, made a successful crowdfunding campaign, where they managed to gather around 50.000 EUR from 50-60 donors in just a few weeks. They have around 1100 readers, which pay 52 EUR per year for the subscriptions. Critic has also an open part but for the reports and interviews one has to be subscribed.

The audience which they address to is the middle class or people who are not used to read alternative media, but which are discontent of what the mainstream media is offering. Picazo (2014) is criticizing the alternative media, especially because he used to work for such newspapers in the past 15 years, because he realized that only with volunteer journalism, they couldn't arrive to the mass and had to fight with other media, which had considerably more financial resources, more power and more employees. At Critic every journalist gets paid and they refuse to do any volunteer journalism.

“If we could not pay we are not going to do it, we are going to break down, or close our media.”
(Picazo, 2015)

The team consists now out of three journalists, which work on a daily basis and five to seven freelance journalists.

The main sources for their journalistic work are NGO's, social movements and public information. They use these sources, because some are delivering very interesting themes, are very critic with the current situation in Spain, also in Catalonia and have a lot of information. Usually, the mainstream media seldom give the opportunity to NGO's and social movements to express themselves or don't even use them as a source. Picazo (2014) unfortunately doesn't understand why this is the case, because these sources have so many information on corruption, big companies, attacks to the environment. The Spanish government delivers also good information, however the data should be much more transparent, according to Picazo (2014).

"Here" [in Spain] "the transparency is a disastrous situation, but they are beginning to publish documents or contracts with companies, they have to do it for the legal mandate, you know and journalists don't have time to go deep in this information and this information is on the web, on the internet, you only need to have time to read a lot of documents, a lot of contracts or subventions money from public money to private money, you only have to have time and the journalists in the media don't have time because they are always running with last hour or last situation or last declaration of the political govern, they are like running running running and they don't have time to pose and see the information that is public. Well, I have these two sources and they are very good way to do things in the new journalism."



Fig 6. El Diario, Logo

eldiario.es is also a new digital means of information and analysis with a focus on politics and economy. It was established in 2013. El Diario wants to give a voice to the citizens and to offer

daily qualitative informative news in a media landscape, “that fails to be pluralistic and which delivers mononous and suffocating news” (eldiario.es, 2015). The journalists from El Diario believe in a rigorous, independent and honest journalism. The values, which they represent are freedom, justice, solidarity and a sustainable progress of the society. They defend human rights, equality and a better, more transparent and more open democracy. Their intention is to accompany journalists as citizens in an increasingly complex task to understand and decode reality. Fortunately more and more voices in the public debate and social networks have enhanced the collective intelligence.

Eldiario.es is edited by Journal Digital Press SL Over and 70% of the newspaper is in the hands of people who work daily, who have financially contributed. They understand themselves as a group of journalists eager to keep trying and are motivated by the ambition to buy their freedom, to claim our office, to own their writing and thereby ensure that the editorial policy is independent and does not respond to vested interests. (eldiario.es, 2015).

Victor Saura, the head of eldiario.es in Barcelona, states that this journalistic initiative is a good example and it’s quite different from everything that has ever existed in Spain regarding independent journalism. The newspaper is just only and free and open for everyone. It is organized as a federation of journalists and consists out of small projects in the biggest cities of Spain. This means that each eldiario sub-project has its own management, but all content is being published on the same online platform.

El Diario also competes with the mainstream press of Spain, which have both online and offline versions.

Before the newspaper was launched, Ignacio Escolar, the journalist, who started this initiative made an awareness campaign. Escolar is a famous journalist of a big newspaper in Spain, Publico, which was closed down because of lack of profit. The fame and credibility of his past work were of big advantage to be successful in this first awareness campaign, which started in 2013.

In terms of funding, every small project manages its finances and the business model functions out of a mix of advertisement, donations and subscriptions. El Diario thinks that although they receive money from big companies as banks and telephone companies, they can still remain independent, because the amount of money received from advertisement is incomparable to the amount of money mainstream media collects.

The subscriptions at El Diario are based on donations of 5-10 EUR monthly and they managed already to gather around 10.000 partners, which is a very high number when taking into consideration that the content of the newspaper is free and open for everyone. However, the readers understood that quality journalism has to be in these times of media crisis supported.

“So it's a mix of this specific phenomenon - I don't think that this happens in any part of the world where you can find 10.000 people who is putting money not to read something that the rest won't read because El Diario publishes is free and open for everyone. It's not because I put money and I can read what the rest cannot, no, no, is because they want us to exist.” (Saura, 2015)

The subscribers have however a special status in the sense that they receive the news in advance and when their news comments are prioritized to be seen in the feed. They also receive a printed magazine, but there is in fact no difference in terms of content between being a subscriber and being a normal reader.

This initiative managed to build sustainable structures. In 2013 there were 5-6 journalists, which were working with a contract, whereas today there are between 20-25. Victor Saura stated that El Diario is “project of good health”. The structure is still rather small, but it's growing at a fast pace.

El Diario has around 2 million single users and these people are mostly normal citizens progressive in ideology, voters of left wing party, but above all “citizens with hunger of good information”.

The journalists at El Diario write on topics such as corruption, politics analyze, economy, society in terms of what is harming the welfare state (health, education), culture and they also have a few international news. The last section is planned to be developed.

The people who were recruited for this initiative are good journalists willing to work a lot of hours with a quite low pay, involved people who believe in the project and who have the mindset that they are doing rather a public service.

“Like having good sources to information and being able to write, being interested in investigative, in research, in journalism and being fast, you need to have some previous experience, because before becoming an investigative journalist, you cannot get out, I believe, from the university, and ok, I'm here, I am going to find out Watergate - it's not like that. What you don't find so easily is good journalist who has some background, because young journalists do the things perhaps correct, but have some lack of background, of the content, of course because they are young. But these skills are not easy to find, of course there are people and of course if we had more money, I am sure we would be able to find more and more good journalists.” (Saura, 2015).

What makes El Diario different is the fact that they believe in the quality of photography, which also has a high information value. In the team are also professional photographers which collaborate with the newspaper.

The main sources, which are being used are not the official ones. The journalists from El Diario try to get to the main source – in this sense lawyers, politicians, union workers – to receive reliable information. Saura states that for him these are best sources of information, which are indeed not easy to find, and if they were easy to find, they wouldn't be as good since they are for anyone.



Fig. 7: La Marea Logo

“Independent, but poor! That’s the price of independence”

(Thilo Schaefer, 2015)

La Marea is a monthly magazine and a daily digital paper that is committed to rigorous and dedicated journalism, in-depth reporting and culture. Their first issue appeared in December 2012.

The goal of La Marea is to provide free information of business and political interests with clear editorial principles: freedom, equality, secularism, the defense of the public, sovereignty, economic justice, democratic regeneration and the reporting of the illegitimacy of the monarchy, historical memory, free culture, work and decent housing and respect for the environment.

La Marea believes in leading by example on the values they defend. Therefore, they have high ethical codes which prevents them from accepting advertising that contradicts the editorial principles.

The editor of La Marea is the MásPúblico cooperative society, a company that was formed after the closure of the paper edition of Público and dismissal, in abusive conditions of 85% of its workers. A group of them, together with the support of many readers of the newspaper came with the idea of launching this magazine.

The organizational structure of La Marea proceeds on a horizontal level. There are no shareholders, but just members and everyone has the same right to vote. The assembly is built by people who work there and by about 100 readers. The assembly meeting takes place twice

a year and the members discuss about general lines of the magazine, about their values, topics of the magazine. The initiative is therefore very democratic.

The co-owners of the magazine have also a space on the website, where they can publish their articles within the frame of values of the magazine.

“We have a few members which are actually very good commentators and we publish them also in the main sector” (Schaefer, 2015).

The journalist team of the magazine is still pretty small, there are seven people who are employed. The salary is very basic, although the journalists working there are very implicated and believe in the idea of the project. These people used to work before in journalism, mainly in Publico. However, the freelance journalists and photographers are being paid almost the same as the big mainstream newspaper do, like El Pais, El Mundo.

The initiative is at a small level sustainable, however just in the sense that they do not make any losses, but not sustainable in the sense that people can make a decent living out of it – they need more ressources, they also need to grow old.

La Marea funds itself over the yearly contribution of the co-owners (1000 EUR), subscriptions of readers (35EUR), solidarity rates from subscribers (60EUR) advertisement, however the revenues are according to Schaefer (2015) ridiculous humble. They do not accept ads coming from banks supporting house evictions or companies investing in weapons. They do not publish sexist, racist or undermined human dignity advertisements.

The agenda of La Marea extends over economics and politics, the crisis in all different facettes, Podemos even before they got known on the main political scene, to social problems and even issues of freedom of speech. They also have a cultural section about “film, music, literature, but not the mainstream stuff. We also try to not be too freaky either!” (Schaefer, 2015).

The subscribers of the magazine made local groups in cities outside Madrid and Barcelona and they help out with the distribution and put them in café and bookshops, where the potential readers are mostly going. The commitment of La Marea with its readers is high – they directly

engage with the audience, for instance they are organizing talks on the main topic of the current issue, open discussions with the journalists and conferences

“We try to do something interesting with interesting guests speakers but obviously, it's later the more hedonistic part, we stay on and have drinks. We also want to have just a party, to have drinks and raise some money with it.” (Schaefer, 2015)

The audience of La Marea are mainly young readers from the internet. The website has around 300.000 unique visitors per month and the traffic comes mostly from the social networks. However, the hard copy reaches around 6000 people, which are mostly between 40-50 years old. La Marea has around 2500 subscribers, which receive the magazine monthly and around 4000 copied are being saled at newsstands.

La Marea has in the team 1-2 experts in data journalism and also has an interesting feature, FILTRALA, which is a whistleblowing website, managed in cooperation with Diagonal, La Directa, Critic and El Diario.

Diagonalperiódico.net

Fig. 8: Diagonal Logo

Diagonal is a critical and independent journalistic initiative with no directors or managers, based only on thousands of subscribers. This is a project with many people behind, a collective editors team and an extensive network of partners and sponsors. Diagonal is part of a community that is committed so social economy. As a result, they produce and share news content under free creative licenses.

Diagonal has already a history of 10 years, meaning that they were on the market before the financial and media crisis in Spain. They see their work and investigations as useful for the society, and they use communication as a tool for social change. Diagonal in fact was born out of a former project called “Molotov”. The aim of Molotov was to generate information from

social movements to the social movements. Years later they have reached a point in which the people who were taking part in the project, decided to generate information also for the civil society. Diagonal, is a newspaper based on social movements but trying to talk to the civil society.” (Prieto, 2014)

Diagonal competes with other similar small projects, but their idea for a solution is to resolve this issue in a collaborative way:

“For us, despite the first step, you could say that this is not good for Diagonal, since there is a competition between this small different media, rather we try to resolve this issue in a collaborative way, having people from other projects, like La Directa, La Marea or others and in this sense we feel very happy about that and since all these projects that are arising and creating for the last three-four years, since the peak of the crisis and also are following the way of organization which we've started some ten years ago.”(Prieto, 2014).

The agenda of Diagonal focuses on the social movements agenda: for instance Podemos, Initiatives, which generate discussions if it's all right to have such tools of social change, debts issues of the Southern countries and the role of the EU or the big mortgages movements in Spain. The online content is free for everyone and there is also an English version of the newspaper. Subscribers and online payers, however get the information earlier. Diagonal also cooperates with La Directa, a similar online newspaper. They exchange articles and publish them on each others platform.

The journalists from Diagonal use as sources experts from the social movements, voices from the academy, from different political actors, however, Diagonal, is not such a big medium and they are not taken so seriously by the authorities, according to Parate (2014).

The audience from Diagonal are of course people coming from social movements, people sensible to social change, more open to develop new ideas.

The initiative finance itself over 10% advertisement, subscriptions and crowdfunding. The advertisement come from little companies, which are members of the Social Economy Network. Diagonal has around 5000 subscribers and they pay the amount of 50EUR per year

for receiving the newspaper. At the beginning, the target was to get 5000 subscriptions, however, the project is getting bigger and they have to search for new ways of financing.

The team consists out of 13 people with background from sociology, history, communication science. However, the common background are the social movements. The salary is also minimal, the journalists receive around 700 EUR/month for 35h/week, whereas a normal pay for a journalist in Spain would be around 1000EUR. The collaborateur are unfortunately not paid, however Diagonal would not be sustainable without them, according to Parate (2014).



Fig. 9: La Directa Logo

La Directa is an independent journalistic initiative based in Barcelona. This initiative exercises the social function of journalism while denouncing the abuses and injustices and promoting alternatives. Due to the existence of a large network of correspondents and collaborators around the world since 2006, La Directa reaches more than 2000 subscribers who support the project.

The journalists working for this initiative understand communication as a tool for social transformation and not as a simple commodity or business. For this reason, La Directa wants to be a the direct communication tool to observe the practices of social movements, political projects, social and cultural issues and not least, to generate alternative models for the groups, which are invisible for the mainstream media.

La Directa is an online and print newspaper, which sees itself as a political independent press initiative. Interesting is the perspective of Jesus Rodriguez (2014), the head of La Directa, which states that:

“Politics is the form of governing the society, the form to understand the world, so it's impossible to talk about about apolitical. It's very dangerous if I talk with someone and I say I am apolitical, it's not possible. We try to talk about us, as a difference in the information society - it's political. But it's difficult to talk about stereotypes of political right, left, or center... this is a language of the past! We talk about transformation! About more social justice! About breaking the status quo!” (Rodriguez, 2014)

The core values of La Directa are honesty, veracity, veridicality, authenticity.

“Instead of objectivity, I would talk about honesty! About veracity, veridicality, authenticity. Veracity is the honesty with the sources and with the themes. To lie, to always put the things in the right context, to give voice to all sources, investigate for information. This is vercity!” (Rodriguez, 2014)

Before the crisis hit Spain, La Directa was already thematizing the questioning of the system, topics which just nowadays are being discussed by the mainstream media. Nowadays, the thematic principle of La Directa is set on alternatives to the societal problems.

“We don't just talk why the actual model isn't functioning, but we suggest alternatives for these problems in education, sanitary system, housing problems etc. So alternatives, how there can be made possible an acces at a normal different life, away from the actual model. We put much energy in trying to find these alternatives. We are discussing the post-crisis - what happens after the crisis?” (Rodriguez, 2014)

La Directa has a financial model from down. It does not receive public financing, 70% of the funds are collected over subscriptions (around 1900 subscriptions), 10% over advertisement (no hierarchic publicity, but a horizontal one, meaning that the advertisers have the same space in the paper, small ads, ads from social spaces, cooperatives, small companies. The key is to get numerous small ads on horizontal basis), 5% over direct selling of the paper and 25% over other incomes like merchandising (T-Shirts and other type of stuff related to the medium).

The situation of La Directa is however with 2000 subscribers still very precarious. The scope is to achieve a boost of the percentage of advertisement and to achieve at least 5000 subscribers in order to be sustainable. La Directa has around ten employed journalists, which work on a parttime basis for 400 EUR per month. The rest of the journalists are working on voluntary basis. Besides of that, about 100 people work as collaborateurs for about 1-3 hours a week, which help out in writing and delivering visual information.

The solution to boost the revenues is according to Rodriguez (2014) an awareness campaign on the value of having an independent medium, which is not financed by banks. This campaign is being planned together with Diagonal and La Marea.

The funder of the newspaper, Jesus Rodriguez, is in actual fact no journalist – he comes from the social movements

“We arrived to the journalism thinking about how to explain the social movement, which were difficult to arrive to the mass media. Thinking about this, I arrived to the journalism. Thinking about the contrastation of the journalism, the sources, the official sources and the social sources.” (Rodriguez, 2014)

Many other employees are however journalists of profession, they used to work in the mainstream massmedia and were since the crisis hit Spain, already in precarious situation of work:

“They prefer to work for an independent medium with precarity then to work for a mainstream newspaper with precarity. A few years ago in the mass-media, when the money was more and journalists received 1500-2000 EUR/month, it was not the case. But now 800EUR in mainstream media or 800 EUR in an alternative media? Well, I for instance don't want to be controlled from a bank or politics. I prefer being in a medium with an assembly where I can't talk freely and I can propose and investigate on important issues” (Rodriguez, 2014).

Similar to La Directa is a newspaper in Sweden, which managed within 20 years to have 25000 subscribers. They have started like La Directa nowadays they do not have any issues of sustainability anymore. This gives hope to Rodriguez, that the situation will change.

The audience of La Directa are people who are interested in finding out towards which direction is the society going, about the change of the society and the alternatives. The potential audience is however increasing. Before the crisis the majority of the readers were activists or extreme leftists, but now as Rodriguez (2014) states, it is not about the ideological concept of the model of society, but it's about the arriving to a point of solutions of vital necessities and needs of the people.

“these kind of people are increasing, because the crisis is affecting the life of the people, it's transforming their mentality, their vision, and they are transforming their thinking about all these. And this people are looking now for media talking about this.” (Rodriguez, 2014)

4.3. Media Context - Greece

“The print sector - I could say that it is almost dead!” (Prof. Heretakis)

Between 1980 -1990 the Greek media landscape radically changed. This period is characterized by the commercialization and internationalization of communication (Papathanassopoulos, 1999). The media development for this decade can be subdivided into the following stages (Papathanassopoulos 2001, Veneti & Karadimitriou 2013):

1. The middle of 1980s is the period that affected the market of the press.
2. The late 1980s is the period of the deregulation of the state monopoly, which was connected to the appearance of numerous local, national, private television and radio stations
3. The decade of the 1990s in which a lot of newspapers appeared.

The above development indicates that in less than ten years, the number of radio and television stations increased significantly, resulting in the size of the Greek market that can no longer afford such investments. Veneti & Karadimitriou (2013) stress that the Greek experiences of media scene during these years has been transformed "into an arena of power games between different interest groups." In fact, the drive for change in the radio and television sector was not part of a government policy but of political opportunity.

Additionally, the concentration of ownership in certain business groups and relations between the political elites and the media are just some of the characteristics of Greek media landscape realities even before the crisis. In an article published by Reuters the power triangle between media, entrepreneurs and politicians as responsible for the Greek crisis. This phenomenon boycotted the development of the democratic values, the objectivity of journalists and the right to diversity.

The Greek media had a lot to suffer because of the decline of economy and consequently because of the decline of advertising revenues during the past few years. Therefore numerous newspapers were closed down or went bankrupt (case newspaper "Eleftherotypia"), around 30% of the journalists were dismissed and circulation figures dropped by 66% between 2008 and 2014 (Athens Daily Newspaper Publishers Association, 2014). Above all, the biggest attack against democracy and media was the illegal interruption of the signal of the public television ERT on 11th of June 2013 by the government. This action brought a huge decline in the media freedom index of Greece.

These main points shape the climate of the journalists to carry out their work. The working conditions are difficult - many journalists are in financial insecurities due to the lack of definition of their occupational status and low wages (Anagnostou, Psychogiopoulou and Kandyla 2010). At the same time, many newspapers which still run are sustained through funds from other economic activities of the media owners. A lot of media owners use their media to influence public opinion and exercise political pressure. Moreover, censorship cases appeared during the crisis even more often. A typical example is the dismissal of two journalists of the state TV show "Morning News" in October 2012. The journalists Arvanitis K. and Katsimi M. reported about the beating of several demonstrators in Halkidiki, which were also arrested. As a consequence, the former Minister of Public Order and Citizen Protection, Nikos Dendias, immediately interrupted the show. Therefore, the current media system devalues, trivializes and prevents journalists from accomplishing their work of informing the civil society with objective information.

The Greek interviewed journalists also gave important insights to illustrate the bad functioning of the Greek media. A crisis of authority is being felt among the journalists. The use of journalism as means of influence by various business men had major implications for the trust and credibility of the readers. For instance Dimitris Bounias stated that the pro-Troika press in Greece was generating a feeling of fear among the readers, it fed a very toxic debate and a very toxic perception for guilt of the people. People were bombed with information such as "the bad Greeks, who were living above their means now need to be reformed", according to

Bounias (2015). People needed time to get angry on the press, but in the end they did! So the loss of revenue had definitely also to do with people getting angry with the mainstream media.

According to Aris Chatzistefanou, the head of Infowar, the Greek media was never profitable. “It was mostly owned by big construction or oil companies, by ship-owners, which were using them as instruments to put pressure on the government” (Chatzistefanou, 2015). Most of the Greek interview partners suggested during the discussion the power triangle in the mainstream press.

However, a very shocking statement during the field work, came from Prof. Emmanuel Heretakis from the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, Communications & Mass Media. Before sharing me his opinion about the power triangle, he confide during the interview that he loves reading about dictatorships and that he already read so much about this topic, that he could affirm that:

“So - this means that I can assure you that the level of propaganda in Greece these 3-4 years was much greater than the Nazi propaganda. (...) - the intensity of the propaganda, the huge amount of lies - it could be compared only with Goebbels and the propaganda ministry of the Third Reich. It was a huge. In order to have people obeying your order or your dictates, you must create people full of debts. So you can control them by using counter-fear. (...)” (Prof. Heretakis, 2015)

Therefore the main problem is in fact the pressure made by the media owners in order to control the news. The media owners, for instance in Greece, were mostly business men with no interest or experience in journalism. These businessmen basically expect that their newspapers promote their interests and points of view.

All until now presented factors have a strong power to actually alter the conditions of a media landscape in terms of freedom of the press. In Europe freedom of the press is rather taken as granted. However, the crisis has also big repercussions in the public sphere. During the crisis years, there was a huge collapse in the classification of Greece. After falling 56 places in the index from 2009 to 2014, Greece now has the European Union’s second lowest ranking. This had of course also to do with the most dark episode of the democratic media – the closure of

the public TV station ERT, but also with the political and economic pressures on the institute of journalism.

These pressures were present also before 2008 according to Aris Chatzistefanou, the owner of Infowar, a independent journalistic project:

“Before 2008 there was censorship, but it was indirect. Journalists had to self-censor, while understanding what the media owner wanted the journalist to say, but there was no power intervention in the job of the journalist. Journalists still had a space in which they could move. After 2008 it was a direct intervention of censorship – the editor in chief would come to the journalist and say that's our line, nothing else, forget it, otherwise you are out of here.”(Chatzistefanou, 2015)

The case of the investigative journalist from Hot Doc, Kostas Vaxevanis, is also very interesting to include as an argument for the triangle of power. He attempted to break this power triangle, after he received a list from the back-then French finance minister, Christine Lagarde. This list included all big Greek depositors in Switzerland, which were suspected of tax-evasion. Vaxevanis published the Lagarde list after discovering that the by-then Greek Finance Minister Giorgos Papaconstantinou had received it and done nothing to investigate its content. After Vaxevanis published the list, he was prosecuted the next day and he was brought to court. This was by then a big topic in the public sphere, every journalist used to write about this – but what the newspapers failed to mention was the exact names of the corrupt business men and politicians.

“This could be seen as a huge hypocrisy of the Greek mainstream media” (Bounias, 2015).

4.4. Analysis of the Greek journalistic initiatives



Fig. 10: The Press Project Logo

“There was almost an appetite to open all fronts at the same time.
To have no friends at all - it was scary and we loved that!”

(Dimitris Bounias, 2015)

The Greek project, “The Press Project”, was founded in 2010 as the crisis already landed in Greece. It sees itself as “an independent news outlet providing news and analysis for a global audience, with a commitment to investigative journalism.” (The Press Project, 2014). They “are picking up the baton from where the old masters of the investigative journalism trade left it. From where they were forced to abandon it by media barons, steeped in crony capitalism, beholden to advertisers, over reliant on the easy money of a stock exchange bubble and later mired in debt and unreliability” (The Press Project International, 2014). They focus on investigations, “dissent”, “swift reflexes”, “independence from political parties / vested interests / governments”, “revelations”, “holding every power to account”, “credibility”. The Press Project disputes the existing financial models and tries to rely just on its readers. It does not accept advertising from Greek banks or government organizations, since such sources of advertising in Greece have been linked to manipulation of information, and is making an effort to rely on its readers/audience. This journalistic project is nowadays one of the most successful medium among the independent journalism scene in Greece (The Press Project International, 2014).

The Press Project was initially launched in 2010 and functioned until 2011 as a selective news aggregator. The topics of the initiative are now the systematic discussion about the restructuring of debts and Eurozone sustainability, the Arab Spring, documents Wiki-Leaks, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the impasse of “austerity” assemblies Indignados in the

Constitution, the democratic deficit, the oligopoly of the press and obscurantism of Greek television.

The Press Project International is a separate entity, which is autonomous in editorial manner and is an independent medium, which is functioning together with TPP as a joint venture, providing news and analysis for a global audience about the issues in Greece, with a commitment to investigative journalism.

In just two years, The Press Project has been receiving almost two million unique visits each month. For its international edition, The Press Project needs more support from all those who want to know what is really going on in the country with the gravest crisis in Europe.

The Press Project was first to publish the Greek diplomatic cables from Wikileaks, produced a documentary about the crisis ('Debtocracy'), which was seen around the globe (more than two million views on YouTube, Vimeo, Dailymotion) and kept the public broadcaster ERT alive, providing it with media servers when the government decided to shut it down overnight.

According to Dimitris Bounias (2015), which is one of the two journalists working for The Press Project International mentions the fact, that the people who joined TPP were journalists from all around Greece, either because they were unemployed or because they found a very welcoming place to "feed some critical stories".

The Press Project International was born out of the need for global news about Greece during the most heavy crisis the country is going through. Dimitris Bounias and his colleague, Nikolas Leontopoulos, have been working already since many years in international media like New York Times. The case of Greece was a phenomenon in the international media, since day after day the crisis in Greece was the last 5 years on the front pages of many newspapers. However, according to Bounias (2015), the journalists from The New York Times haven't been to Greece since a few years already. This created an appetite for international news by Greek journalists.

“We saw that a lot of good reporting did not fit, did not find the space in the international pages of Greek media and we wanted to create for an international audience with the reporting which we understood it was valuable. So we wanted to create a website, that international audiences could read from Greece.” (Bounias, 2015).



Fig. 11: Infowar Logo

The INFOWAR productions website was established in 2013 while building on its members' long standing cooperation since 2001 in various media projects. Since 2011 the team has produced the documentaries Debtocracy, Catastroika and Fascism, Inc. which were watched by millions of viewers all around the world. These projects constitute two of the biggest experiments in crowd-funding, both in Greece and on a European level.

Several international media outlets (e.g. CNN, Al Jazeera, Guardian, Liberation etc.) talked about our documentaries, which were screened in more than 20 countries. Besides, INFOWAR has produced short documentaries for the Guardian, Medecins du Monde, and several Greek companies and organizations.

In addition, Infowar Productions is the creator and distributor of the Greek radio show INFOWAR, broadcasted by leading radio stations in Greece and Cyprus since 2006.

INFOWAR team consists of highly skilled journalists, cameramen and photographers who have worked in various hot spots for leading international media and news agencies. Experienced video editors and sound designers provide post production services. (Infowar, 2015)

The creator of INFOWAR productions is Aris Chatzistefanou, which already works for 15 years as a journalist. He was working for BBC World Service and brought his experience to Greece, where he started his own radio, INFOWAR. His radio show, which was a news analysis, was distributed in Skai Radio and it was a success. Afterwards he made his first documentary, Debtocracy, about the crisis in Greece and three days before the documentary went online, he got fired. The second one was Catastroika and the third one FASCISM INC.

The main reason for getting dismissed from the Skai Radio was the political disagreement between the two parts:

“even though I was working in international affairs, my radio show was mainly on international affairs, I was presenting cases in other countries where they had the same debt problem, and by doing that I was presenting alternatives to the mainstream idea of how to overcome the crisis, so I was saying for example in Argentina, in Iceland, in Ecuador, they befold it, they didn't feel morally obliged to pay the debts, they stopped the monetary unions that they had and things that we could also do in Greece. So this starting creating a problem in my job - even though I didn't criticize the government directly, I was doing that indirectly by presenting different examples from other countries.”

The second reason for getting dismissed was the fact, that Chatzistefanou refused to sign the new labour agreement. An austerity measure from the Greek government was to cancel the collective bargaining agreement. Within the new agreement, the media owners would have been allowed to cut salaries, to increase the working hours. Chatzistefanou and 24 people from the media organization of around 400 employees refused to sign the contract and within a few weeks or months they were fired.

Chatzistefanou also works in Efemerida ton Syntakton, Unfollow and still makes his radio show, which he sells to several radio stations in Greece and Cyprus. In this way he is constructing a real job by adding together these numerous projects.

His projects don't follow the mainstream of a capital society, because, according to him “it's not profitable”.

Chatzistefanou's ideology on journalism within a neoliberal ideological society is rather radical. He states that a journalist can not have absolute freedom in the capitalism because

"information itself becomes a product. In my opinion, information should be freely available to everyone... you cannot buy and sell information - it has to be out there for everyone. The capitalist society by making this information into a profitable product, it imposes its capitalistic rules on the information because it's advertisement, it's who pays it, it's an interference to what you should produce. What we are trying to do is that our products are on public domain and so they are not products in the capitalistic way. It's free for everyone, not only to watch it, but to download it, to make public screenings or even to take parts of our documentary and use it for the own job." (Chatzistefanou, 2015)

The first two documentaries were very successful, they had an audience of about 5.5 million viewers of people from 25-65, politically mainly from the left and highly educated. Chatzistefanou has anyway a left wing rhetoric to approach the news: "they start politically speaking from the center to the extreme left." (Chatzistefanou, 2015)

The whole INFOWAR team used to work before and while shooting the documentaries in the mainstream media, like Skai Radio. The journalists from Skai Radio liked a lot the idea, that their own employees are creating the first crowdfunded project, but did not exactly know what the outcome would be. INFOWAR received immediately the support of the mainstream media.

However,

"when they saw the documentary, they were so furious against us, that they stopped. At first they attacked us, they realized that by attacking us, they were giving more publicity to us, so they stopped speaking about that, because when they did that it was too late because we created a huge network of supporters on the Internet." (Chatzistefanou, 2015)



“The “Journal of Journalists” is our response to the crisis.”

(Efsyn, 2014)

Fig. 12: Efemerida ton Syntakton Logo

Efemerida ton Syntakton is a “special and unique” project which was launched at a time, when unprecedented conditions were developing in the modern Greek history. “The Journal of the Journalists”, which was published by the “Association of workers in newspapers and magazines” was formed mainly by former employees of the newspapers “Eleftherotypia” and “Sunday Eleftherotypia”, but also by former employees in other media and was launched on November 5th, 2012. This cooperative newspaper entered the market without the support of the government or a political party, without a strong owner-publisher, without being part of a band or a media group.

Efsyn covers a broad spectrum of society based on independent, pluralistic and in-depth information, critical research and analysis of every aspect of reality, and especially strict, harsh, but honest criticism of the respective power.

The newspaper committed to the fact that they will start shaping a new media landscape in a progressive direction while claiming from the start that today requires more than ever the criticism of public life, independence from political, economic and publishing interests. According to the statement of Efemerida ton Syntakton, this attitude does not mean alienation from society. The newspaper interests are in all policy areas and wants to meet the expectations of a broad spectrum of society, stretching from the fringes of the Conservative to the far left.

The newspaper is addressed to all citizens, to the employed and unemployed, who want a newspaper that would not mock them or mislead them.

The journalists from Efemerida ton Syntakton preserve the pluralism of the newspaper as a necessary condition of autonomy. This pluralism is ensured through a collaborative, cooperative form of organization, which is owned and controlled by the body of employees. Besides, members of the cooperative are the ones who elect the members of the management team.

The pluralism of the newspaper is guaranteed by the fact, that besides many professional journalists, the contribution of hundreds of collaborators - editors from the scientific and political world, from the fields of culture and academia, the labor and social movements, from the area of civil society organizations from the church or from ordinary citizens receive a voice in the newspaper.

The newspaper promotes an effective dialogue and strengthens the press freedom and democracy.

Nicholas Voulelis (2015) shared in an email interview, that in order to overcome the crisis of democratic value in Greece, a journalistic initiative like Efemerida ton Syntakton is more than welcomed. The collective of the newspaper is trying as an independent and pluralistic newspaper, to operate as an example for the entire sector, demonstrating that a small revolution is possible even under the worst conditions. As a positive feedback in this regard, the newspaper is already in the top four dailies in terms of circulation on a national basis, coming second on Saturdays, however the revenues from circulation and advertising still do not cover the total expenditures.

UNFOLLOW

“Our ally is the truth and anyone who is drawn to it.”

(Unfollow, 2015)

Unfollow is a monthly, independent political magazine, which was launched in December 2011. The journalists from Unfollow do political journalism and reportage, commentaries and analyzes, literature and cultural criticism. The magazine is dedicated to readers with political consciousness.

Unfollow decided that such a magazine is necessary primarily for political reasons. Unfollow does not perceive itself as an alternative magazine, but as a professional journalistic magazine and with a different perception of the mainstream media. They “keep track of what needs to be recorded, reveal what it takes to uncover, analyze what needs to be analyzed, and do not identify the outset with no faction, no perspective and no position.” (Unfollow, 2015). Unfollow is clearly in favor of the emancipation of all, mainly through thought, knowledge, questioning and political participation.

In terms of financing, which is still the most crucial for the independence of each medium, Unfollow chose not to have "external" funders or investors in order to preserve one of the highest value of journalism - independence. The magazine UNFOLLOW is strictly dependent on the sales and on their readers.

4.5. Media Context - Romania

“Romanian press is still young, mediocre and immature.” (Mihai Gotiu)

The rise and fall of the Romanian print media in the past 26 years since the fall of communism seem to be a classic story of “grandeur” and “decadence”. Romania was until 2008, when it was hardly hit by the crisis, one of the fastest growing economies in Europe and has been also one of the most dynamic sectors of economy (Ulmanu, 2013). However, Romanian journalists and promoters of independent professional media such as Mihai Gotiu or Cristi Lupsa (2015) describe the traditional Romanian press as still “young, mediocre and immature”. Moreover, most of the Romanian people lost the custom to consume the written press (6%) and inform themselves nowadays mainly over TV (63%) (Media Factbook, 2014).

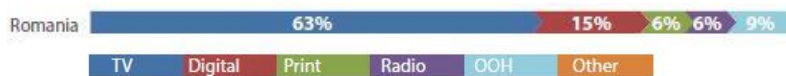


Fig. 13: Romanian Media Consume (Media Factbook, 2014)

Print Media Sector

The transition from the communistic to the democratic ideology has been a process in which during the first democratic years around 1.200 new newspapers appeared. The hunger of free information was big after over 50 years of suppression and opened a lot of doors for opportunistic future media owners. However, nowadays, the number fell immensely and in Bucharest are by now around 20 daily main-stream newspapers and in larger Romanian cities three to four dailies. The yellow journalism is aside from that more successful than the quality journalism (see Fig. 14). Yellow journalism and sport print newspapers represent about 80% of the newspaper circulation in 2010.

	Title	Circulation	Category of journalism
1	Click	332,279	Yellow
2	Libertatea	209,465	Yellow
3	Adevarul	141,330	Quality
4	Cancan	114,790	Yellow
5	Jurnalul National	77,914	Quality
6	Gazeta Sporturilor	69,145	Sport
7	Romania Libera	59,685	Quality
8	PRO Sport	54,713	Sport
9	Evenimentul Zilei	40,635	Quality
10	Gandul	26,733	Quality
	Total	1,126,689	

Fig. 14: Top 10 national dailies (Ghinea, Mungiu-Pippidi, 2010)

The Romanian media was after the fall of communism a rather fragile field. Ghinea and Mungiu-Pippidi describe in the “Journalistic background information report on Romanian media, MEDIADEM” (2010) three characteristics of the Romanian mainstream press, which developed during the “democratization” of the Romanian press:

1. **The personalization of the press** meaning that the media outlets were less important than their media owners or editors-in-chief. In this regard the Romanian media was mainly in the hands of powerful businessmen, which dictated the editorial policies after their own political convictions or interests.

Some media moguls were also themselves engaged in politics or even had problems with the law, like Dan Voiculescu, which is a former agent of Securitate and used to own Jurnalul National, five different TV stations, six Bucharest-based publications and radio stations. He also founded the Conservative Party in 1990, which never entered the Parliament, but Voiculescu made deals with the Social Democrat Party to receive political influence in exchange for positive coverage of the SDP in his media. In 2014 he was found guilty for money laundry and was sentenced for ten years to prison (Konzett, 2014).

Sorin Ovidiu Vantu was also a controversial character in the Romanian media landscape. He built in the 1990s an investment fund, which was in fact a Ponzi scheme that benefited

from protection within the state. The fund deprived over 300.000 Romanians of their life savings, some managers were prosecuted, but not Vantu. Later on he owned a media empire (14 print outlets, three TV stations and a radio network). Between 2006-2009 he attracted many journalists from other outlets with very high salaries, however his venture collapsed in 2010 and he sold all publications to the employees. Vantu was also a fierce opponent of Traian Basescu, the former Romanian president, and this political conviction was of course dictating the editorial lines of his media (Ghinea, Mungiu-Pippidi, 2013).

In 2004 there were some disagreements between Sorin Ovidiu Vantu and Dan Voiculescu and a media war between the two started, while accusing each other of illegal acts. Later on they joined forces together against Traian Basescu, the former president. (Ghinea, Mungiu-Pippidi, 2013).

Other powerful business men, were Dinu Patriciu, who was a liberal politician and among the richest men in Romania. Besides having owned the media outlet Adevarul Holding, he used to do business in the oil industry. 2014 he passed away (Marcu, 2014).

George Constantin Paunescu is a trader, banker and media mogul, whose family owns the influential newspaper Evenimentul Zilei. He used to have connections with former Securitate and took loans from state-controlled banks but never paid the money back. His family also founded B1 TV station, which was the only station, which supported Traian Basescu during the 2009 presidential election (Ghinea, Mungiu-Pippidi, 2013).

In 2008, alone six conglomerates controlled about 90% of the national newspapers and the Paunescu's family had around 45% of the TV audience market (Ghinea, Mungiu-Pippidi, 2010). These social power elites formed the Romanian journalism after the fall of communism and miserably failed to be in the interest of their readers, but successfully played the game of power in their private interest.

2. Uncertain revenues

The advertising industry was in the 1990s new to Romania. The higher circulation did not automatically guarantee higher revenues because the market was still not prepared. Otherwise due to the media fragmentation, the newspapers were financially unsustainable and their media owners had to negotiate both with private companies and the state to obtain advertising or “special deals”. Therefore, the entire media market was basically an easy victim for businessmen and Western media companies that entered in the late 1990s.

3. Lack of professional ethics based on the fact that the opinions of the media owners were the editorial policy of the newspapers. There were some attempts by various NGO’s to introduce rules of professional ethics, but they were either ignored or harshly criticized.

The propaganda model of the media after Herman and Chomsky (1988) seems in this case even more meaningful and relevant. These were only a few media moguls, which dominated the Romanian media landscape until 2013-2014, which expressly underlined the media situation showing the triangle of power between economy, politics and media.

However, between the years 2005 – 2008 Romania felt a media boom with an inflation of journalist’s salaries. The ones with experience earned even 5-10 times more than the national average wage. However, a common practice of the media owners was to split these amounts among permanent working contracts with a minimum wage and paying the rest in temporary intellectual rights contracts in order to avoid paying benefits such as pension and health insurance. This practice of avoiding social taxation was changed in 2010 due to a change of the law by basically forbidding these kind of intellectual property contracts and renaming them “independent activities”, for which the journalists had to pay the social duties. After a petition calling for fiscal strike later in 2010, the government changed the payment method (Ghinea, Mungiu-Pippidi, 2010). The number of titles on the market also rised a lot and the quality of top newspapers had been increasing with better print, more pages, more diverse coverages,

supplements and Sunday editions. There was also more money from investments and advertising, as the country's economy was prospering at a quick pace (Ulmeanu, 2013).

Financial crisis of the media and the outcomes

Since 2009 the print sector suffered a steep decline. Almost all printed newspapers duplicated their content also in the online versions of the publications, which generated much more easy and affordable access for the readers, but simultaneously a substantial reduction of the print titles buyers (Media Factbook 2014). As a consequence to this, the advertisement revenues in the print media fell down by 25% in 2014 compared to 2008. The chain of negative effects include of course the decline of independency and quality of the press (CJI, 2015).

Moreover, according to the Romanian interviewed journalists, the media situation in Romania was even before the financial crisis not good. Cristian Lupsa (2015), the editor of the magazine "Doar o Revista", which was trained and worked in journalism in the United States, criticizes the Romanian press as being "mediocre and based on opinion and scandals." The press did not have enough time to professionalize itself, since it had to start from the ground in the 1990s. The end of 2008 and beginning of 2009 destroyed among the press, what eventually started to overcome the "convalescence" of a controlled press until 1989. The symptoms of the media crisis were the dismissal of over 6000 journalists during 2004-2010 (CJI, 2015), but the numbers are not clear, since many journalists are working just as freelancers, since it's more convenient for the media owners. Mihai Gotiu (2015), an investigative journalist, exemplifies how drastic these changes affected the working conditions of the journalists. The editorial departments were radically reduced. If for a local weekly newspaper two to three editors were working just in the cultural department, after 2008-2009 a national newspaper had just one editor, which had to cover two to three departments – from culture, investigations to politics and social. The most affected was the investigation journalism, where a lot of resources would have been needed. Consequences of these working conditions are shrinking quality and uninformed public opinion, which endangers the democratic act.

According to a study made on by the Centre of Independent Journalism on the state of the mass-media sector (CJI, 2015), the word which would best define the condition of the print press in 2014, is “fear” and namely the fear of the journalist to lose his/her job or the fear by the end of the month, that the paycheck would be delayed, the fear of the media owner, of politicians or authorities. Journalists accuse the lesser salaries, the lack of predictability and stability of the job, the bigger workload with fewer employees. The readers consider that the mass media are profound viced, bewail the lack of quality content, sometimes condemn mass-media approaches, but they are still consuming the media, which they criticize.

Therefore it is difficult for the quality journalism to find its way in the jungle of critics about the fourth estate of democracy. There exists of course quality mainstream journalistic work, however, according to this study, they still remain in minority.

Another critical point refers to the agenda of the media, which is mostly dictated by extra-editorial factors and does not overlap with the public interest (CJI, 2015). A very good example in this regard is the topic of one of the most controversial projects in Romania, the “Rosia Montana gold mining project”. This project was promoted by a Canadian company and very much disputed by some Romanian political forces and ecologists. Its aim was to extract gold with the help of cyanides techniques, which are asserted very dangerous and hazardous to the environment (Rosia Montana, 2013). The “Roșia Montană” topic was according to a Romanian media observer (Zelist, 2013) in September 2013 of much more greater interest than any other political topic in the online. The reason for this were the massive social movements, which also put the independence of the mass media again to proof. The trigger was that the government of Romania has signed a bill which would have allowed RMCG to start extracting the gold. Many politicians supported this project, but the public didn't really share this opinion. The biggest disappointment of the civil society was that even the public broadcaster failed to cover the social movements in the first days as experts might have been expecting to. When the protests started, the news from TVR (the Romanian public broadcaster), which were covering this issue, allocated a small amount of time on this topic which was of great public interest (Office MediaSind, 2013). Short after the protesters occupied the building of the public

broadcaster, the editorial content about Rosia Montana clearly extended. The main issue here was that the mining company was buying off politicians and media to not report about what problems – social, political, cultural heritage - can be produced by implementing this project. According to Mihai Gotiu (2013), an investigative journalist on the case of Rosia Montana, the mining company invested about 60Mil EUR just on „external communication“ – meaning aggressive advertisement but also successful attempts to buy favorable opinions of journalists in Romania but also from abroad or lobby with the state for law changes in favor of the project. According to the Active Watch Report in 2013, TVR didn't report properly because of their economic pressures. The most flagrant act of sacrifice of the editorial space in favor of a publicity client remains the mediatic campaign of the Roșia Montană Gold Corporation, which didn't stop with the inundation of political commercials, but also invaded the editorial space with masked publicity and generated the quasi disappearance of critical information addressing the mining project (ActiveWatch, 2013).

The Annual reports dedicated to press freedom in 2011, 2012, 2013 FREEX (ActiveWatch 2011, 2012, 2013) also state that the most outrageous case of economic pressure by a company in 2010 is related to the mining exploitation from Roșia Montană. The reports state that the presence of the Roșia Montană case in mass-media represents the gravest case of manipulation, abuses, aggressions, censorship of journalists and freedom of expression encountered in the last few years. The Romanian mainstream media failed to act as a watchdog of those in power.

However, the struggle for democracy of the Roșia Montană movement succeeded to bring a change into the Romanian print journalism within the context of the economic and democratic crisis, which made the Romanian media system rather fragile and unable to feed the civil society with critical information and maintain the democratic process. Some new journalistic initiatives arose within this rather weak media landscape and got to play a big part in strengthening the speech of the public sphere and creating a critical civil society. A new generation of independent journalistic communities such as Casa Jurnalistului, the Rise Project, Romania Curata have delivered in-depth, quality and authentic coverage on the topic

of Roşia Montana. According to Paul Radu from the Rise Project, these social movements have the power to change the face of Romanian journalism. He further claims, that this phenomenon was made possible by the “lack of professionalism of journalists who, at one point, stopped learning, became [they became] self-sufficient, dependent on sources connected to politicians or media owners” (Radu, 2013). The new generation of independent reporters has the internet and social media as means of distributing the information, they are transparent about their investigation techniques and are open to collaboration (Burtea, 2013). They’ve impressed the audience with surprising discoveries, with investigations about the connections between the economy, the state and the mainstream press and therefore strengthen the public speech. In this way Romanian journalism enters slowly a new phase.

4.6. Analysis of the Romanian journalistic initiatives



Fig. 15: Casa Jurnalistului Logo

“We are a Bucharest-based community of independent journalists. All of us have worked in the news media industry – the printed press, televisions, radio stations – and have produced prize-winning journalistic pieces. However, we have also witnessed how most of the media outlets have been built as instruments for politicians. That was turning off our enthusiasm. So we’ve started our own thing.” (Casa Jurnalistului, 2013)

“Casa Jurnalistului” means “The Journalist’s House” and is literally a house where journalists live, meet, work and organize events for their readers, who support them directly through donations. The house was built in 2012 from scratch by the core team and it expands depending on public involvement. The journalists’ collective at Casa Jurnalistului create in-depth feature stories, reports, investigations and multimedia projects about social issues in Eastern Europe,. The have also worked with international media like The Guardian, Channel 4, USA Today, Al Jazeera but they usually publish their stories in a multimedia format on their own website.

Vlad Ursulean is the founder of this initiative and has a very liberal philosophy when it comes to Casa Jurnalistului. The initiative has no rigid structure or editorial policy, it is according to Ursulean (2015) a very personalized initiative. The Journalist’s House has a big network of journalists, who collaborate and come every day to work. The core team consists out of four journalists, who live in the house, there are about ten people, who come often and work on various article. According to Ursulean (2015), Casa Jurnalistului, is in an explorative phase.

“We do not know yet, there is no category, we do not know what is to do, we do not want to enter a category, we are in an exploration phase, if you want a category to say one exploratory journalism, journalistic innovation and survival.” (Ursulean, 2015)

Casa Jurnalistului was actually planned like a “an ark for saving the journalists, which do not want to do their job through these murky waters” (Ursulean, 2015). The initiative is centred on the journalists, which can join them and have the liberty to look for their own subjects and approaches. The advantage is that the collaborating journalists have the chance to discuss with other good journalists from the initiative, exchange ideas and use the resources and equipment provided by them. Casa Jurnalistului is like an open space for ideas, collaboration and development.

“There is a group without clear borders and I want it to stay this way, everyone is involved to the extent that he wants and has no obligations”. (Ursulean, 2015)

Casa Jurnalistului is financed by the recurrent donations of around 150-200 people. Along the time they have received many awards for the qualitative work they did and they also continuously applying for various funding from several organizations. They are searching also for grants and will try in fall 2015 to collect money again over crowdfunding. The recurring donations cover at least the household expenses and sometimes they also have enough resources to buy new equipment or pay for the documenting trips. However, the money are not enough to make a living out of it.

The journalists working for Casa Jurnalistului work mostly on voluntary basis. What they receive is the expertise of a team of very good journalists. Each material is edited by 5-6 people, meaning that the journalists from Casa Jurnalistului place high emphasis on quality. The collaborators also have the chance to use their whole technical equipment and have the opportunity to publish.

The initiative is at this scale sustainable, but if they plan to grow, this could be problematic. The journalists from Casa Jurnalistului think about how they could increase but also how can the project be systematized so that it can become replicable for others. Ursulean would like to build a decentralized network of all kinds of centers, institutes, journalistic groups, which can cover a wide range of approaches, of functioning philosophies. If it is decentralized then this would be much less vulnerable to external pressures, according to Ursulean (2015).

Spontaneous and unplanned is also their agenda. However, due to the fact that they apply for grants, which have their own agenda, Casa Jurnalistului is now working for instance on a subject on education, domestic violence. But otherwise...

(...)“It hits us on the street, I have a list of twenty pages of topics and each day I add something. Sometimes five four additional topics...” (Ursulean, 2015)

The initiative doesn't write for a particular audience, but the readers of Casa Jurnalistului are people of an average age of 28-30 years old from urban spaces, most of them educated. This last characteristic does not please Vlad Ursulean, because according to him (2015) it's not that he would have wished to have a more diverse public, but the problem is that both, educated and uneducated do not have a strong media literacy, do not have a media education. For this purpose, Casa Jurnalistului started from the ground and tried to educate their readers with articles about “What is journalism”, “what is manipulation of the press”. They made graphics and charts to show their readers how manipulation functions and how should journalism look like.

“We overcame this basic phase and now we educate our public through our own example, quality journalism.” (Ursulean, 2015)



Fig. 16: Rise Project Logo

RISE Project is a non-profit journalism organization founded in 2012 by a community of journalists, programmers and activists. They mainly investigate organized crime and corruption affecting Romania and the countries of the region. Paul Radu, the head of the Rise Project is also the executive director of an NGO, which unites investigation centres of East Europe until Central Asia. The Rise Project is therefore a member of this regional network, Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) and of the Global Investigative Journalism Network. The members of Rise Project are also founders of the Investigative Dashboard, which is a tool developed together with Google Ideas to help investigators track down the money and hidden assets of criminals and corrupt politicians. Rise Project, OCCRP and Quickdata also created Visual Investigative Scenarios, a tool to visualize business and crime networks.

This project therefore reveals hidden connections between criminal organizations, politicians and businessmen. For this purpose they use advanced investigative techniques and information analysis technologies. They have the know-how to obtain documents from offshore areas and analyze large volumes of information to be then able to create databases and piece together the puzzle to bring forth new and authentic realities.

Rise Project is not only a platform for the publication of investigations but also a visual archive, an index of the present times. It is a graphic exposure of people, business, litigations and links between the investigated actors and their businesses.

While investigative press in Romania is fading under censure, RISE Project is an succesful attempt to bring corruption in Romania to sight (Rise Project, 2015).

According to the Annual Report of the Rise Project (2013) most of the investigative work is done on a voluntary basis. In 2013 however, Rise received several medium-sized grants from donor organizations and also benefitted from donations from the public. Between 2012-2013 Rise was a partner in the project Visual Investigative Scenarios (VIS), a project financed by the International Press Institute and Google Inc. with a total budget of 71.100 Eur. The NGO received 21600 Eur for their work – research, coordination and communication.

In May 2013 Rise was also awarded a 14800 USD grant from the United States Embassy in Bucharest to conduct trainings on investigative journalism techniques, data research and data visualization for reporters and civil society activists from Romania and the Republic of Moldova.

In June 2013, the Open Society Foundation Media Program provided 24900 USD for a series of investigative journalism and data visualization trainings and cross-border collaborative projects throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

The members of the Rise Project also received international awards for their work as investigative journalists: The Rise Daniel Pearl Award for Outstanding International Reporting in 2011, Investigative Reporters and Editors Awards in 2004, The Global Shining Light Award (2007), Tom Renner Investigative Reporters and Editors Award (2007), Knight International Journalism Award (2004) and Investigative Reporters and Editors Award (2004) (Rise Project, 2015a).

The donations from the public allowed them to cover access fees to public records and reporters' travel costs for field research.

The motivation and idealism of the journalists from RISE lead them to conduct alone in 2013, 14 investigations, 48 articles, in which they've indexed around 40 people, 152 companies and 12 law suits, whereas they managed to generate between these, 731 connections, which are

represented on their website (www.riseproject.ro) through infographics and visualizations. One of the most consumed investigation was about the confidential documents of the Rosia Montana Affair – “Rosia Montana Gold Corporation under official investigation in a major money laundering case” (Rise Project, 2013b).

Rise Project also allocated an online tool for readers, which they can use to send possible leaks. This system was implemented in July 2015 and is confidential and secured for the users with the purpose to bring contributions for investigating corruption and organized crime (Rise Project, 2015b)

Radu claims, that in the context of the fact that almost the whole press in Romania is bought by oligarchs as also presented in the media context, the NGO’s are the only chance for doing investigations (Moldoveanu, 2013). The only issue is therefore the one connected with sustainability of the project as the work of Rise Project is mostly based on volunteering. However, the good work is rewarded, but the factor of unsecureness and unsustainability may disrupt the flow of good and high qualitative work of the investigative journalists from the Rise Project. At the same time, this could also motivate them to do better work in order to further on receive grants, awards and recognition.



Fig. 16: Romania Curata Banner

According to their manifest (Romania Curata, 2014), the Alliance for a Clean Romania is a civic movement open to individuals and organizations, NGOs, trade unions, companies, institutions, promoting good governance and functions on voluntary basis.

Romania Curata is not a journalistic initiative per se, but the journalistic interface of an NGO project of the Academical Society of Romania (SART), lead by Alina Mungiu-Pippidi. The scope of the project is to encourage people to involve themselves in a better governing, in following the public money, in the way they are spent, the organization of public debates when there are decision taken in a community or at national level and also the encouraging of the civil society of Romania to action.

Although it is not a journalistic product, this initiative is very interesting because it creates new democratic communicative spaces, its purpose is to take the position of a watchdog of those in power, while doing numerous in-depth investigations but also to educate the civil society to act in a democratical way against those in power and is of course free for everyone. The innovation brought with this initiative is the orientation towards the activities of the civil societies, but also the promoting of good governance, civic implication and social movements. The audience is therefore empowered to act democratically. The scope of the project is according to Mihai Gotiu (2015), an investigative journalist working for this initiative, to bring another type of information in the public debate. Romania Curata is also a product of the crisis, since Gotiu (2015) claims, that if the crisis wouldn't have hit Romania, these topics could have been also thematized by the mainstream press.

SART conducts also another project, which analyzes the degree of transparency of public institutions. This project actually had a learn effect on the public institutions, because the

authorities have understood and in the course of time, made their information public and their actions more transparent.

Romania Curata is also an aggregator of press releases about the actions of several NGO's, which at an informative level, are also part of journalism, but at a minimal level. Romania Curata works also a lot on investigations, editorial opinions, which draws the project closer to journalism.

The NGO consists of members working in the administrative area and in the journalism area. Mihai Gotiu (2015) is one of the few employed people, because he is the coordinator of the project. However, the most materials from Romania Curata come from volunteers. The NGO also have collaborateurs as journalists, which are paid for each article. They take the information, which usually comes from the volunteers and give it a journalistic form. There are also collaborateurs from several cities of Romania, which develop topics on the agenda of the civil society.

The project is financed by Norwegian funds but it also takes donations. The condition for receiving these funds, was to get 2 million unique users within two years. So, the project is therefore a 2 years project, whereas the first year has already passed. However, already after one year the target was reached. The project went very well and had great results, which were mirrored in the actions of public institutions, so the founders of the NGO want to continue the project. There are several possibilities - either trying to find funding sources on this type of projects, or in other projects, which are made by the Academicians Society from Romania or in partnership with other NGO's and foundations, where positions of journalists can be designed, which reflect the particular project idea.

Romania Curata has an average of 7.000 unique users a week, but during the electoral period in 2013, it reached the highest number of visitors, 154.000. The audience is mainly interested in civic implication, they are people between 20-45 years old with education higher than the average and which work mostly in liberal domains (like architecture, environment). A lot of readers come from the diaspora (20-35%) but during important periods like for instance, the President elections, the percentage of these people considerably increased to almost 40-45%.

As an example, Mihai Gotiu narrated during the interview, that he has data, which proves, that the readers of Romania Curata, influenced a lot the outcome of the elections. In November 2013 during the elections period, the peak of the visitors number on Romania Curata was reached. The fight in the electoral period was given between the Socialist and the Liberal Party. Mihai Gotiu and some active civil groups from the diaspora wrote an open letter to the Romanian Government and criticized the way the first tour of the President elections was organized in the diaspora – the Socialist Party, which knew, that the Romanian civil society from abroad was getting more critical about the governing of the Prime Minister, which now was running for President, invested far to less resources for the elections from abroad. People were queueing for hours in order to give their vote, which is a democratic, constitutional right. Some, did not even managed to vote, because the invested human resources by the Romanian government were far too little. The anger of the people, at least the one from the diaspora could be mirrored in the numbers of the voters – 2009 around 90.000 and 2014 almost 160.000 (Gotiu, 2014).

Moreover, Romania Curata had in November 2014, a higher audience then the generalist newspapers

“Practically we had on a niche, more readers than the generalists online mediums had. So, it is assumed, that the diaspora had a clear influence on the outcoming of the elections.” (Gotiu, 2014).

Mihai Gotiu is mainly known because of the movement from Rosia Montana. He was one of the very few journalists in Romania, which wrote fiercly and critical on this topic. He even documented the whole Rosia Montana Affair since the Canadian company first came to Romania in 1996. He did investigative work and revealed information, which were not so easily digested by the company itself but very much consumed by the civil society, which was starting to undergo a transition from being lethargic in terms of governance to receiving a voice, having more civil courage and starting to be eager to do a change. Gotiu became one of the most critical voices of the Rosia Montana movement and to some extents he also managed with Romania Curata to educated the civil society!



Ce gândim. Ce vrem. Ce facem.

“If you look at the few awards and grants for journalism in Romania, Casa Jurnalistului and DoR and Rise and two-three other initiatives dominate the press in Romania because we win everything!” (Cristian Lupsa)

Decat o Revista (“Only a Magazine”) reflects and explains in words and images, ideas and obsessions of Romania from nowadays. This magazine brought in December 2009 a new succesful genre in the Romanian media lanscape and namely – the narrative journalism.

DoR is a quarterly magazine that publishes generalist stories about the reality we live in today and explores the familiarity of the Romanian experiences. The agenda of the magazine is on social, political, cultural trends, personal decisions topics.

Their editorial niche is according to their self-image (Decat o Revista, 2014) the in-depth editorial. Their “readers are intelligent and curious”. DoR believes that a magazine can be sincere and transmit emotions. The writing is combined with illustrations, photographs and an original design concept, forming the printed edition a collector's item.

Cristian Lupsa, the head of the magazine, came back after his Journalism studies in the States in 2007, when the media in Romania was still flourishing, however more in economical terms than quality as he states (Lupsa, 2015). Lupsa was not content about the Romanian journalism - not due the external, economic and political, pressures, but about the way journalists used to work and refer to their jobs and profession:

“I had the feeling that they are lazy and they complain a lot. Well, we don't have any time, we don't have any ressources - and this in a time, when in Romania the economic situation was pretty stable. But the journalism was further on superficial, the daily journalism, the magazine journalism was beneath criticism.” (Lupsa, 2015).

Lupsa thinks that the Romanian mentality about journalism is “damaged” since the most media outlets focus far too much on the economic outcome and not on the quality of the journalistic content:

“And I think this is a very damaging mentality because, from a point, you need for your existence, that someone validates the need of your existence – and the only ones which can and should do this within this profession are the readers. And if you generate mediocre content, at some point the readers will abandon you.” (Lupsa, 2015)

The philosophy at Decat o Revista is that quality is more important than everything else, and unfortunately this is not a philosophy, which is much applied within the Romanian landscape.

The idea of the magazine came to life in April 2009 and the first number was launched in November 2009. The magazine was issued mainly out of a sort of frustration, because the journalists working at Decat o Revista used to work before for different magazines and media trusts and needed to have a space where they can do journalism in a proper way. They wanted in this way to demonstrate that quality content and a good magazine can be also done with few resources but with a lot of dedication and implication. Their desire was to do something which was different to everything what was being done in the Romanian media landscape. By the time the first number was issued, the alternative independent mediatic space with other ways of funding was quite empty.

“By the end of 2009 it wasn’t almost anything. For sure not on paper. Now... the things are different! There are many different initiatives, which is wonderful! (Lupsa, 2015).”

Lupsa (2015) doesn’t believe in competition, at least not on this journalism niche. In his opinion, these initiatives, which are sustained in an alternative way, have to find some ways to support each other. DoR also promotes other journalists and initiatives on social networks, because “the space is so small and if the people did something good, it’s nice to know about it.” (Lupsa, 2015)

Lupsa used to work for some other magazines, before 2009 when he issued the first number of “Decat o Revista”, which is a totally independent magazine. Everything what they do at DoR mainly comes from an anglo-saxon heritage. They do narrative journalism and storytelling, portraits, reportages, personal essays and everything is based on a lot of documentation and discussions with the people about they are writing about. This enables them to be able to write about “the Romanian social and cultural temperature”. Lupsa’s view is that Romania is in a huge confusion regarding its own identity and through the magazine they are trying with well written stories about what does it mean for instance to be a citizen in today’s Romania or how do Romanians get along with themselves in terms of the cultural and historical heritages, to illuminate these difficult questions.

The journalists of DoR want to play a role in the change of the perception about journalism and in its transformation, however their main purpose is to give people something good to read. Interesting was the answer of Cristian Lupsa regarding the education purpose of the civil society. He states that the educational purpose is tangential. They have a difference of the tone, because they do not want to give lessons or draw conclusions. The topics, which could have had an educational purpose are about discrimination, minorities, but this process happens in a rather subversive way. This is created, according to Lupsa (2015) through tolerance and democratic values, but not in an activist tone. The journalists from DoR write in a more empathetic way and have a human approach.

“I don’t hide to you – there were moments when the people from these initiatives, which we were talking about before, said that, “Hey, you are too gentle, you are not militant enough” ... and for me, this is a compliment.” (Lupsa, 2015).

DoR has also political topics. During the presidential elections they did for three months a project, where they covered each of the four main candidates. However, this was mostly done from an anthropological point of view.

“It was a sort of a project, which was showing a political show, where everybody is participating.” (Lupsa, 2015)

The magazine is being funded mostly over grants from companies and organizations, which give money so journalists can cover some topics. This is an alternative way of funding for journalists, which want to cover more complex stories. However, Lupsa (2015) still feels that when the money comes from a company, there are also some limitations or imposed directions. They sell around 2500 copies of the magazine (1000 subscribers and between 1500 and 1700 copies sold from the distribution). According to Lupsa (2015), these are small numbers related to the population, but related to how down the journalism market in Romania is, it is satisfactory.

DoR receives a very good feedback and has received awards and grants for journalism in Romania.

“If you look at the few awards and grants for journalism in Romania, Casa Jurnalistului and DoR and Rise and two-three other initiatives dominate the press in Romania because we win everything!” (Lupsa, 2015)

However, Lupsa and the team from Dor are frustrated because they still haven’t managed to reach more people and get bigger. He then continues and states that the fact, that they have received so many awards what could give them prestige, is a false way of thinking because “(...) because we are the kings of a scorched territory. The whole system is down and the whole journalism is in a grave.”

The sustainability of the magazine depends mostly on its readers and the small initiatives like Casa Jurnalistului, Rise Project or DoR are the ones which still have the energy to do a change. But the chances for the future and long-term financial sustainability are according to Lupsa (2015) pretty small. These small publications are mostly for Bucharest or urban spaces.

“For instance, the aunt from Lugoj, which didn’t understand how corrupt is actually the local administration, doesn’t read the magazine. If you are a journalist, this is what you have to do, to reach as many people as possible to tell them about realities, which happen in their life. And we play by now still for small stakes. I don’t say that this is grave, but this is a reality.” (Lupsa, 2015)

DoR tries to connect as much as possible with its audience. For this reason one of their essential values is to “go outside in the world” (Lupsa, 2015). Each number of the magazine is launched with an event – either concerts, or readings out of the magazine. They are also doing seminars, in which they bring people from different areas to talk about how they tell stories in their profession (artists, musicians, lawyers, business people). DoR is present at several festivals in Romania, where they have a stand. Therefore, they try to stay close especially to their subscribers and cultivate the community, because they are the main reason Dor can survive. Moreover, they also organize courses with students, people from NGOs or journalists about the storytelling and narrative journalism. DoR also hostes a big conference, which will already had by 2015 five editions, where they bring journalists especially from the U.S. but also from Western Europe to talk about storytelling in different media.

“So – we tried from the beginning to not be just a magazine because otherwise you do not have any chance. In these times a magazine which appears every three months necessary has to have a relationship with the audience.” (Lupsa, 2015)

5 Discussions and Conclusions

“Journalism is dying!”

Journalism is facing today a most complex combination of challenges – economic, political, ideological, functional, structural, technological - so many that the bubble has burst and the media finds itself in a crisis of identity.

However, after having analyzed the literature on topics such as governance, freedom of expression, journalism under neoliberal conditions and crisis of the media, which all together reflect a rather negative light on the situation of today’s journalism, the outcome of the field work in Greece, Spain and Romania showed refreshing results. The bubble has indeed gravely burst but brought light into the apocalyptical setting of the journalistic field by the input of these journalists, which were themselves directly affected by the harsh conditions of the crisis.

The crisis generated among the media field the dismissal of around 5.000 journalists in Romania, the closure of 305 papers in Spain and the drops in Greek newspaper circulation of 66% (see Table 1., Chapter 2.5.). The crisis has therefore economic aspects, but also political and technological (Giles, 2010, McChesney 2010 and Nichols, 2010; Gillmour, 2004; Downie and Schudson, 2010). On top of this, there is an acute crisis of authority, caused by the systematic interference of external powers, which led to a symptomatic mistrust in the media by the civil society.

The social cohesion is broken and therefore there is more pressing need to address social issues. The crisis generated a climate, in which the structures are more fluid and decisions for coming out of the crisis have not yet been taken. This period is called by McChesney (2007) critical juncture and is a means to understand the social change. The combination of the revolutionary new technology that undermines the existing system, the discredited media contents and the major political crisis, which Europe is facing now, is according to McChesney (2007) contributing to the destabilization of the field of the media.

Academics (Giles, 2010; McChesney 2010; Nichols, 2010; Cortell, 2014) have claimed that it is not the journalism, but the journalism business model that is in crisis. This statement is true, however, when journalism moves between the conflicting priorities of the profit speculation of media owners and the journalistic performance expected by the society (see Chapter 4, Media Context), than I have to agree with Zwicky's (2012) judgment, that the crisis of journalism is actually connected to the ideological frame of our society, the immense commercialization of the media caused by the ideology of neoliberalism. A media project should be "an intellectual and not a financial plan with an intellectual excuse" (Cortell, 2013).

Of course, this has also to do with the business model, however for a good functioning of the media system in the tradition of democracy, there is a big need of people with a dissident voice, because democracy is not necessarily compatible with the ideology of neoliberalism. To amplify this argument, I will bring some examples of the working philosophy of the journalists, which created the investigated initiatives, which are in parallel discussed with the characteristics of neoliberal markets (Croteau/Hoynes, 2001) (see also Chapter 2.5.1.).

1. Capitalistic markets are, contrary to the liberal affirmations, undemocratic.

The new journalistic initiatives work more democratically, because their main goal is to do a social change and to close the gap between the civil society and the elites. Moreover, their organizational structures are horizontal, meaning that the influence of the medium is distributed among the journalists, which are working for these initiatives. Some of them, like Romania Curata for instance, do advocacy journalism and address the social development issues and concerns. They also empower the civil society to raise their voice, when it comes to social injustice (see Chapter 4.5.). Moreover, the rise of the investigative journalism linked with professionally done data journalism as seen at the Rise Project, managed to undercover many corruption cases in Romania of the elites from politics and economy. Many voices state that the massive protest against the mining project at Rosia Montana in 2013, which is seen as the most flagrant act of sacrifice of the editorial space in favor of a publicity client, has changed the face of journalism in Romania (Radu, 2013). And this is the best example to prove the democratic power of these journalistic initiatives.

2. Markets produce and reproduce social inequalities.

As a conclusion to this structural problem, one can assume that media generally reflects the interests and views of the rich.

The main purpose of the investigated journalistic initiatives is to close the gap between the civil society and the elites. Indeed, in regard to media, “those parties with significant resources may own or disproportionately influence media content, while those with only modest means, have little or no influence on what is produced” (Croteau/Hoynes 2001:22). However, the statistics already show that the trust of the population in the media has fallen drastically in the past few years. A recent Euro-barometer (EC, 2014) survey reveals that only 23% Greeks, 31% Spaniards and 39% Romanians trust the press news compared with an EU average of 41%. And for the existence of the news media, one needs the validation of their own existence, and the only ones which can and should do this, are the readers. If the civil society feels that it is not addressed anymore, they will stop consuming the medium.

The Greek interview partners delivered a very interesting insight, which fits very well to this characteristic. Dimitris Bounias (2015) claimed that the pro-Troika press was constantly generating a feeling of fear among the readers during the crisis years, “it fed a very toxic debate and a very toxic perception for guilt of the people.” The readers received persistently information like “the bad Greeks, who were living above their means, now need to be reformed.” Bounias (2015) continues by saying that the irony was that the media, which was generating nationwide the feeling of fear among the people, was the one which had been practicing high level corruption during the crisis. Also, the high level reforms have been used as a tool to retain people’s thoughts in collective guilt. So, the news content turned people against each other. Bounias (2015) states that the people needed some time to get angry on the press and the drops by 66% in circulation between 2008 and 2014 had definitely to do with the even lesser consume and the higher mistrust in the traditional media.

Aris Chatzistefanou from Infowar produced three documentaries during the Greek crisis - Debtocracy, Catastroika and Fascism Inc. These documentaries were very critical about the measures of the Troika and even brought alternative solutions to solve the crisis. As a

consequence to this, he was fired from the mainstream radio, Skai Radio, where he used to work to be able to finance his projects. Catastroika was in fact the first documentary, which was 100% funded over crowdfunding. The discourse of his work was against the Troika and had real success among the Greek and international public. An other example is the work of La Directa. Before the crisis hit Spain, La Directa was already thematizing the questioning of the system, topics which just nowadays are being discussed by the mainstream media. Today, the thematic principle of La Directa is set on alternatives to the societal problems.

“We don't just talk why the actual model isn't functioning, but we suggest alternatives for these problems in education, sanitary system, housing problems etc. So alternatives, how there can be made possible an acces at a normal different life, away from the actual model. We put much energy in trying to find these alternatives. We are discussing the post-crisis - what happens after the crisis?” (Rodriguez, 2014)

3. Markets do not necessarily match social and democratic needs. Meritorious goods are being neglected in the market model.

The question that emerges out of this characteristic is how can “democracy-relevant” journalism be financed over the market, if it's not enough requested in comparison to for instance boulevard or yellow journalism. Also the influence of the advertisement is here to be brought into question. The tendency according to Croteau/Hoynes (2001:24) is “to produce economic benefits while simultaneously creating (or at least helping to sustain) democratic deficits”.

This is the most important point, which guarantees the independency and freedom of the journalists working in these new critical journalistic initiatives. All of them depend mostly on their readers, the financing is therefore from down. These initiatives survive through donations, subscriptions and crowdfunding. Some of them also accept advertisement, but not from big companies or banks, which could influence the editorial line. The Romanian journalists finance themselves also a lot over grants and funds from several independent

organizations and since they also do quality work, which strengthens the democratic line of the state, they also receive a lot of awards.

“If you look at the few awards and grants for journalism in Romania, Casa Jurnalistului and DoR and Rise and two-three other initiatives dominate the press in Romania because we win everything!” (Cristian Lupsa)

This way of financing guarantees them their independence, however with the price of being “poor” (Schaefer, 2015). The sustainability of these initiatives is problematic.

These new independent critical journalistic initiatives basically support the democratic public sphere more than the traditional media does, they close the gap between the ones in power and the civil society and come with critical reporting on those in power. Almost all initiatives started during the crisis. All initiatives are independent of any private interests and are uncontrolled, are critical and investigative and have a sharp focus on social change. They are close to the society - journalists cultivate and implement a dialogical culture engaging with citizens, but always concerned about the truth and an accurate, non-distorted approach to reality. Some of them even organize talks, open discussions and conferences on topics of their initiative so that they can engage even more to their audience. They are constituted in form of cooperatives and are self-managed. They have horizontal hierarchies, innovative funding and at the moment rather small teams.

They do investigations on economic and political issues, critical debates, they discuss the crisis in all different facets, unveil corruption cases, address social problems and issues of freedom of speech. Therefore, their orientation is towards civil societies, of which the mainstream press does not write about and they consider themselves watchdogs of power. In this sense they have managed to retrieve their democratic identity and to revitalize the field of journalism, which was sentenced to fall apart.

During the field research there have been many types and genres of journalism initiatives observed. However, it is interesting to observe, that one differentiation is between

initiatives started by fired or discontent professional journalists, which were unhappy with the situation of the mainstream press, like in Efimerida ton Syntakton, The Press Project, Unfollow, Infowar, Critic, La Marea, El Diario, Casa Jurnalistului, Decat o Revista,

and,

initiatives, which were started by grass-root journalists as social movement newspapers in Spain, until they reached a point when they noticed the importance to reach the whole civil society like Diagonal and La Directa.

However, also interesting to observe is the fact that almost all professional journalists, which were fired or discontent with the situation of the mainstream press use as sources, information from social movements and NGO's. So, professionalized journalists, fed up on the structures of the traditional media meet the social movement journalists – two different worlds meet common ground.

As Greck and Altmeppen (2012) poetically labeled the different types of journalism as orchids in the media jungle, which grow on other plants in symbiosis, the same can be observed among these initiatives – public journalism, investigative and data journalism, alternative journalism, advocacy journalism, counter-information journalism – everything is there. The genres of these initiatives have no clear contours, however on the base of their philosophy, they could be altogether included in the slow journalism movement. The slow journalism values accuracy, quality and context, takes time to find things out, seeks out untold stories and sees the audience as collaborators (Berkey-Gerard 2009). An added value is of course their agenda and their orientation towards civil societies, the innovative funding, which makes them independent and their journalistic praxis as watchdogs of those in power.

The sustainability of these initiatives is however still a problematic point. The interviewed journalists, state, that at this point they all are sustainable, but in case they want to grow, they would have to search for new business models, which further guarantees their independence.

“I believe that some newspaper created after the crisis are much more professional and much more free and open than we used to have when the economy was in a boom BUT it's much more difficult for the journalists to do that. I work 5 times more than I used to work in 2007 and I am getting 5 times less money that I use to get. So it's 10 levels difference to what I get and how many hours I spent to get that.(...) Information should be free for everyone – because the press is the opinion builder of citizens, and this right shouldn't be bought! Such democratic projects in a capitalistic society are possible, but hard to sustain!” (Chatzistefanou, 2015)

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Sources of the Investigated Newspapers and Magazine

Critic (2015): <http://elcritic.cat/>

La Marea (2015): <http://lamarea.com/>

El Diario (2015): <http://eldiario.es/>

Diagonal (2015): <http://diagonalperiodico.net/>

La Directa (2015): <https://directa.cat/>

Efemerida ton Syntakton (2015): www.efsyn.gr/

Unfollow (2015): <http://unfollow.com.gr/>

Infowar (2015): <http://infowarproductions.com/>

The Press Project International (2015): <http://www.thepressproject.gr/en/>

Casa Jurnalistului (2015): <http://casajurnalistului.ro/>

Romania Curata (2015): <http://romaniacurata.ro/>

The Rise Project (2015): <http://riseproject.ro/>

Interviews

Rodriguez, J. (2014): Interview (see Appendix)

Saura, V. (2015): Interview (see Appendix)

Schaefer, T. (2015): Interview (see Appendix)

Picazo, S. (2014): Interview (see Appendix)

Prieto, G. G. (2014): Interview (see Appendix)

Chatzistefanou, A. (2015): Interview (see Appendix)

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Appendix

Interview Questions

CRISIS Block

1. Has the crisis affected the ways in which you do your job as a journalist? How?
2. Describe a working day since the crisis started. How did it differ from before the crisis?
3. How has journalism as a profession actually changed?
4. Has it affected the ways in which the news are presented? Which influence it has on the themes covered? Can you please give me some examples?
5. Could you observe any changes in freedom of expression during the crisis?*chilling effect (fear), precarity of jobs, changes, not reporting, reliance on agencies* + examples
6. What kind of measures has the union of the journalists undertaken for better working conditions during the crisis?
7. Have there been any law changes in the media recently or in the past 5 years?

Journalistic Initiative

1. Can you please tell me more about your journalistic initiative? Funding – organization – hierarchy – selections of the themes.
2. How sustainable is your project at this time?
3. What was your journalistic employment career? What is the background of your colleagues and what is the best option in your opinion to screen the best people to work for these “democratic projects”?
4. Who are you reaching with your journalistic project? Who is your public?
5. New online only sites are making waves by experimenting with new ways of storytelling and engaging audiences. What are your working instruments? *data journalism, innovative, in-depth investigations that incorporate data, narrative and interactivity*
6. Reporters should be addressing society’s concerns. What are your sources for your articles?

FINAL

1. Do you think that the public has lost its trust in the media? What is the best way to regain the trust of the readers?
2. In your opinion, how can Greece’s/Spain’s/Romania’s journalism overcome the crisis of democratic value?

Interviews from Spain

Critic, Sergi Picazo

Interview taken in Barcelona, Spain - November 2014

(Introduction made beforehand)

S: This is Ecos, it is a space of cooperative, '...cooperativa' in Catalan and in in this place different, like small companies in a form of cooperative company. We work together in the same space but we are very different companies, different enterprises, also NGOs here but there is very different kind of companies who work on insurance or journalism also media or people who work on very different...We have a 'lab cop' it is a laboratory of to help other projects, social projects or cooperative companies, that are in the beginning, in the very first beginning of their work. Well, it is very interesting place in Barcelona, we have this space and another space, like 2 streets more and it is very very interesting place. And this is 'Fiare' (showing to the office next to us), Fiare is a ethical bank, they are working with an Italian bank which is "Banca popolare di Italia", there are ethical banks like "Triodos", or other ethical banks. They are in the beginning. #00:02:12-0#

P: And how did you learn each other? #00:02:13-7#

S: Critic? #00:02:23-4#

P: In general, did you know the other people? #00:02:24-0#

S: Yeh, yeh, there is like organization that is called like "Structure de Economia Solidaria" - Solidary economical network- we are working in different projects together, every company has his own work but together for example two weeks ago there is a very big meeting, it is called

S: "La Fira da economia solidaria" in Barcelona, there is like 15 000 people come to see all the projects here, other project outside, that are working on social themes. If you were here, but...#00:03:19-8#

P: Next time. #00:03:22-3#

S: Next year. #00:03:28-0#

P: Did Critic also started here? #00:03:34-9#

S: We were trying to find a place to stay we wanted to stay here because we find that being with other social companies or cooperative companies or another projects who are very interesting for us it is going to be helpful for us, we can work together in different things or other projects could appear. Now, we don't have any project with the other companies, any project together but we are beginning to talk with other people, here it is very practical thing if you meet other people every day, perhaps something sometimes in the coffee time or during the lunch or could happen. We are speaking with other people here to do in the future perhaps, do things together. #00:04:52-3#

P: (appreciates the idea and gives another example) let's talk a little bit about our project. Thank you for the invitation and for the introduction #00:05:10-9#

S: We are just in the beginning, it is our first month with a media, our digital media and it is a very stressful days. #00:05:21-3#

P: We even more appreciate. #00:05:25-6#

S: What are you working on? #00:05:26-6#

P: (explanation of the project: media governance and changes in media, journalism, policies due to the crisis). #00:06:30-9#

S: In Europe or in countries? #00:06:30-9#

P: In countries affected by crisis, mostly Greece, Portugal, Spain, England and we also compare it with some other countries like Romania, Poland, Austria. One part of the project is independent media and the other part is public service media. (Explanation of the independent media project, case of Rosia Montana in Romania). #00:08:09-6#

S: Which one are you interviewing in Spain? #00:08:12-3#

P: (exchange names) #00:09:14-2#

S: Perfect, you have everything you have to do: Catalonia Plural, La Directa, Café Amblllet, Critic. In Madrid the best independent media with more audience and more money is EL DIARIO.ES, also INFOLIBRE they are the two big among the independent media, independent new media, they have only two years, perhaps 3 years only and also more like Directa is another who is called Diagonal, they are more alternative, they have 8 years or 10 years perhaps. Well, in Madrid there are also other media but Eldiario is very important, if you need contact I can give you a name of the head of information. I don't know if it is too big for your investigation, I don't know because (name) is more, is independent I think but they are like, they have like 30 people working there and they money, they have advertisement from everything, but I think it is independent, it is new media. I mean N. Skolar is director, is very known journalist, like left-wing journalist and he is on TV on the shows, on radios, always talking, he is very famous in Spain. #00:12:16-3#

P: Ok, let's talk about the crisis. We are interested if you can tell us if the crisis affected the way in which you do your job as a journalist? And how has journalism as a profession changed during the crisis? #00:12:37-4#

S: I think media or the press in Catalonia but also I think in Spain is very depressed, like in 2 or 3 crises at the same time. Like we have the economical crises that hits Spain in general and it has been a disaster with thousands of fired journalists and hundreds of media that have been closed, it has been a very very disaster situation but we also had the crisis of the press in general, most the newspapers, the paper press that with internet and the social network and I think that Spanish or Catalan newspapers have not been very, they have not modernized and the internet has hit our way of communication with the people. I think all the newspapers in Catalonia are losing readers, they don't sell newspapers as they used to sell in the 1990s because they trusted everything to the advertisers, they had trust on the money of the construction companies #00:14:40-1#

P: Sorry, by 'they' you mean the readers? #00:14:40-1#

S: The newspapers, the owners of the newspapers have trusted everything on the advertising, most in the construction and the housing companies. When these companies broke down the newspapers, the money of the newspapers fall immediately which is a disaster. And the third crisis, I think, we have a crisis of credibility. The center of sociological investigation in Spain, is a public institution who makes surveys in general in Spain, asked the Spanish people about the professions in general and they have to point them 0 and 10. The worst professions were from the Spanish citizens' view political and journalists. We used to be, the journalists we used to be like the 4th power, the people who fight against, for the truth, we have to investigate the power but now I think journalist and the political power are very close and for the people the image of the people is like we are together: journalists and power political, people are, we are walking very very close, the people look us, the journalists as the same kind of people in power. Political power, economical power and journalists, they are very together. Because we have been very together during very, a lot of years and we are not independent any more. #00:17:00-

4#

P: So they blame politicians for the crisis and also you as a one team with them. #00:17:00-1#

S: Yes, something like this I think but it is kind of impression, I don't know if it is true. I think the crisis has been a very disaster situation because it is not only economical but also credibility and crisis of the press, of the paper, all the way to do journalism. #00:17:39-7#

P: And it is all coming together. Crisis of the press it is more general stuff going on in the whole world, it is not only Spanish situation. #00:17:45-8#

S: Yeh, I think the first crisis is more like from Spain, Greece, Portugal, Italy perhaps, and the other is shared with other companies, I was in the Western world. I think not in Indonesia or in Africa, I think it is very different situation. #00:18:10-6#

P: Do you have the feeling that this affected how the news are now presented? Which influence has on the themes which are now covered? #00:18:28-7#

S: Hmm, ok, I am in this thing a little bit more optimistic than from the other. I think crisis could be a great opportunity to do the news in different way. If the journalists realize that we have been too much near the political government or economical power- yes, we can do the news in the different way. But I think in the crisis the only way to do the things still remains and the new way is born, is increasing but the new way is not a...in general, ok? But we have seen that for example on issues like corruption, political corruption or economical crisis the news, the new media but also the old media we are doing the things in a different way. We are being more critics on this kind of things that we used to be. I think the journalists living in this society, they don't live in other places or other planets and they have seen that people is suffering a lot with a crisis and they see that people is angry with this political corruptions. Now I think, now the media are doing, are being more critics and they are doing more investigative journalism that they used to do, I think. But I don't know, it is very beginning, perhaps when money came again all this like critical journalism is going to disappear but now I see an opportunity to do the things in other ways. The crisis will help us. #00:21:07-5#

P: I like the idea, crisis as opportunity. #00:21:07-5#

S: I don't know if it is going to be real but it is like a new way. #00:21:14-6#

P: What about the freedom of expression? Do you observe any changes in the freedom of expression during the crisis? #00:21:28-6#

S: Like going down? #00:21:30-3#

P: Like going down, the fear of the journalists to express themselves and also the impact from the working conditions #00:21:47-4#

S: Ok, absolutely. But I think we see two phenomenon together that they are perhaps contradictory because in the big media obviously the fear to lose your job after have watched that thousands of colleagues have lost their jobs in the last 5-6 years could make you more scared and could do that you more obey the power or your director or your head in the newsroom and perhaps in the big media they have fear but also in the same way I think more and more journalists, I think from the bottom, not from top, are losing the fear that we used to have and they are thinking that if everything is lost go away and strait on because we have seen that with silence or fear we are doing the worst journalist ever in Spain. Perhaps now, most thanks to the internet and the new media and most in the small new media this kind of fear have disappeared because I think the key is and this is one of the keys of our project, is not depending on advertisement, money and not depending on funds of the government. If you get this, that is very difficult, if you get to build the media who doesn't depend on public money and doesn't

depend on big companies money from our Wall Street there is index 35, like the big companies, the 35 companies in the market in the stock market, if you don't depend on this money you can do it! But if you keep your., if your money come from these two regions it is more difficult to be more brave or investigative or critic, I think. Everything, in journalism also, depends on the money. For example Critic wants that our money depends on our readers, this is our independent project. If the readers don't pay for the media we are lost because we are going to depend on the banks or the constructions companies again or the found from the public money from our, the Catalan government for example. #00:25:45-1#

P: Can you perhaps tell us more about Critic, about the initiative, the founding, about the organization, about the hierarchy, the selection of the themes? #00:25:57-6#

S: Critic is a new media focused on an investigative journalism and critical analysis. We are based in Catalonia, we are in Catalan language and we work on political issues, for example big companies issues and social problems. These are our main questions. We are a cooperative company, we have our money that, I say it is a very important thing, is from the people who support the company, we name them collaborators, like when you are a part of the club, you are a membership or sth. I don't know the word in English, These people put 50 000 Euro to us in donation of 1 000 for person. They are like 50 people who get this 50 - 60 000 Euro and this is our beginning capital. Than we have like 50 000 more Euro from the readers. If you want to read Critic, well there is an open part and there a closed: reports, interviews and they have to pay for this. They have to pay 52 per person every year to be a subscriber and we have 1100 subscribers. This is small capital 100 000 Euro, you cannot do a lot of things with this money, there are millions of Euro the other media have, even other new media they have more money then us but in the beginning we wanted to be small, with the objective for increase and to grow up to a very big media. We want to compete with (name) or ElPeriodico we don't want to be alternative, we want to fight with other big media. Not now perhaps but in the future but we need for building that we need the support of a big community in Catalonia, of readers who are interested in independent journalism investigation and a critical point of view also. We don't hide this, we used to say that we are not independent, we depend on the people. But we prefer to depend on our readers than to depend on the big companies or the money of the Catalan government. We are going to try it, we don't know if this is a... we only have one month and half of life. The first indicators say that we get in a small part of the market in Catalonia but I think the political government, most the political government of Catalonia have begun to say: wow these guys are doing things we don't like but they are serious, they are working hard, they are professionals, we only publish things that we know, we can prove it, we don't want to be like leftist journalists or journalists who are not based on the truth, you that propaganda media often our media like alternative media have used to do some propaganda sometimes, we want to arrive to the middle class or things or people who are not used to read the alternative media, they are used to read the official media but they are discontent. For this, the thing of the credibility of the media, the lack of the credibility people are finding, are trying to look for other points of view who are not depending on big companies or the public government and who is independent. And we can, we have to look for this kind of people but we have to be professional and I think...we are not obsessive with money but (laughing) we are worried about money because we used to, Rosel and me, we used to work on alternative media in the past 15 years and we do it and we are happy to do have done it during the past but we realized that only with volunteer journalism we could not arrive to a big public and we need to cross our borders and fight with the other big media that have more money, more power, more journalists to do their job but we have to fight with them and only with the professional approach we could do it. #00:33:39-0#

P: You said about your colleague, how many people are working here in Critic and how, are they getting paid now? #00:33:47-6#

S: Everything is paid now and we are not going to do any volunteer journalism any more. If we could not pay we are not going to do it, we are going to break down, or close our media. Now we are 3 journalists working every day in Critic and one like who takes care of financial, financial director and after that we have freelance journalists who work on different report, investigation, interviews that is like 5-6-7 more other journalist who are freelance who work with us and also other people, with media. We want to be bigger. [interruption, somebody enters the room]. #00:35:28-4#

P: One more question. What are your sources for your investigations? #00:35:43-4#

S: Well, I think I have an article written that a very good way to get information for us is NGOs, social movements and social organizations. They are working on very interesting themes. They are very critic with current situation in Spain, also in Catalonia, they have a lot of information and usually the media don't give them the opportunity of express or don't get them as a source as an important source of their work and I don't know why because they have very interesting information on corruption, on big companies or for example attacks to the environment or something like this and their information is very real, they don't do propaganda, only, they have information, they have dates, they have like big data from social movement, is a very interesting place to dive and get a lot of information. But also in Spain, or in Catalonia we have a very good information in the public places, like in the internet, the government wants to be more transparent, they are not like in England or in other places in Europe because here the transparency is a very disaster situation but they are beginning to publish documents or contracts with companies, they have to do it for the legal mandate, you know and journalists don't have time to go deep in this information and this information is on the web, on the internet, you only need to have time to read a lot of documents, a lot of like contracts or subventions money from public money to private money, you only have to have time and the journalists in the media don't have time because they are always running with last hour or last situation or last declaration of the political govern, they are like running running running and they don't have time to pose and see the information that is public. Well, I have these two sources and they are very good way to do things in the new journalism. #00:39:29-3#

P: It is probably what the government hopes that nobody will have time to look at all this documents, otherwise... #00:39:36-0#

S: You don't find, well in Spain also in Catalonia, to find a public information in the web is very hard, because it is very hidden. Hidden information, after a lot of documents you have to waste a lot of money, a lot time. Time is money. #00:39:58-7#

P: Ok, thank you very much for this.

El Diario, Víctor Saura

Skype Interview in December 2014

P: Hello! #00:00:14-5#

V: Hello! #00:00:17-5#

P: Can you hear me? #00:00:17-5#

V: Yes, yes - and also see you! #00:00:17-5#

P: Ok, so sorry again for the delay! I had a technical problem, but now everything is ok! #00:00:30-7#

V: Ok, no problem! #00:00:34-8#

P: Ramon Amat Rodriguez from Vienna gave me your contact when I was back in Spain - so that is why I contacted you back then, but due to the busy schedule, I wasn't able to meet you person, but thank you for this Skype interview! #00:01:00-4#

V: I know, I know - it's no problem! You know, that I don't know him? #00:01:04-9#

P: You don't know him? #00:01:08-7#

V: Ramon asked a friend of mine and this friend of mine told him about me. #00:01:14-1#

P: Ok, I understand now! Did I understand well, you work for El Diario. #00:01:21-8#

V: Yeah! That's one of the works I do right now - well, I write from time to time, but that's not my main work right now at El Diario. I am more in other administration and you know, looking for ressources, actually looking for money. So that is what I do - like Public Relations or so. #00:02:00-3#

P: Ok, PR - so this is other side of journalism. #00:02:02-2#

V: Yeah, we have to do these kind of things. #00:02:03-9#

P: Sorry - it got interrupted! #00:00:08-3# #00:00:11-0#

P: Ok - so I've researched a little bit on the internet and I saw that you are also teaching at the university, you are also a history teacher. #00:00:18-6#

V: Yes, I teach some classes, yeah, in the University of Barcelona for foreigners - about economy. I have been doing this for over 14 years, but it is just one class per week, it's like an extra thing I do. #00:00:39-7#

P: I understand, then I will tell you about our project and why we are actually want to do the interview with you. I am doing now my Masters in Communication Science and I am writing my Master thesis on the rise of the independent and investigative journalism in times of crisis. Actually I have chosen Romania as the first country to investigate, because I come from there, and last year there has been a really big crisis regarding a mining project which actually managed to make the civil society rise up and to use the main instrument of democracy so to say. The problem was that there were many big manifestations and big protest, although the media didn't really cover this theme. That was the moment when new projects arise, projects of journalists which used to work for main stream media and these people had the idea to do journalism as it should be done - saw the idealism in journalism. And so they started these projects, which are totally independent, they finance themselves just over crowd-funding or over subscriptions and they write for the people so to say. They are also investigative, they also have new ways of story-telling and use innovative tools, like data journalism. And this a new hype in Romania. And then my professor, which is from Greece, suggested to me to do the research also in Greece, due to the crisis there. And Spain, of course, because I have also found many interesting projects and I had the opportunity to also travel there and do my research. #00:03:27-7#

V: Yeah, I can explain you a little about El Diario. I think it is a good example for what you are researching and it is quite different - I mean, it's really new from all what has existed here in Spain regarding independent journalism, because it has always been small projects, actually, I worked in a independent weekly news paper. It is a magazine I worked for over ten years and it has independent - well it had one owner, but it was a journalist and we really did investigations, we denounced corruption cases in the 90s and so and actually we reached very few people, we maybe sold 1500-1600-2000 maybe, but no more, and like El Triangle - it was in Catalan - there has always been a small efforts to have independent press but none has the success. For instance, we always look at France. They have their "Le Canard enchaîné" from 1930 I think (later edit: 1915) and it is a weekly magazine that has a lot influence and sells a lot of copies but in Spain that has not work. And now with all the possibilities you get with internet and the online newspapers it is really different and now El Diario and also the part of El Diario where I belong to because El Diario is like a federation of small projects, you know. El Diario has a main part in Madrid, where they finance themselves with a mix between normal ads and also looking for the support of the people. It is like a subscription. And then we have in different regions of Spain some independent projects run by the other journalists that are in El Diario. So we are more like a federation of journalists, more than normal company. So, in other words, what I get paid it's not El Diario, who pays me and all the journalists in Catalonia working for El Diario or for our project here are not El Diario who pays us, it's us, who look for these ressources, who look for

the money to consolidate the project. But yeah, I think we are doing a good journalism and El Diario is now competing with the main newspapers in Spain, who have a online version of a printed version. So, I don't know else I can tell you... #00:08:44-3#

P: Yes, sure - I also have a set of questions, of course regarding El Diario but also some general questions about the journalism in Spain and why it actually came to this crisis of journalism. So, the first question is how the crisis affected the ways you do your job as a journalist and how has journalism as a profession actually changed? #00:09:23-4#

V: The crisis has affected very much because since - I have no numbers here, but I can .. - since 2008 there has been a lot of journalists which have lost their jobs. Being a journalist in Spain has never been like a very good stable or very well paid job - you know what I mean? Only like a big star have been well paid, those who appear in TV and so and so. So, but since the crisis a lot of journalists have been fired or many which got salarie cuts. We, as a journalists collective have not been able to give an answer to that, so that makes us less free, since we are afraid of losing our job, our ways of subsistence, so finally - if journalists are less free, there are more afraid about what they are going to write about! So, they know that, they are weaker in front of any power that may try not to write about this stuff... So finally, there are a lot of journalists, because some colleagues of theirs are losing their jobs, they do their job trying not to hurt anyone, so that has... to me this is the important effect. But on the other hand, some of the journalists have reacted and have created new projects without depending on big companies and some of these projects like El Diario - I would say that El Diario is the most significative one, but it's not the only one... there are some others, and they have success, because people are really hungry of good information. You can feel that in the answers, in the social networks, you can see that, there are a lot of people, which are looking for good information so now, if you publish a good article in an online newspaper, the people which are going to make it move is thanks to social networks. Of course there are also bad stuff running in the social networks, but it helps! #00:13:41-6#

P: It helps, yes! I know what you mean! When I am also hungry for good information I also noticed how fastly you can find it on the social networks. Internet is of great help! But I wanted to ask you actually, because you said that journalists were afraid of disturbing someone when writing... #00:14:19-3#

V: I mean in the traditional media, of course, there are a lot of good journalists, sitting there and trying not to do anything wrong because now it's easier for any business man to fire you. We have had... I mean not only in media, but in any places, but of course that affects us, because we have had two consecutive labour reforms in five years or so and that has gone in a way of making fire people more easily, because they said of course, that would create more jobs to flexibilize the labour market. It has not really work, I mean - as you probably know, we have the highest unemployment rate in the EU. I say that even more than Greece, so the labour force did not really gone in the sense that they (???15:53), but it has frightened more people. People who have been working for thirty years in a traditional newspaper, so if they would have to get fired, they would go without money, of course, and now they would go with money, but not as much as they use to. So, for someone who is 50-55 years old - I mean, even if he is a good journalist, he knows for sure, he will never get a stable job ever. Even if he has awards or so, he would never get a stable job, so yeah, for those people is complicated and they are afraid to do things that would annoy someone! #00:16:57-4#

P: But have you observed that the crisis had an influence on the themes which were covered? You said that people are afraid of writing... Could you perhaps tell me what are the main themes in the main stream media which are being covered? #00:17:27-4#

V: You mean what issues and what topics are being discussed ? #00:17:34-3#

P: Yes, did it change before and during the crisis? #00:17:35-2#

V: Ok, ahm, yeah, it's not easy to say! I mean, because the easiest answer now for you would be that there are many corruption cases which in this big media they wouldn't write about, but actually this is not this way. In big

media you find corruption cases but it is always a corruption case against, I mean... media here are very much in one party, you know, they do not belong to a party, but specially the media in Madrid you know that El Mundo is for instance a newspaper close to Partido Popular and you know that El Pais is close to PSOE (Socialist Workers' Party). But they have published corruption news too... #00:19:00-2#

P: ...but against another? #00:19:00-2#

V: Well, yeah! No, not only, sometimes you get surprised that El Mundo has published delicate information about PP, but it is never, how to say - that's why I am saying, that this is not an easy answer. But it's never... ahm... inside PP there are also groups. So, when El Mundo is publishing delicate stuff or corruption cases regarding PP is because he wants to help one group inside the PP against another group. But yeah, they can say, yeah, there is this corruption case and we are publishing it. Well, when you ask, what are those journalists afraid of? Well, following this example: at the same time they do good job in specific cases, they can be very demagogic, they can lie in other ones. So one good journalist in El Mundo will never go against his boss saying what is that you are doing, because it is not professional, this is not information we are giving, this is completely madness. They would not do this because next day you are on the street. You understand? And here in Barcelona it happens more or less the same. We have another reality - it is not the same like in Madrid, but we have a big newspaper which is La Vanguardia, and in this big newspaper you can find of course corruption cases, because now thanks to social networks, corruption can not be silenced anymore. When I worked in El Trianglo for over ten years in the 90s, corruption cases could be silenced, I mean, we talked about a lot of things that now 10-15 years after that, we have been proven that we were right but at that time, we were very small. Other media could just ignore us. Now this is not possible anymore. Thanks to social networks, media cannot ignore these cases, where there is corruption. Of course, justice in Spain it is slow, but justice finally more or less works and is working. And some things that are on (???22:00) you cannot ignore them as you could. I mean, that is what they did in the 90s. They ignored this type of stuff. But what they can do is, they can try to smooth as much as possible a corruption case - like never on a front page, I don't know, you have finally to write of some things, but you can write in one way or in another and if one journalist asks what are we doing - we are not hiding information, but we are disguising it. So, is a journalist.... he would never get in front of his bosses because... and this was what happened in the 70s, in the 80s. Journalists felt strong to face and to give their opinions when they didn't agree on what the behaviour of their bosses. I don't know if I have answered you... #00:23:35-1#

P: Yes, you did! Thank you! So this means that you can also observe a change in the freedom of expression during the crisis - like a chain effect, or? #00:23:53-0#

V: Well, as I said, I believe, thanks to social networks - there is more freedom of expression right now! Simply because it is no longer possible anymore to hide information. There is a lot of information running upside down. But when there is a big case you cannot ignore it anymore, so that in a way it is positive, but in the same time, as I told you in the traditional media because of crisis there is more fear and yeah that's something which is affecting the freedom of expression. But as I said - it was not very good in the 90s or in the 2000s at the beginning when there was a good economic growth - we were not a good example, a good model anyway, so if I have to compare these two periods, I would say that we are better now! While here we had a golden age in Spain of the press - that was right after the death of Franco, the dictator in the 70s. Between 1975 - 1985 more or less, journalists held strong and the owners of media respected them more than they respected them after that. I think the workers in general are the same. We had a working, the unions and so they were stronger back in the 70s and the beginning of the 80s than now.... #00:26:39-8#

P: But why is that? #00:26:40-3#

V: Unions... well there is not so much culture of belonging to a union in Spain. They don't have the prestige they used to have, still there are strong, I mean they are the only things we have, but as I said, in the 70s they were much more stronger when Spain recovered the freedom after 40 years of dictatorship, they were much stronger than they are now. #00:27:31-6#

P: Did you have the feeling that the unions helped you during the crisis? You said they were two consecutive labour reforms in five years. The unions have to be behind their workers, did you feel that? #00:28:15-9#

V: Well, yes, they did demonstrate. We had two or three general strikes in 2013 and 2012, maybe before we had some other big demonstrations, but that was one day each. One day they are able to stop the country so to say. We have two important unions, which are UGT and CCOO and there are more unions but these are the big ones. And when they get together they are able for one day to call for a general strike and go for a big demonstration. So people go to the street, they protest but next day people go to work... and the labour reforms go on... and when the election comes.... you know or the conservative or the other ones which are supposed to be left wing but they are very very moderate, so some of the reforms are their reforms and some have been imposed by the Trojka - by the ECB, EU, IMF - because Spain had had a lot of problems due to their financing, you know, that happened in Greece too...it happened more in Greece than in Spain but here we had our banking system, which was bankrupt, so we need a bailout plan just for the banking system. And we are in this bailout plan, we had a lot of money coming because of this rescue plan and so that when Trojka gives you money, Trojka asks you for reforms. And some of the reforms are budgetary and some are labor. And so to say those reforms were much more imposed by the European Bank... or Man in Black - they are also called. #00:31:18-9#

P: Sorry, you've mentioned the three labour unions - the UGT and the CO...? #00:31:29-3#

V: Comisiones Obreras is the if you write CCOO - you can find them. Do you want me to spell it? #00:31:52-7#

P: No, thank you! I will search it by CCOO - and these are the ones who also fought for TV3? #00:32:12-6#

V: TV3? Well, what happened in TV3? You mean Channal Nou, maybe? #00:32:14-9#

P: No, I mean TV3. We met some people from an union, which worked for the public media in Catalunya. And that is why, I thought it is the same union, but of course this was television... #00:32:38-3#

V: And what did they fight for? For their salaries, or? #00:32:42-1#

P: Yes, that they do not lose the jobs and that they don't get lower salaries. #00:32:48-8#

V: Yeah! Well, here in Catalunya we have a small union - I belong to that union and probably the one that you been talking about. What is the person you talked to? #00:33:03-1#

P: One moment - I have to search... Jordi Lopez. Either way they were telling us about the demonstrations and about the lobby meetings they had at the government. #00:33:50-8#

V: Well anyway - maybe they belong to ones of those two unions, maybe a smaller union. In Catalonia we have SPC (Sindicata Periodista de Catalunya). I belong to this union. #00:34:50-2#

P: But the journalists didn't have so much to profit from the union measures as you said, or? #00:35:04-2#

V: Well, that depends... I would'nt say that there are so many journalists willing to fight. I mean, so, I don't know, probably I would have liked more aggressivity from the unions, but it's the society which doesn't finally push them. I mean, in TV3 for instance - there have been protests because they have seen their salaries cut and they say that goes against the public service and so and so... but I have not seen them protest when there were scandals of corruption cases silenced or other things like that and the same happens in Channal Nou. Channal Nou is a public TV in Valencia. More or less a year ago the Valencia government closed down Channal Nou - they decided this is too expensive, we are going to shut this TV down. And they did so - actually there are now like we cannot afford this anymore, we have to cut our deficits and so on... but there were a lot of protests of the workers of Channal Nou saying that this is a pity because it is a public service and you cannot cut public information, this is against

democracy, but someone remind them and I agree with them that for 20 years of existence of Channal Nou, they had never had done these type of protests while they were being manipulated, they were by the government I mean, when they decided not to forecast whatever news because the government would have a problem with it. Since the past 20 year they have been ruled by PP. And this TV was public TV but it was the voice of the PP of Valencia. So, ok, I mean - they ask for our solidarity. I mean, I am sorry, I am against the shutting down of a public TV, but I have to agree to those who say that for 20 years they have done nothing while they were being instrumentalized and they had never say many things. In Valencia it was an exaggeration. In TV 3 in of course not the same, it has always been more a quality TV, more professional but yeah, they have always have the biggest salaries in our profession. And now they cut their salaries - ok, it's a pity, but I mean, there are other problems in our profession than yours and as they say, there have been other moments, where you could have protested because you're TV was not informing such problems, or such corruption case, or such whatever, so - sorry - that's how I believe! #00:40:40-4#

P: At the beginning it's really comfortable when you have the good work conditions and you don't have any stress... Regarding the closure it's the same in Romania... they shut down the Cultural TV Channel from the public media and there was a lot of scandal, but it's also clear that the public TV is a really strong instrument which has been misused a lot ... so public media somehow, tends to lose its credibility. #00:41:41-1#

P: Regarding media law changes - do you know - have there been any changes in the past few years? #00:41:56-1#

V: You mean media large changes? #00:42:01-7#

P: No, just media law changes! #00:42:01-7#

V: Ok... Law, law! No, no, no we don't have any - because there is not such a big regulation of media in Spain. There have been no media law changes. There has been - and that is an important thing to mention - although here you should do some research if that's interesting for you. There has been corporate changes - especially what has happend is because of big media are very much in debt... There are losing a lot of readers and a lot of sales and so that makes them,... they have lost also a lot of advertisement... so there are much in debt and they are finally to go on, they had to ask for loans to banks. So now the big newspapers in Spain - most of them are trapped by their debts with banks. SOme people say - I am not sure about that, maybe they are right - that our big media are completely owned by the banking system. For instance: El Periodico del Catalunya which would be the second largest newspaper in Barcelona area - since he owns a lot of money to la Cacha (???) and is not paying the money... so if La Cacha in any moment would want to shut down the newspaper, could just ask any judge to close it, because ... so El Periodico, of course, it looses its freedom because they are so much in debt with a bank, you know and that happens too with the rest of newspapers and the most important media group in Spain is PRISA, which El Pais belongs to Prisa... El Pais, La Cadena Sen (radio station) and Cannal Plus and there are some... but these are the most important media... But PRISA is the most important media group in Spain and because of their debt... I am not so sure, but...PRISA had some corporate changes, so now I think the main share holder is an investment bank, I guess, so really no one know any more who owned this media group and plus they have big debts I think with Banco Santandel, but the thing is what has happened in the past few years, in the big media companies in Spain is that they are much more in debts with banks then they used to be, but they are now and some people believe now that they are completely owned by banks. But no... in laws, we have don't a law change... there are just some laws also conserning if you publish something that is not correct and affects the honour of the person, which can sue you or whatever... you can get a fee, but that's the only regulation we have. We do not have any laws. #00:47:22-3#

P: Ok, thank you! It's really interesting to hear that the most media is in the hands of banks... than I would like to talk to you more about El Diario. So, you told me about the funding, that it's based on advertisement but also through subscriptions. What kind of advertisements do you have at El Diario? #00:48:09-6#

V: The normal ones everyone has - I mean we go after whatever we can get. Of course, the big companies that

are in the traditional media, like for instance a bank or a telephone company or whatever big company it is in Spain. We ask also to announce. But what they invest in El Diario is insignificant if we compare it to the big media. So I believe, we can still be independent with having this type of ads because in a way subscriptions is very important. They have I think 10.000 people in Spain that they put 5 - 10 EUR per month in the subscriptions in El Diario. I would like Catalunya Canal, where I work to have the same luck, but we don't - I mean, Spanish market is more larger than Catalan market but they have 10.000 socios/partners, normal citizens who like not only read everyday El Diario, but they feel is like theirs and they help 5-10 EUR per month. I guess 5 is the less you can put. So that is a good input coming every month that guarantees that if Telefonica not to advertise anymore, that won't jeopardize the project and of course there are not only these type of companies, there are also commercial companies that advertise in El Diario because you are reaching every month about 2 million single users so that is a lot and that means that there are commercial companies which want to sell and advertise and they are welcome to come and welcome to invest here. So it's a mix of this specific phenomenon - I don't think that this happens in any part of the world where you can find 10.000 people who is putting money not to read something that the rest won't read because El Diario publishes is free and open for everyone. It's not because I put money and I can read what the rest cannot, no, no, is because they want us to exist. They believe that information on other sites is not what they want to. Especially since I - remember I told you that El Pais now, El Pais who was like the newspaper for the more progressive in Spain - since in the last years it has been by this investment fund so now it not more such progressive, it's much more moderate and people are now a little bit confused about El Pais so I think there is a lot of people to know more things and people willing and for that they understand that they can support this project. It's of course not only this - it's also commercial, it's also institutionalized and so far this is not making or conditioning the information that appears in El Diario. Ahm... they have not as many journalists like a normal media has so the main lack we have at El Diario and the other projects which surround El Diario, like mine, is that of course we are still a few people comparing to a normal newspaper. In Madrid there are 15-20 journalists, here in Barcelona we have 2-3 steady journalists and three or more which are collaborating often, so but maybe if everything goes well during 2015 we will have two more of those who are collaborating with us, completely working for us. So this small structure if you compare it to a normal, a big newspaper/radio network, but it's growing and with this small structure we can compete with big media in terms of information of quality. So, that's the most important things to say about El Diario. #00:56:04-1#

P: So - funding over advertisement and over these collaborators or subscribers. #00:56:28-1#

V: Yeah! The subscribers get actually some news to read before all the people get it. There are some news in advance for them. Also when they comment the news, if you are a socio, you can see the comment better than if you are not. You can see through the comments who is a socio and who is not. They also do a magazine once every time and the subscribers get a printed magazine send at home. But the most important thing - there is not such a big difference between being a socio and not being a socio. So we believe these socios are with us because they understand that to have good media they have to support good media.

_P: That is a great feeling to see that so many people support you! But how did the people started to donate money? Was there a big campaign or how did the people got motivated? #00:59:32-1#

V: Well there was a campaign, but the guy who started El Diario was a guy that was already quite known. His name is Ignacio Escolar. He is the director of El Diario - Ignacio Escolar and since he had been the director of a newspaper which was closed down, he was quite known - he appeared in TV, so he had many followers on Twitter... he has around 400.000 followers in Twitter. That helped him a lot to become quickly known and of course he had the credibility of his past work and so that was I believe a very important factor to explain that the financial help of the socios is necessary. At the beginning there were of course no 10.000 socios, this is a number that was reached after a two years work. They started with 500 at the beginning but of course after working every day, publishing every day good stuff - that is what making more and more people to become socios. And during those two years they have always been in campaign to get more and more socios. This campaign has never stopped and we do the same here in Catalonia but with less luck like them, because we don't have an Ignacio Escolar but yeah, this campaign is always there. #01:02:40-9#

P: But Mr. Escolar was working for the newspaper, which went bankrupt or? #01:03:18-8#

V: The newspaper was called Publico. Now Publico is an online newspaper, but it used to be a press newspaper and just the owner decided that it was too expensive and he tried to sell it, but he didn't find anyone to buy it, so he decided to close it down. It was not a bankruptcy, it was just that the owner thought that he was losing money and he would never get his investment back, so he decided to close it down. It was a really young project. It was 3 or 4 years of existence, not much more than that. But it was a newspaper, which young people and former readers of El Pais, people who felt that was not a left wing newspaper in Spain. They found in Publico what they were looking for. So most of these people are the ones which followed Escolar at eldiario.es. #01:04:46-6#

P: And since when does eldiario.es exist? #01:04:55-0#

V: Let me think... I think two years... I mean, it's 2 years and something. You need to know the exact date? #01:05:14-4#

P: No, not the exact date, but approximately how old the project is. How is eldiario.es actually organized? El Diario Madrid, El Diario Barcelona ... ? #01:05:43-5#

V: There is eldiario.es and all the regional sections they have. These are different projects but we are all in the same website but our financing depends on ourselves, ok? So, we are completely free of what we decide to publish. For instance Catalonia Plural, which is where I work for, we publish whatever we want without consulting El Diario. We do not ask for permission. We know that we all agree in the same things, we have the same philosophy, vision and we agree in terms of how information has to be dealt, but we are an independent project. Sometimes it is difficult to explain to the customers, to those who you ask for ads, but anyway, there is this central structure in Madrid. The support we get from them is of course the information going in both senses - they send us information that they produce and we are interested in and at the same time there are some information that we produce in Catalonia that they bring to their homepage. #01:08:00-2#

P: Aaah... you also have different homepages? #01:08:01-4#

V: Yeah, well we have a different homepage which is actually inside El Diario. Well, let's say we don't have a different homepage, because for you it will be a mess... hello? #01:08:29-5#

P: Oh, sorry - this was my boyfriend who brought me coffee... sorry for that! #01:08:29-5#

V: (laughing) Hello there! Ok, well since our homepage is inside El Diario because all the informatical stuff, well all the system is from them provided! So that was the deal! And of course there are ads, or sometimes we get some help in terms of publicity/advertisement and I guess it's the same with all the other regional projects which surround El Diario. But there are still some parts in Spain, which they haven't reach. There are some part in Spain where there is no a regional project, so I believe they will look for that. But the main parts of Spain are being covered. #01:09:56-6#

P: And what are the most important topics at El Diario? It is also going on the investigative niche? #01:10:09-2#

V: Yeah! That is the main will! To explain things that other don't explain. So - it's investigation, corruption, it's also the all political themes. I mean, politics we talk about, but not in the traditional sense that you see in the normal newspapers, where you have someone says something, than you have the opposition and there is talking and talking. That is not the case here. Here, I don't know if it also happens in Austria or in Romania. There is a lot of "periodismo de declaraciones"/ statement news. We are analyzing more what they do! So that's how we look at politics. There is no statement news. And of course economy, society in terms of whatever is harming the welfare state, that is a main issue for us (health, education), there is also some cultural news, there is very few international news, in El Diario, they plan to have more and more, but so far we are not so strong to get good international information, which can distinguish of what you find in normal media and so there is very few that.

But probably it will get more and more important. But what we do not have at all and we are not planning to have is sports information. I mean, you can find sports, if there is a corruption case related to the president of a football theme. If Messi scores his 1000 goal - you will not find this in El Diario. #01:13:27-2#

P: Do you have the feeling now that El Diario is now a sustainable project? #01:13:33-8#

V: Yeah! It is sustainable. It is not a feeling, it's something what you can see. When they started, I am not sure, I mean, maybe there were 6-7 people working there with a contract. Now there are 20-25 people working there, in different areas, not only journalists, but also commercial sites, administration, system, things like that, no? And so far is growing fast in influence and yeah, I believe it is a project with a good health and I don't know, what could go wrong. #01:14:49-7#

P: Could you than tell me with what other newspapers are you competing with? #01:14:59-3#

V: Well, El Diario is competing with the traditional media! There are other projects, where you can find different information let's say, but there are much smaller projects and they are looking for this very specialized public, who is very cultural or very intelectual, or very much.... for instance, there is one magazine called La Mareea. But I believe this is press newspaper, it's like Vanity Fair and is done by some people which also worked in Publico. Here in Catalonia we have a couple of... we still have the weekly magazine I used to work for but it is another story and is not going very well. There is also a weekly magazine done by independent journalists and who is financed by subscriptions only, with very little ads and which is very radical, and this has been existing also before the crisis. It started in 2006-2007 and it has existed until now, it is called Directa. There is one called Diagonal. So there is not such a phenomenon like El Diario. There is nothing else similar regarding independent journalism. There are small, quite not bad small independent projects but of course not competing with traditional media. #01:17:29-2#

P: Do you by chance the business model, which Mr. Escolar used for El Diario. Do you know from where he took this model? #01:17:58-4#

V: I understand your question, but I have really no idea! I could ask him, but really I have no idea, from where he took the inspiration. His not alone, there are also other people. I do not know from where he got the inspiration, because the projected already started when I joined them. So really, this is something I have never ask (laughing). But maybe it is no model, maybe they invented that. I don't know, really. #01:18:40-8#

P: Because now, I've observed that these kind of new projects are in the experimental phase. The crisis now it's like a spring for these new independent projects and there are experimenting different business models in order to remain sustainable. That's why I was curious to hear! #01:19:15-8#

V: I don't know! Here for instance, there is a recent project from three former colleagues of mine. It's called Critic and they did a crowdfunding and it worked really well and they got like 35000 EUR in a few weeks and for those who helped, the crowdfunders... they are publishing one article a day in their online newspaper. One, but it's supposed to be investigation. Always! They publish one article, but there is work there! The consolidation of this model depends exclusively only on the subscribers. There were like 500 people who gave money without even knowing how the project would be. #01:21:10-5#

P: I already met Sergi Picazo! I had my first interview with him! #01:21:24-0#

V: Well yes, he was a colleague of mine! Well Critic it's something that what did he tell you, that they are doing the best journalism in Catalonia? (laughing) #01:21:35-4#

P: (laughing) no no! Does he think so? #01:21:39-9#

V: Well, Sergi Picazo worked for me at that newspaper I told you about! His first job with me as his boss! (laughing)

And his colleague also worked for me! So yeah, but maybe it will work, but what they expect is that only having these people following them, they would be able to subsist. They are doing good stuff! They are doing what they promised they will do, but of course this is not a global look at the highlights. Every day they publish one article. Some are better than the other. Some are big interviews and some are normal people being interviewed (haha) but that would be an example. I wouldn't for instance say that they are competing against the traditional media. It is an interesting project, but they would not look for big companies to advertise. Well, I don't know, that's about it! #01:23:34-9#

P: Would you say that this kind of journalism which Sergio is now doing, Critic, could be the new public media? #01:23:49-4#

V: That there are creating a new public? #01:23:53-9#

P: No, no, a new public media, like TV3 is public media in television! And in print ... #01:24:09-1#

V: No, no! I mean here in Spain written journalism would never be public. I mean there is a press agency which is public, which should perhaps not be, but no... #01:24:21-9#

P: With public I don't mean like being dependent on the government... #01:24:30-3#

V: When I say public I mean state owned. #01:24:34-9#

P: No, no! I think this is the problem, that "public" is seen as state owned. When I think about something "public", this has to be something which belongs to the whole society, to the people. #01:24:46-6#

V: Probably you are write! But here when we talk about public media or private media, we think at public like state-owned. #01:24:54-2#

P: I know, this is everywhere like this! But this thought goes through my mind - perhaps it could be a step forward for journalism...Ok, then I am going ask you about - do you by chance know on which criteria are the people chosen at El Diario? #01:25:26-1#

V: Very good journalists, people willing to work a lot of hours with a really low pay (haha). Of course we cannot pay a lot of money ...but journalists who believe in the project, journalists who enjoy their job and who believe that their job is more than their job, that they are doing a public service - in this term we can talk about public service. But of course, they would never get paid like journalists in El Pais or La Vanguardia. So that's how it is. And you need of course people who are fully motivated. They have to be at the same time professionals and believing in the project and believing that the product is their. That is actually what I wanted to do when I was in El Triangle, it was hard, I mean, with the first generations it's easier, because they enter in a place where everything is new and everything is starting and they feel that they are part of it, more involved. When you enter in a more consolidated media, there is a risk you become more functional - good worker, good professional, but sorry at 8 I have to leave! Good Bye! I am sorry, this weekend I am going with the family! You understand? Of course, as a journalist you have a life and you have a family, but this job needs people who is willing to really get very much involved. #01:28:25-4#

P: Yes, I can imagine, you have to be one with the project. I was asking this, because I came on a statement from Bernardo Diaz Nosty - I don't know if you know him. He wrote the "Black Book of Spanish Journalism" and he claims that there is like an "academic bubble" so to say and he was referring to 75000 journalism graduates in Spain and I was curious about the employment career of the people at El Diario. #01:29:23-1#

V: Yeah, I understand what you mean... I mentioned two conditions: to be involved and to be a good journalist, a good professional and when you talk about a product of El Diario, that means that there are some specific skills which you have to have that it's not so easy to find journalists with those skills: Like having good sources to

information and being able to write, being interested in investigative, in research, in journalism and being fast, you need to have some previous experience, because before becoming an investigative journalist, you cannot get out, I believe, from the university, and ok, I'm here, I am going to find out Watergate - it's not like that. What you don't find so easily is good journalist who has some background, because young journalists do the things perhaps correct, but have some lack of background, of the content, of course because they are young. But these skills are not easy to find, of course there are people and of course if we had more money, I am sure we would be able to find more and more good journalists. #01:32:14-7#

P: But this young people have to get their experience from somewhere good and more if they have an ideal in journalism they should actually start with such projects. #01:32:34-5#

V: Yes, of course! I mean, I am old for this job, you know, I am 47, that's why I am doing all these kind of other things, not only writing, I know I am old for that. So we need young people, who are very much on social networks, who are very much on these type of things my generation is not very much skilled in that. But, at the same time, you need someone who is young, but at the same time very much professional. And of course you have to give opportunities to young people, and I believe we are doing that. Our two main journalists, I am talking about Catalonia, there are less than 30 both of them. They are to be 25-26. #01:33:57-3#

P: I ment with my former comment, that young motivated people have also to start their career in a good place like yours. #01:34:17-6#

V: It's true, of course! I mean, we have the capacities, which we have. As you see, we are doing a good job, we are competing with the big ones, we are still small. We have a small office where we get together. #01:34:47-9#

P: I just have like three more short questions: Who is your audience? #01:34:55-6#

V: Ahm... I would say normal citizens who are progressive in ideology. For sure voters of left wing parties. The majority, but also normal citizens, as long as they have this hunger for information and have this ideology of putting the welfare state pillars as the most important things we should look after. #01:36:07-5#

P: Ok, so the broad audience. #01:36:11-9#

V: Yes! #01:36:14-6#

P: You were saying about the skills of young people in the internet. Can you perhaps tell me, because your newspaper is also online, what are your working instruments? I don't know, how do you engage the audience, what kind of new instruments are you using, or do you use data journalism? What are the innovations in El Diario? What are your working instruments? #01:36:59-3#

V: Working instruments? #01:37:03-8#

P: Do you also post videos, do you have like graphics? #01:37:11-5#

V: Aaah... yeah! We post videos too, but about this I do not know very much! (haha) We post videos, but most what we publish is just work and pictures of course! Maybe there is something what we have to mention. In El Diario we believe in the quality of photography. So, in most of the digital and printed newspapers, you would find photos done by the same journalist or photos that are stolen from the internet, from google images. Here we have professional photographers and we try that the photos have an information value. Photographers have an important role in information. We believe in that and so that is why we have professional photographers. They get paid of course, they are not with contract here, they are just collaborators, they are not in the structure, but they are regular collaborators. And there is videos... and yeah! there is nothing else actually... the normal ones. We have key words, telephone and finding information in any sources you can imagine. #01:39:32-8#

P: Talking about sources... where can you find the sources? #01:39:43-5#

V: Sources are always a mystery... well no, it's not a mystery... you have to find good sources of information, which are not the official sources... so they can be everywhere. For instance lawyers can be good sources of information, when there is a judicial case, an important one... you would try first with the lawyers, politicians in the opposition, workers of the union... #01:40:39-4#

P: So - you use direct, first hand sources, private contacts. #01:40:45-8#

V: For me these were the best sources of information, which are not easy to find, of course, well if they are so easy to find, they are not so good. They are for anyone. The most easy to find, are the official ones... and of course there are also things which are being published. That's what they do in Critic a lot. They look on reports, official data, where journalists don't usually look after, and there you can also find good information, that you manage to order it, you get a good article. There are a lot of sources of information, just the time is the question, how long can you work on them. #01:41:43-0#

P: Ok, it's interesting, because I received many different answer on this question. So, to come to the last question - in your opinion, how can actually Spain's journalism overcome the crisis of this democratic value which is right now ongoing? #01:42:14-3#

V: This would be very difficult! I believe that these self employment projects, that we are seeing, not only El Diario and Critic but also the other... I don't know if they are enough significant to say that this is the way to overcome the crisis. So the question was... #01:42:49-1#

P: How could Spain's good journalism overcome the crisis? Because the trust of the people - as you said, people are hungry for good information - I read some reports in Spain saying that journalism in Spain has a not such a good image. #01:43:17-5#

V: They have not such a good image. I don't know.... #01:43:26-0#

P: In the meaning that people lost its trust - and I mean now journalists from the mainstream media. #01:43:37-3#

V: I can believe that... I did not know about this research, but I believe journalism is not the less popular job in Spain, probably politicians popularity is much lower. Here we have a problem of our own democratic system. And there is something... there are many changes coming in the following years, so one thing would be linked to another - so there has to be a regeneration of the political system here in Spain. There is clear that is going something to happen. Because both political parties are so much corrupted, that people is really fed up with that. I don't know when, but I think that next year some things are going to happen and I believe that media is going to follow that! I don't know, maybe some of these big media, which are so much influenced they would finally close down, and this young free media is going to grow and grow and grow. #01:46:02-1#

P: I am totally sure about this that they will grow and grow, it just takes time for this. I saw it in Romania, it was unbelievable how fastly the retrust of the people in journalism grew in these new independnet projects. It was like a fresh spring wind in the whole journalism. It's a similar situation. People are fed up with the politicians, there is also a big media concentration in Romania, meaning that there are few owners, which are really influent and people do not know from where to take the information. It is time for a change. And I am pretty sure, that this is going be the solution... Well, I do hope!!! Because that's why I am also writing on this topic, because I find it fascinating how these projects work - it's like how journalism has to be like. Authentical, trustworthy, critical. Thank you very much for your time, Victor! #01:47:09-2#

V: You are welcome! You have my email - if you need some concrete data, I will send!
_ #01:47:18-0#

P: Thanks a lot! Well if you also want - it will take some time, but I can also send you my report! #01:47:33-4#

V: I am very curious about Sergi Picazos interview (hahah!) #01:47:38-2#

P: Haha! I can hardly wait to finish the paper and send it to you! #01:48:36-6#

V: I would like very much to read your report! #01:48:43-3#

P: Thank you! I wish you all the best! #01:48:43-3#

V: Thank you too! Bye! #01:48:43-3#

La Marea, Thilo Schaefer

Skype Interview in February 2015:

P: Hello, good morning, can you can hear me? #00:00:15-1#

T: Hello, yeah, I think I do! #00:00:15-9#

P: Perfect! So, do you want to do the interview in English or German? #00:00:23-3#

T: Yeah, whatever you want! #00:00:24-6#

P: I also speak German, but my paper will be in English... so let's do it in English! Yes... as i said, regarding my paper - I am doing my Master now in Communication and Journalism and I am also in a research group with my Prof., who comes from Greece. So, the countries I am investigating are Greece, Romania, and Spain - because I found out of Spain, that it has a big tradition in independent media. I mean, I already did some interviews with some colleagues of yours (La Directa, Diagonal, Critic, El Diario) and I've noticed that among these projects, are some which also exist before the crisis. It was interesting for me to see how it was before. And the purpose why I've chosen this topic was because of - I don't know if you know about the Rosia Montana movement... (describing the movement)...(technical problems - couldn't hear him for a few seconds - new call). #00:04:01-5#

P: Hello? #00:00:07-5#

T: Can you hear me now? #00:00:07-5#

P: Yes, I can hear you much more better! #00:00:11-5#

T: Ok! I did hear everything you've said and my last words were that I wasn't aware of that movement you were talking about. #00:00:24-7#

P: Ok, I am just gonna tell you in a few words about it... ((describe the movement and about the two projects - Casa Jurnalistului and Rise Project in a few words)). So yeah, this was a brief introduction, now we will discuss on two blocks - the general one about the journalism crisis in Spain and the other block on your project, La Marea. So, can you please tell me how the crisis affected the ways in which a journalist does his job? How this profession actually change during the crisis? #00:04:11-6#

T: Well - La Marea, is an immediat product of the crisis, same as El Diario and some new media that have came

up, like Mongolia, which is a satirical magazine. Most of us used to work for a paper named Publico. A big subleft wing, general paper in Spain, that's run for 4 and half years, from 2007 and it was closed down in 2012 because of the crisis and because the owners didn't want to put more any money more. So everybody got sacked and that's when people started to organize themselves and set up their own companies, in different forms and different areas, yeah! But you can say that obviously, if Publico hadn't closed, you wouldn't have La Marea and El Diario and probably some others. But well, I was working on the foreign desk, I was a foreign news editor and obviously with the crisis, you could tell that there is less and less money all the time. Especially when you try to cover foreign news, that really affects, you know, because without money, there is not much... that it is the financial aspect, but obviously what happens to a lot of big mainstream medias during the financial crisis, they become highly indebted and now they have been ((sold?)) to the big banks. So now, in many big media companies we have the banks as big and main share holders, that obviously cast their coverage on certain issues. So - yeah! We've decided to set up... well, our first idea with La Marea - well, it wasn't called La Marea in the beginning. It was called Mas Publico and our idea was to buy the brand and some assets from the... there was an auction after the bankruptcy, but in the end we didn't get it. The former owner manage to rebuy the own assets and it's now running as a website. #00:06:32-5#

P: That is now El Diario, or? #00:06:32-8#

T: No, no! It's Publico! #00:06:35-0#

T: So then we decided to go ahead and create our own magazine online news outlet in form of a cooperative. Meaning there are no shareholders, they are called members, everybody puts inside some money, it goes to a (??? 07:00) and everybody has the same right to vote. So there is no single share holder, who controls 30-40%, our assembly is from people who work there and readers - about 100 something readers who joined in and we talk about the main issues. So it is a very democratic exercise and also a way to guarantee that there won't be a big share holder who can control most of the affairs. This is one pillar of independence and the other is the renounce at some sort of advertising, in fact advertising revenues are ridiculous, they could be better, haha! But in part because we do not accept ads from the big banks and big companies, which could try to influence. The result of all this is that we are poor! I mean, people make a living out of it, but at a very low level. That's the price of independence! #00:08:15-7#

P: I understand! So, you were working before at Publico? And how did the crisis affect your allday job so to say? Do you feel like more afraid to write on different issues? Or I don't know... how was it before and during the crisis? #00:08:43-8#

T: Ahm... as I said in my case, I didn't notice it so much because I did international news. The only restrictions was as I mentioned before, the lack of funds. With no money, it is difficult to make a decent international coverage and I think this affects a lot of media. You have to solve to fill up all the space on the web and on the paper, the quality goes down, if you don't have the means. Ahm, I don't think there was so much political pressure to not talk about certain issues. In Spain, like in many other countries, it is completely bias - you have a lot a media right, some central left and they tend to be nicer to whatever party they can consider closer to! #00:09:50-2#

P: Aha, ok! So in your case, wasn't as much difference... #00:09:55-3#

T: Yes, but there's another interesting issue. I don't know - you've probably heard of this new party, this Podemos... #00:10:01-7#

P: Of course! #00:10:01-7#

T: So, a year ago nobody knew them. I guess they presented themselves in society in January last year and the big media didn't care about at all about this strange movements and smaller parties. We did - we thought they were interesting people and interviewed them and they suddenly got these big results in the European elections and now everybody is talking about them. But - we also tried to highlight other issues, social problems, issues of

freedom of speech, which for the big media aren't that important at the moment because they have other things to write about. #00:10:52-5#

P: Aham - yes, of course, having international news doesn't have to be suppressing for you, because the mainstream media is supported by a political direction than reporting on international affairs. #00:11:22-3#

T: Exactly! #00:11:22-3#

P: Because the next question would have been how the crisis affected the ways the news are being prepared, talking about freedom of expression - but in your case this is not an important question so to say! Ahm - you pointed out that freedom of expression - again in your case, I am not sure! Did you feel any changes regarding this? #00:11:53-5#

T: Ok, there is more now, because there are more media! In Spain it's pretty lively and obviously this goes combined with social media. There are a lot of things that become a big issue, not because some journalists find out about something, but because people comment on it on Twitter - I suppose it's the same in Romania and probably Austria. And then the media jumps on it. There have been a lot of abuses as a consequence of the crisis. People who were kicked out of their homes, by the banks, because they couldn't pay the mortgage anymore, other cuts from funding from schools and hospitals, I mean there were schools here, that had no money to pay the heating in winter, so the head teacher told parents to give their children a blanket and warm clothes so they didn't freeze in schools! That kind of stuff... And the independent media jumped on to these stories more than the political deal making and whatever. #00:13:16-8#

P: Ok, was this a topic this winter? #00:13:27-7#

T: This year! Yes, we've got elections, regional elections in almost all the country in May and for the Parliament in November probably and everyone is very excited what it's gonna happen with Podemos, the new party. Because the release of break by partizan system... there are either the conservative run the government or the socialists, so they come in, and we'll see if they manage to make a change to the policies that have let the crisis in. Well, the way out of the crisis here is not like in Portugal or Greece through cuts and they hit the weakest more than anyone else, so there is certain expectation regarding Podemos. There is also the economic recovery an important topic, so we have to see how this translates into real improvement to the people on the street, which so far is not easy to see. #00:14:41-4#

P: Did you actually observe any changes in the media law in Spain in the past few years? Or is there a media law in Spain?! #00:14:51-3#

T: Is none! But there is a new security law. It is about to be approved by the Senat. It's very controversial because it raises fines and sanctions for people who are doing demonstrations but also very controversial issues for taking photographs of the policeman during demos. It puts in danger the security of the security forces and one can get fines. So, I mean, if you take a picture of a policeman beating up some demonstrators and you publish it, you are infringing on his rights ... that's something we have to seize now. It has become a little more restrictive. #00:15:54-2#

P: Do you have in this matter the union by your side? Do they do something regarding this because it is also like repressing the freedom of expression. #00:16:08-0#

T: Yes, you are right! We do have them, but they are not very strong in Spain - unfortunately. There have been demonstrations against that law, but the conservative government has absolute majority so they can basically put through whatever they want without much resistance. That's what they do... #00:16:30-0#

P: Yes, I am little bit shocked! In fact I knew about this law, saw a lot of posting on Twitter and Facebook. This is outrageous and totally against democracy... because a demonstration represents in fact the voice of society

#00:16:59-1#

T: Yeah! And there is no social demand for it. I mean there were a lot of demonstrations, like big ones in the last few years... during the crisis, and I've been to quite a few. There have been some smaller violent episodes, like throwing some bottles whatever, but is nothing compared to what we've seen on TV what is happening in Greece. They have set whole streets on fire...

P: Let's start then with La Marea! Can you please tell me more about this initiative? About funding, organization, hierarchy, selection of the themes. You told me in the beginning about the project, but let's go more into details! #00:18:10-6#

T: Yeah! Exactly! Well Publico closed down, the workers got sacked and initially a large group of journalists put forces together and joined together with us. We didn't wanted to disappear, so we created a kind of movement and a group! We did crowdfunding to get funds in order to rebuy at least the name of the paper and to run it ourselves. That didn't work, but at that time, we had so much support by so many people, readers, then we decided to give it a try. We published two printed papers, which were free shits and we hand them out at demonstrations during the 15-M. We also had a website, actually a blog... We constituted this company in form of a cooperative and came up with our first monthly magazine paper in December 2012. And now we had our first anniversary. It keeps growing, at a small pace.. .we would like it to have it a bit faster, because we can only grow organically. The more money we earn, the more we can spent on investigation, on hiring new stuff. We don't have big credits behind which allows us to do all these things that we would like to do! So, we have to be humble and we have to steer with the money which we have, but yeah! The company is a cooperative, meaning that there is no single share holder. We are about 100 people between ...one group are the workers, fixed stuff. That's up and the others are the readers and we get together usually twice a year in an assembly and talk about general lines, like our basic values and that kind of stuff. And we can't sell the paper without the consent of the others. Nobody can come in and buy us. And that's basically the main claim to our independence. #00:20:58-9#

P: So, you said that on one side it's you, the journalists and on the other side there are the people. #00:21:07-9#

T: Well, we are like co-owners. That's the thing. I mean, the members are like shareholders, but you don't call them like that and the thing is, no matter how much money you put in, you have only one vote. So, it's not like in a listed company where someone buys like 10% and then he has 10% of the vote... we have the same rights and votes for everyone. #00:21:41-4#

P: So, how many co-owners do you have? #00:21:42-2#

T: There are about 100. #00:21:51-3#

P: Do they also write articles? #00:21:51-3#

T: Well, they have a space on the website, where they can publish their articles, which is clearly subsigned that members write here. We have a few members which are actually very good commentators and we publish them also in the main sector but basically yeah! One of the rights of the members is that you've got your space where you can write whatever you want as long it is within our frame of values! Obviously we wouldn't allow people to go mad and publish some racist shit or whatever! #00:22:31-8#

P: It's understandable! And these people also donate money, do they?

—
T: To join you pay 1000EUR. And that's it. The money you put into the capital. Now mostly there are also subscribers and they help us in many other ways. There are groups, like local groups in cities more outside Madrid and Barcelona - well, they organize, they help out with the distribution - like we send them the paper, and they put it in cafes and bookshops, where our potential readers are going. They also set up conferences and meetings and they ask us if we can send us someone from the paper to talk about some certain issues. #00:23:42-5#

#00:23:43-1#

P: And the newspaper is free of charge? #00:23:45-8#

T: No, no, it costs 3,50 EUR and there is also a subscription, which is 35EUR and then we have solidarity rate for subscribers for 60 EUR which implies some more things. Basically our ideal, which is the same like the one from La Directa or Critic or El Diario - people who appreciate independent media have to be aware that it costs money. They money has to come from somewhere - we are not idealists and work for free! I mean, we could do that, there are a lot of bloggers and people who write for free out of passion or whatever and they are quite good, but to run a serious paper you need at least some money and if this money doesn't come from a government or big advertisers, it can only come from the readers! #00:24:53-1#

P: Ok - so this is the funding - if the people want to be coowners, they have to pay 1000 EUR once, or? And you said about conferences and meetings - I took a look on the youtube channel and also saw you have many videos from talks... Do you mean these kind of meetings? #00:25:26-8#

T: Yeah, some we organize ourselves, mainly the ones in Madrid. Our magazine has a front page theme, which is developed over 12 to 20 pages and we try to organize some talks on those issues. The last one was before Christmas on promise in the political systems, there are some control mechanisms, that are supposed to watch over a fair play in politics, which don't really works and there are a few experts from university and politicians to discuss. We did one last year on football clubs and their finance and how do they do with the taxfraud and the authorities don't do anything, because nobody wants to hurt his local footballclub. Ahm, so we had a discussion with a former coach and tax inspector. #00:26:42-1#

P: I find it really good, because you come much more close to your audience so to say! #00:26:52-5#

T: Exactly! It's a way to engage with the readers! We try to do something interesting with interesting guests speakers but obviously, it's later the more hedonistic part, we stay on and have drinks. We also want to have just a party, to have drinks and raise some money with it. Yeah! People like it, because journalists sometimes, yeah, other people have the idea that journalists are hidden behind their screens and newsrooms and they never get to talk to them and it's also very important to find out what our readers think about what we do and obviously you got the social networks, people leaving comments on your website but it's still different to talk to someone over a beer and you can ask directly questions and it's not the same when people comment on Twitter. Twitter is also important but they remain postings. #00:28:07-7#

P: Yes! Well talking about your audience.. who is actually your audience! #00:28:13-6#

T: That's a good questions! I think we have two audiences. One - people who follow us on the Web, 300.000 unique visitors per month. It's not bad, these are not so big numbers, but we since we are a small team, most of the resources go in the monthly magazine. But we try to put from 5-10 stories on the web every day. So, we believe, that those are younger readers, people who are more on the web. A lot of traffic comes from the social networks, twitter, facebook, but then we did a little survey on who buys our magazine. We have 2500 subscribers, people who receive it monthly and we sell another 4000 copies directly on the newsstales - single sales, so altogether we have more than 6000 people buying the paper and these are mostly elder people. About 45. The younger people are more interested on the online. #00:29:42-9#

P: The audience from Publico - do you also have it here? Because as you've said, the most of you, came from Publico. #00:29:56-5#

T: At Publico happens the same - the website was really successful, but they didn't sell so many printed papers. The people who would buy the paper were generally a bit older. But then again, we have the same problem as everyone - it's difficult to ask for money when you put your content free on the internet. #00:30:33-2#

P: This would be my next question - the content, which you post online, is it the same one as the one you print out? #00:31:05-9#

T: Ok, as I've said - we do have our own stories on the internet, especially regarding current demands like the terrorist attacks on Paris last week. We couldn't wait for our next magazine to come out by the next month. So what happens with the content for the magazine. The magazine comes out at sale, we usually put one or two stories online as kind of teaser to invite people to buy the magazine... but at the beginning we do not put the whole magazine online at once - but we do over the months, bit by bit publish stories. We could say that 70-80% of the content from the print magazine end up on the internet, but not by the very beginning, obviously! We also have to respect people who paid for it and they have the exclusivity for a few days, weeks. But all the important stories are on the web. #00:32:31-8#

P: Can you say about La Marea that it is already a sustainable project? #00:32:36-3#

T: It is at very low level - as I've said - we have seven fixed staff. They get a salary, which is very basic. I'm not talking about numbers but it's of course not decent enough... mmmh... some have to ... I am working for german language papers... well, yeah! I earn money from there and in my spare time I am working for La Marea! It's run on a shoe string - we definitely need more people also in the administrative department. We've hired a part-time administrative staff, then we've get freelancers - I mean, the occasionally freelancers that write now and then and then we have fix freelancers who work on photography and layouts, who also have other jobs. We are sustainable now in terms that we don't make losses - YES! But we are not sustainable in the way that people can make a decent living out of it and have more resources we need to grow old! But we'll see! #00:34:05-2#

P: You are just 2 years old! It's a matter of time! I also have the feeling, this kind of journalism is like fresh wind in the media landscape and yes... I wish you all the luck! #00:34:25-2#

T: Thank you! We are still confident! As you've said - most media projects or most enterprises have a 3-5 year plan before they break even! Usually they have got funds to last for 3-5 years! And now we have to be sustainable quickly, but we've achieved that by sacrificing ourselves - we earn little money. We do pay fair tariffs to our freelance workers. I mean, if you publish a story in our paper, we pay almost the same as the big ones do - El Pais, or El Mundo. It's not much difference. And we are quite proud of that! #00:35:12-1#

P: So you support professionalism and quality! #00:35:12-5#

T: Yeah! We do not like to accept things for free! It depends obviously. If university professors or politicians officers (??) we don't pay because they also get a public salary. But we do this for NGOs and there are some people who accept free subscription maybe in exchange, but most journalists, when we order a piece, we insist on paying on it. #00:35:51-2#

P: What are actually the main topics of your magazine? #00:36:05-1#

T: Obviously the crisis in all its different facettes, we got a lot of economic issues, economic politic. It is very difficult to separate economics from politics. And also the social consequence. Our main subject every month is trying to point out what's going on and we try at least to take a constructive taken it and point out what can be better. I did a big piece on the banks and how they (???) out to stop regulation and everything what was partly responsible to creating the financial crisis. Ahm, we did a big front page story on Podemos - who they are, how they are organized, that kind of stuff. Now we are working on the negotiations between Europe and the USA on free trade and how this can affect peoples lifes, even if we don't know the outcome yet. Yeah! That kind of stories! And we also have a cultural section - film, music, literature, but not the mainstream stuff. We also try to not be too freaky either! Haha! #00:37:45-8#

P: Not too alternative, hm? Haha! I talked to the guys from Diagonal and La Directa and I know that you have some plans together. Will you do outsourcing from eachother or do you want to relaunch the projects?

#00:38:14-1#

T: Well, it's quite funny! A lot of ask us and suppose the colleagues from Diagonal and Directa, why don't you join forces? Well, it could be an argument, but there are different models and it's not bad to have different options, so I think the editorial, the contents run on other things. Which it doesn't mean, that we cannot do things together. With La Directa we have got a partnership, we publish some of their stories. They publish some of ours. You know, it's a Catalan paper. But they are obviously ways of cooperating... there could be specific issue, like let's say... we join forces to work on one big topic or publish a book, or special publication, but I don't think that the correct idea would be to melt everything together. The other thing is of course on the administrative level. There is a lot of synergies. We could hire someone who can look after ethical advertising for the three of us. #00:39:44-9#

P: During my research I noticed two bring branches - how these kind of projects developed: projects like yours, where people came from different newspapers and from social movements, like Diagonal and La Directa. Is this differentiation right. Because I tend to think about independent projects also independent from social movements. #00:40:44-8#

T: Yeah! Absolutely! You are absolutely right! This has also to do with the rise of the social media and now it's easy for activists to make their message across... well, and if you look at the big NGOs like Amnesty or Doctors without Frontiers, Greenpeace, they do some really good stories but the danger is.... I think you have to separate from an activist who can write well and present his subject with all kind of facts from a professional journalist. As you just said, we have to be independent from everyone! You mentioned the gold mine in Romania. In Spain we also have some enviromental scandals. There are some big infrastructure projects in some regions, then the enviromentalists say that "oooh! this and that is gonna happen and blabla and so many people lose their jobs". I often take that information serious but I do not have to believe it either because I know that their idea is to stop it! And we have to also listen to the other part. Especially when it's about jobs, so I think there is a slight difference between activist and journalist. But both can live next to eachother. I have absolutely no problem with people if they want to take their information from whatever Greenpeace or other groups. That is a good thing with the web - because information is no more exclusively to journalists. I started some years ago this profession before the internet was widely in use and you got all these press releases by fax. So only you and all the other media had it. But normal citizens didn't have any acces to the original news release, so the papers could do whatever they wanted. Now it's much democratic and much better. #00:43:19-1#

P: Ok, so the technical infrastructure makes the freedom of expression grow more and more. #00:43:30-7#

T: Yes, absolutely! #00:43:36-0#

P: But how would you describe - because you also used to work in an other media landscape and namely in Germany. How would you describe the Spanish landscape in respect on the new independent and investigative newspapers? #00:44:00-8#

T: Spain is crazy, it always has been because there are more papers in proportion to readers like anywhere else. I mean there arecompared to Germany. Here we have half the population of Germany and the amount of people who actually read papers and magazines is lower as well but you have far more titles. There are like three financial papers in Spain and four daily sport papers and now as you've seen with our independent media outlets, let's also a huge variety, probably too many for the actual markets. But othersides you've got more variety, more plurality. Probably if there were fewer and stronger, they would do better job, but right now... how should I say... I mean, the thing I've mentioned earlier about here there are bias, it's not saying that this is very different in other countries but I do think in Germany for instance that a conservative paper like the FAZ doesn't have to agree with everything that chancelor Angela Merkel says. Here it's like if you are on the side of the conservative government of Mariano Rajoy, then you shouldn't criticize him. This is one of the differences. #00:45:45-4#

P: Like one unwritten law... #00:45:53-4#

T: Yeah, quite a lot, there influenced a lot! #00:45:56-7#

P: You were saying about this big numbers of paper. I've came upon a quote of... I don't know if you know him. He wrote the "Black Book on Spanish Journalism" and he was talking about an "academic bubble" and he was saying that 75.000 students graduate in journalism in Spain to which other which are graduated in communication, advertising which are to be added. There are so many which want to work in this field and I want to ask you what is actually the journalistic employment career of a journalist which is working at La Marea. What is the background of your colleagues and what is the best option in your opinion to screen the best people to work for these kind of democratical projects? #00:47:03-9#

T: Right, well our background... right now most people used to work for Publico. There are mainly... well the age is from 26 to 44 - the whole range, but there are already people who worked before in journalism. Obviously when we are hiring, which is not the case now, we would look for really sound education, probably work experience, but also as I've said, because it's very special project, you need some implication. It's not a place where you just do your job. You should really believe in the project, and obviously this is something which compensates for the little money you pay. It's not that easy to... I mean, I would love to have more and better freelance workers for example. #00:48:18-9#

P: But why do you prefer the freelance workers... actually I want to ask you about the new ways of journalism engaging audience and the new working instruments and that is why I thought that the freelancers, which have more contacts and more projects can bring more value to your project. #00:49:09-8#

T: Yeah, we've got quite a few really good freelance workers. Some of them are colleagues from Publico and we know how they work and it's excellent but we get offered stories from people we do not know, that happen to be in some place in Spain or the world and think that they have an interesting story, which they want to offer us and usually we are open and interested, but sometimes the result is far from what we thought it would be and very often it leaves a lot to be desired. But, obviously this is the way it goes. I would say that for a journalism student today it is very difficult to aspire to a fixed job in a media company, that would guarantee you stability and a good life style. I used to earn good money in the old days, but it's getting more and more difficult so probably if you wanna become a journalist, you should be prepared for a life as a freelancer. #00:50:35-9#

P: Yes, I observed it. Just to give you a small example. Some colleagues of mine wanted to do an internship for a newspaper, Die Presse. Well in order to do your internship there, you as an intern, you have to pay them, which I find outrageous. #00:51:15-4#

T: Oh God, yeah! We didn't got that far! There are a lot of companies that don't pay you anything. #00:51:22-1#

P: But, that they request money from you, that you do your job... or let them teach you, it's crazy. #00:51:28-9#

T: That's indeed crazy! We had three interns last summer and we gave them 100 EUR per month for their travel expenses and we invited them to a coffee occasionally. This is all that we could afford but at least it was something. #00:51:47-9#

P: Thilo, one more question - you didn't tell me what your working instruments are. I saw your webpage and it's pretty innovative in terms of the platforms you are using. #00:52:05-6#

T: Do you mean the technological working instruments? #00:52:13-2#

P: Not only... the thing is that I am not able to read the content of your magazine, but I don't know, do you use like new forms of journalism, I don't know - like data journalism for your investigations or how are you working on an article so to say? #00:52:39-6#

T: I think, that hasn't change that much! I mean, it's still the old school checking your facts, trying to get to people who can give you information, which is not available for everyone else, obviously with the internet, you've got far more possible tools to look behind. Yeah, we do have, one or two experts in data journalism, because there is a lot of information which is available publicly but it's not easy to find, and we've got people who are able to scan through complicated statistic sites and data. And we got a joint project with El Diario and Diagonal, which is called Filtrala, which is a whistleblowing website where people can leave information and they won't get caught and we scan through that. But the basic tools of journalism are the same - common sense, trying to get information out of people and double check as much as you can. #00:54:55-2#

P: So, your sources are so to say direct contacts and data journalism. #00:55:04-6#

T: Exactly! #00:55:04-6#

P: Ok, perfect! I have now a broader image about La Marea! And the last question - I found a study from the Institute of Journalism in Madrid and they were saying that the trust in the media is really low and that people would compare journalism with politics, talking about expectancy. And my question to you - do you really feel that public lost its trust in the media, what is the best way to regain it and how can Spain's journalism overcome this crisis of democratic value? #00:56:12-5#

T: Yeah, the perception - I know! I would like to say that it is a bit exaggerated. It also has to do, I mean, many people know they have their own idea of what things are like and if some paper or TV tells something different, they think they are lying. It has to do with plurality. I think what we have to do is to keep working hard, try to do serious journalism without too much bias and yeah, convince people that there is nothing behind it. They love conspiracy theories, I've probably given you a few in the course in this interview, that oh! behind that is the government or whatever bla! So you have to really make clear that we are just informers and how people buy it, but as I said the appearance of new media like our and the others you've mentioned, there is a wide choice. It's much easier to compare with the internet. You don't have to read one paper. In the old days you would buy one newspaper and that's it. Now you can see it, what El Pais says about a certain story and La Marea and El Diario. #00:57:45-3#

P: Oh, by the way, what would you say of La Marea, with which kind of journalistic project would La Marea compete? #00:57:58-2#

T: In what way? #00:58:01-1#

P: Who is your competition, so to say? #00:58:10-4#

T: Almost everyone! Obviously there are some other media, which are closer to what we are doing as Diagonal, Diario, but I wouldn't call them competition, because we are still small - all of us. And there is such a big scope for growth, that it should be space for everyone. #00:58:42-5#

P: But would you say that you are also at the point that you compete with the big players? #00:58:51-0#

T: Yeah sure! In reporting we do! Of course! We try to be better than El Pais. They have of course really good journalists and they are really big but our challenge is to be to report better than that! #00:59:15-6#

P: Thanks a lot, Thilo, for the interview! #00:59:17-1#

T: If you have more questions, you have my email adress! #00:59:20-5#

P: I really enjoyed the talk with you! I mean, I would be ready with my paper somewhere in Summer, but if you want, I can also send to you the outcomes of the paper, because I would be like screening these kind of projects in Spain, Romania and Greece. And yes, who knows, perhaps you could find some interesting information!

#00:59:53-2#

T: Yes, please! I would really like to see what you've written! Good luck with that! #01:00:01-7#

P: Thank you very much! I wish you all the best with your paper and yes, we'll keep in touch! #01:00:08-8#

T: Ok, bye Patricia! #01:00:26-5#

P: Bye!

—

Diagonal, Gonzalo Gárate Prieto

Interview taken in Madrid, Spain - November 2014

(Brief introduction of my project, which is not recorded)

P: Can you please tell me your name and short about your project? #00:00:08-4#

G: Yeah, my name is Gonzalo ((Orate)) and I am part of Diagonal newspaper. #00:00:20-5#

P: Ok, I've told you already about the project we are working on and we have some blocks of questions: the crisis block, what happened to the media in general in Spain, aahm, actually also the *governmental part, what happened to journalism and what did this institution in order to survive during the crisis, of course also about your project, how you are doing it, what is the structure, the themes and so on and of course what would you suggest as a journalist so that the media overcomes the crisis, the solutions so to say. #00:01:22-8#

P: So, I will start with the first block : Can you please tell me how the crisis affected the ways in which you do your job as a journalist? How has actually journalism as a profession changed? #00:01:42-7#

G: Well maybe the first thing to point out here is that our project, Diagonal, it has a history of 10 years. In March it'll have its anniversary, so somehow we were here before the crisis hit the Spanish society and of course the Spanish journalism. Also, somehow, we like to say that it's not journalism as a whole thing which is suffering a crisis, rather we think that this kind of journalism which is having this journalism which is having this crisis, the kind of journalism, which we can call the mainstream journalism, so the journalism developed by big media and cooperative media. Aaaah, obviously, why is this happening, I mean it has to do with the habitus of consuming information, of course, since the arrival of news technologies, maybe there are not so new now, but since the arrival of internet and social networks, is something we could point the start of this issue on the arrival, on the rise ((...but still about to die)) of media centers. Do you know about them? #00:04:08-1#

P: Media centers? No, I don't... #00:04:08-1#
#00:04:08-1#

G: It's a network of Indy Media, independent centers, which were mainly ... The thing is, as I said before, the way of people consuming information has changed and what we found out during the crisis is that people are somehow not anymore relying on big media, so people are starting to search on new sources of information. Aaah... the thing is, that at the same time, these big media are facing a crisis, while these other kind of media, like Diagonal and the others you have interviewed, are facing a kind of spring; new projects keep on raising. For us, despite the first step, you could say that this is not good for Diagonal, since there is a competition between this small different media, rather we try to resolve this issue in a collaborative way, having people from other

projects, like La Directa, La Marea or others and in this sense we feel very happy about that and since all these projects that are arising and creating for the last three-four years, since the peak of the crisis and also are following the way of organization which we've started some ten years ago. What do I mean with this way of organization is horizontal organization which tries not depending on the big corporations, on the advertisement of big corporations, which focus mainly on the critical information, critical point of view, which also tries to focus on the social movements agenda, until reaching the point which this is something we've started to see in the past couple of years that corporate media and big media are focusing on bringing the agenda of social movements into their projects, into their own agenda. And so (()) some topics which were shown in certain projects like Diagonal are now also appearing in big medias and of course this has to do with the change of so to say the political culture which happened in the Spanish society with the eruption of the 15-M Movement. #00:08:27-8#

P: The 15-M Movement? #00:08:27-8#

G: Yes, I mean the 15-M Movement made a change in the Spanish political culture. #00:08:30-5#

P: Can you perhaps tell me more about this movement? #00:08:31-2#

G: Well, the thing is that the nobody could expect about the eruption of this movement, it was something which surprised even the people from the social movements, so it was something what nobody could expect. The thing is that this movement showed how there was some ((authors)) which talked about this climate, that was not seen by the movements or by social movements, but it was climate going on and creating an anger about the government and about the crisis and this movement really managed to show that there was a consensus in the Spanish society about the things which were not going in the right way. So somehow this movement came up with the idea, that the what is being called old regime, the regime, the Constitution that we have now, of course the transition from dictatorship to democracy in Spain was held by oligarchy which is still ruling the country and somehow that it wasn't a change from dictatorship to democracy. So, this was the breakout of the 50-M Movement, somehow there was a huge lack of legitimacy on the system and people tried to push a transformation of the system making such a huge critique, not only pointing to certain topics than rather making a structural critique of the system. So that made that people stopped to rely on the big media, and there was a huge amount of freelance journalism and through social networks (()) the amount of information, in the sense that nowadays, nearly anyone who has a mobile phone can spread about what is going on in a demonstration and that made to the people a change in the way the information was being generated in the sense that as I said before, you would not rely more on the big media, on corporate media, from that moment that that media is also being part of the old regime. #00:12:29-6#

P: I understand... so this movement was also part of the change in the mindset of the people regarding the media. Ok! And this project started somehow because of these movements? #00:12:44-8#

G: Many of them, well, I see you took the crisis of corporate journalism, as you said before, in the case of Romania, ahm... many journalists were fired from their jobs and some of them started their own projects. Some of them were more ((convinced)) which followed quite the steps of the project, we started 10 years ago, some of them have for instance, La Directa, La Marea, Diagonal, we do not accept advertisement from big enterprises. Well, you also have projects like El Diario, which for instance they accept ads from big enterprises and companies, which makes a difference. #00:14:13-3#

P: But the profession itself, how did it change during the crisis? What was the biggest change, the fear of publishing something, or issues on freedom of expression? #00:14:34-4#

G: I think, the main fear was to be fired and to get fired, it doesn't have to do anything with publishing or the freedom of speech. But it has to do with the aaahm... let's say with the capacity your media, of the ((sustainable)) because the most, actually all the Spanish corporate media are being held by the other companies, which are supporting these kinds of media, because none of the corporate media is held by the people. #00:15:52-9#

P: Do you feel for your project a change before and after the crisis? #00:15:59-7#

G: A change? I mean, what we thought is that as I said before, our hypothesis was correct somehow. And when you face the crisis somehow you see that your project gets more sense and from that point of view you feel much better. You see that the project, the work you do, the investigations are being useful for the society using communication as a tool for social change. #00:17:08-2#

P: And the news itself? What are your main topics? #00:17:26-4#

G: We try to mainly focus on the issues which are being, which are on social movements agenda. For instance, one of the topics, we are now focusing is an old debate going now about the new political party, Podemos, and the debate going now in the social movements about the sense of having or not having this political party. Also there are new political organizations being created now, facing the municipal elections which will take place in the next spring, and lots of initiatives going on in different Spanish towns, which is also generating also the discussion if it's ok to having such tools of social change. Ahm, also all what has to do with the debt and of course the effects of the crisis in Southern countries, the role that the EU is playing there, also the big movements in Spain with the mortgages and you know that the spokeswoman ((Aracolar)), she was the spokeswoman for this social movements for the mortgages, she is now running for municipal elections here in Barcelona. #00:19:37-9#

P: Oh! And what are her chances? #00:19:37-9#

G: Her chances? Ahm, is quite unclear, but as I said before, due to this climate this 15-M Movement, is quite clear, that they will have some seats in the local government. Is not clear, if they manage to actually rule, but for sure they will in. #00:20:25-1#

P: Nice, Interesting! So, what about - you said, that you don't do any advertisement. How are you funding yourself? #00:20:41-8#

G: We have advertisement only from little companies and we are also engaged as well as La Directa with the so called social economy network. So there are different companies from this network, that they do advertisement with us. But of course, ads make just 10% of the budget. The main part of our budget is from the subscriptions. There are around 5000 people, which get the paper every 15 days at home and they pay 50 EUR a year and that's where we get our main source of income. Of course, at the beginning we pointed at this number of 5000 subscriptions to make the project sustainable but since the project was growing and getting bigger, this number of subscriptions is not enough to make the project sustainable and due to this reason last year we made this crowdfunding also to prove ourselves if the community that we have is still supporting the project, because obviously due to the crisis in the last two three years the number of subscriptions kept going down and down and we were asking the people why they do not want any subscription more, and they said well, that they cannot spend that money but at the same time we knew that of course when you point out that you have an economic problem there is nothing to debate about, if you don't have the money - so we said OK, despite we have the same economic problem we wanted to prove if the people kept on supporting the project and fortunately we got a huge report and we got a good amount of money which helped us to get on with the project. #00:24:23-2#

P: How many people are working for the project? #00:24:26-5#

G: Now, we are thirteen and we have three people working on administration area, one is in charge with all the finance and bills, the other one is in charge of the subscriptions and another person in charge of the distribution because we sell the paper in kiosk in Madrid but also what we call alternative selling points, which are like libraries and social centers, bars. #00:26:02-5#

G: There are actually three ways of supporting the paper: one is by subscription, by buying this in libraries and social centers and the third one through internet, so we send the whole PDF document, well we also send it to

the people, despite we have the content of the newspaper open for everyone with the exit of one number and the following one we upload all the information of the paper on the website. #00:26:56-0#

P: Ah, ok, so later on. I understand! So you've said, three people in administration and the others? #00:27:07-5#

G: And we have the redaction - one of them is taking care of the social network and the web, what we call webedition, what is all the information, all the news we have in this format, which does not appear in the paper, there are four people, which do the proper journalism work and there are two photographers, one which is the graphic designers. #00:28:16-8#

P: And in which area do you work? #00:28:24-3#

G: In the third area, which is... #00:28:32-5#

P: Promotion! #00:28:32-5#

G: Hahaha! Yes, in the promotion! This is the promotional area and we have three people working on it, one of us in taking care of the advertisement, I am taking care of the promotional stuff, actually two of us but at the same time all of us do a little bit of journalism. Once every two week you are in charge of the news on the website. It's once every two week you have to do that and sometimes we also have to write on the edition of the paper. But, let's say that information which we have in the paper is around 40% generated by ourselves and 60% is generated from people collaborating with us. The problem is that we cannot afford to pay for those collaborations. We are trying to improve the project and start to pay the people who are writing for. Some cases there are journalists who have their own work, they are freelancers and they do not mind to collaborate with Diagonal because they find this place one in which they can really express themselves and they do not have the fear and the rules they have in other medias but there are also other profiles, like students or journalists which are unemployed, what is quite sad for us, that we cannot pay them and at the same time we find that some of them when they get another project where they get paid, they will start to work for other media, which is totally understandable. #00:31:25-2#

P: But, the people from Diagonal, all of you are paid, or? #00:31:35-5#

G: Yes, yes!
_ #00:31:35-5#

P: May I ask what is the average payment? #00:31:37-1#

G: We all get paid the same and it's 700EUR.
_ #00:31:48-4#

P: For 40 hours? #00:31:48-4#

G: For 35. #00:31:48-4#

P: And how is this salary compared to the economy? Or what is a normal salary for a journalist? #00:31:58-4#

G: Haha! Well, a normal salary for a normal journalist is around 1000EUR. Before the crisis, it was kind of a joke to have full time salary of 700EUR, but now during the crisis, it's not great, but you manage, you have a job and get paid. In this sense you are really happy despite the salary being very really low and of course the project would not be sustainable without those people who collaborate with the project. #00:32:59-2#

P: Yes, of course! And what is the background of the journalists working at Diagonal. Are there journalists from other medias? Or so to say, what did you do before Diagonal? Also journalists or you come from other

professions? #00:33:20-1#

G: Well, let's talk about the academic background. I have studied sociology, some other people have studied history, but actually for example, three out of the people which are doing the proper journalism, studied communication science. But we have all a common background - we have all taken part from social movements. #00:34:39-0#

P: That's why I was asking - I've also talked to other people with similar background and they told me that they feel that they weren't well thematized in the mainstream media, and so they did their own projects. #00:35:10-1#

G: Well, it's different with Diagonal, because Diagonal came from a former project, called Molotov and the aim of this newspaper... #00:35:33-5#

P: Molotov?
_ #00:35:36-8#

G: Molotov, yes! #00:35:38-6#

P: Aaaah, like cocktail Molotov, I understand (laughing)! #00:35:38-6#

G: Yes, haha! You can image! The thing is that the aim of the project was to generate information from the social movements to the social movements. Then they reached a point in which the people who were taking part in the project, decided to open a debate about the political project which they were having and somehow this was a roof, a top, a limit of the project and they couldn't get over it, and they wanted to get over it, in the sense that the political sense of the project was not to generate information only for the social movement, rather to generate information for civil society, so they decided to start this new project, Diagonal, which is somehow a newspaper based on social movements but trying to talk to the civil society. #00:36:58-0#

P: Would you describe Diagonal as a political newspaper? #00:36:58-5#

G: Mmmh... of course, I mean... #00:37:06-7#

P: I am asking, because when I hear about independent journalism, then I don't see somehow the political constant inside. Do you use it as a political instrument or an objective journalism? #00:37:37-9#

G: I mean we try to make a kind of journalism, which is a tool for SOCIAL CHANGE. Is this political? Of course! Do we think that the kind of journalism which we develop, is objective? Yes, we think so, despite being part of the social movements. I would even say, that sometimes the less objective journalism is developed in the corporative media. Ahm, so we have this concept, is what we call SITUATED Journalism. So, it's the kind of journalism that takes part in the social change, takes part in the social movements and understands itself as part of the political change and somehow avoids to be equidistant, this way in which you understand objectivity, that you generate objective news without placing yourself on one side and another of the project. No! We place ourselves, but we think that despite placing ourselves in a certain point, in a certain place, we are still doing objective journalism. #00:39:55-7#

P: Ok! What do you use as sources? #00:39:57-5#

G: Mainly we try to use sources from social movements, experts from social movements, but not only, we also try to get the voice of people from the academy, from university and of course from different political parties and actors. The problem that we face many times is that when we want to get information from the certain levels, state or big political parties and we call them and tell them we are from Diagonal paper, because this is a quite small media that many times, sadly, they do not give you any answers and when you are writing an article you

have a lack of that source, that point of view, but that lack is not because you didn't call them, but because they didn't answer to you. #00:41:15-2#

P: Do you think they are afraid of you? (laughing) #00:41:15-2# #00:41:15-2#

G: (Laughing) I mean, yes, that would be the positive point of view, but in real, they think that you are so small that they do not bother to answer to you. #00:41:36-0#

P: But, either way, they also have to use a medium so that the information gets to the people about what is happening up there. But, yes, politics and journalism have to work together. #00:41:54-3#

P: So, I was about to ask you how you are actually reaching your public. So, what is your public, what are your readers and how do you reach them? #00:42:19-2#

G: Mmmh... mainly our readers are people who take part in social movements but also people who somehow have this kind of, that they are sensible to social change, somehow there are, let's say, more open to develop new idea, how politics should be and try to work somehow in horizontal structure of society which actually now this number of Spanish society interested in this is growing and growing. But of course, despite this number is quote huge here we have very big difficulties to let the project get known to people. We are growing but the number is very slow because you do not have ressources to advertise ourself on TV or so. Before I met I was talking to this guy from Radio National, which is a Spanish National Radio, I had an interview with him, but also I would say, when the people get subscribe for the newspaper, in the form one of the question we ask is how did we knew the project. Mainly, there are three sources: one, I knew you through the website, I knew you since the former project and the third one, the most important one, I knew you from a friend/family and that is how we manage to spread, haha! #00:45:27-7#

P: Jesus, told me yesterday that you are planning a campaign in which you try to raise the audience number. He didn't say so much about it... #00:45:46-7#

G: No, haha! Because it's a secret (laughing) #00:45:46-7#

P: A secret... ok! Then you don't have to tell me! Haha! #00:45:49-9#

G: No, haha! It's a joke! Yes, I mean, we are facing the same debate, which Molotov project faced, in the sense that we arrived to this glass roof, you know, that you face there and you see that you have reached this level and somehow you cannot go through it, so we are starting to think how we could break this top level that we have now. We are going into debates, like for instance, having somehow close the project, Diagonal, and came up with a new project, in which new journalist and people from all the media come and make all together a bigger project. #00:47:08-6#

P: So, it's gonna be like a cooperative? #00:47:12-0#

G: Yeah, the thing is that there are different projects going on, which have a lot to do with eachother and we are starting to think, that is better to work together. #00:47:29-7#

P: Ok, so - Diagonal, La Mareea and La Directa will no longer exist? #00:47:38-0#

G: Well, I don't know, haha! We can talk next year! Well, I mean, it's quite a complex talk to have, it is not something that we will sort out in a couple of meetings, it is a whole complex. Well, for instance, with La Directa, which is our brother project, I mean they focus mainly on the Catalan area and they write in Catalan, so it's not so much sense to make the same project, but the way in which we are collaborating now could be much more interesting - we can translate from Catalan in Spanish and the other way around, but at the same time we are also thinking about which role the paper has, with all the information being held mainly the internet, what the

paper is doing there. Make it sense to publish the paper every 15 days, or get to a format where you have the paper published every two months and the kind of articles there could be big articles and not only with news, like reflections or opinion. But at the same time there are people which they propose to have weekly paper, which is quite clear, that during the weekends the amount of people buying papers is higher. But at the same time we are thinking of doing different kind formats, which is a huge debate in journalism corporative and non-corporative, thanks to new technologies. Newspaper, nowadays could be like a TV website, you could have TV, interviews. All the kind of formats which have to do with audiovisuals and video. #00:50:54-8#

P: That would have been the next question - because there are a lot of new ways of storytelling and engaging the audience into the news itself. So, I wanted to ask you about your working instruments at this time. I tried to look on your webpage, I could understand very little from it, because I understand just a little bit of Spanish. #00:51:38-6#

G: We also have an English version. (typing on the internet to show me the page) #00:51:40-6#

P: But which are your working instruments, like data journalism or I don't know... #00:51:40-7#

G: We try to do a little bit of everything - haha! But, for example, we have an article from La Directa, we get articles from them with their logo, and we collaborate with some other media. #00:52:31-1#

P: On which criteria do you actually choose the articles from the collaborators? #00:52:29-8#

G: From the other media you mean? Well we have really like, once every two weeks, we have the organization meeting, where people from the different areas of the paper came up with different themes in the next number. We have proposals, which we can find interesting or not and then we say, ok, from this list this, this and this article, we will work on it and for the other articles we will talk to collaborators and say ok, I know this person, which focuses on this issue. #00:54:09-1#

P: By the way, how many women work in Diagonal? #00:54:25-5#

G: Five out of thirteen. #00:54:34-2#

P: It's a good number! #00:54:35-7#

G: Should be more, should be at least 50%. Mmmh... about the... going back to the question with the working instruments. We do not have by the way any one who is getting paid for the videos. And I am fighting now for it. But when you are making an interview with someone, there is not such a big deal, not such a big work, you have the camera there and then you have other formats. You can publish in the paper, you can publish in the website but also you can have a video. All these transmedia debate going on and many kinds of possibilities being created there and we are not having the strenght to get all what we could get out of this instruments. #00:56:30-8#

P: I will come now to a question which I have in mind for a while - you were saying that you have now some about 5000 subscriptions. When did this number increase? How many people did you have before the crisis? #00:57:08-8#

G: Actually the number didn't increased so much. The top we had was 5400, around 3-4 years ago and the lowest point which was one year ago, from 4500-4700. And you would say wow! But the difference is just 1000 subscriptions, so you maybe you could think that it is not such a big difference. But because of the limited budget this number was important for us. #00:58:07-0#

P: But did the number increase more when the crisis started, or? #00:58:19-5#

G: At the beginning of the crisis - yeah! we reached the highest point - the thing is that the consequences of the

crisis weren't been suffer. The consequences were also the less subscriptions - but in time. #00:59:21-1#

P: I was just curious - because when such a big social problem is ongoing, then people get more critical and try to search more sources. In your opinion, how can Spain's journalism overcome the crisis? #01:00:14-6#

G: Well, before, with this kind of spring of new projects, I think this is the way. People from La Marea got fired from Público and then they set up this media. So this is the way, to start organize ourselves, which is a common way in all the crisis countries. #01:01:13-5#

P: Why do the public lost actually trust in the public media? #01:01:36-5#

G: Well somehow, the fear start to know that corporative media is part of the old regime, the system and they would do everything what they had to do to maintain their position. And so the people say, what's going on. They are not saying the truth. I mean, I checked my Facebook and this friend of mine, someone from my family and he is telling me another story what is going on. #01:02:35-7#

G: But I mean, every media, doesn't matter if corporative or non-corporative, I like to describe media as a tool generate reality. #01:02:56-8#

P: This is cool quote! #01:03:02-1#

G: Haha! It is not mine! It is from Jesus ((Jivanez)), a Spanish sociologist and he described media as a generator of reality. He talked about El País, as the main generator of reality of the Spanish society. So - if you are in El País, you are real, if not, you are not real! So, after the tools like developed, as in the internet, reality has gone wider, described only by the so.... the window through which you see society gets bigger, with more sources. The corporative media's window is for sure smaller then the non-corporative's. #01:04:34-3#

P: I like your answer! So - this is the last block for my colleague which is writing on suicidal in the media. Did you by chance had some articles on this theme in your paper? Why did suicidal got such an important theme right now? #01:04:46-8#

G: Well, it's a huge debate there! I mean, mmmh, despite the suicide rates are much bigger in Northern Europe then in Southern Europe. Many people point different theories, like the climate, they get little sun but the thing is, that some people are pointing that the number of suicides in the Southern Europe is growing due to the crisis, which is something which is not clear 100%, there are many studies and debates about this. And of course there is also the debate, that the more the media talked about this, the more suicides happen - I don't you, if I express myself right. #01:07:08-8#

P: Is this your assumption or is this a fact? #01:07:08-8#

G: I don't know, we don't have any answer. But we try not to talk very happily about this, because some people within Diagonal are pointing to this issue... but we have to take care on how often we write something, because maybe the more we talk about suicides, the more it becomes a reality and the more people find it as exit to the crisis. But we could say that the term necessary which you need to make a proper investigation to see if this is real or not, it needs more time. Maybe we could talk about this in the next 4,5,7 years and then we could see how the number of articles is by then. #01:08:33-2#

P: I find it quite interesting, because it's true, you do not hear so much about it, but it happens a lot. You've also said, that you had these debates at Diagonal, what are the criteria when you write on this themes? Do you have any editorial guidelines? #01:08:58-8#

G: Well, we have to be very careful of what are the background of that person who had committed the suicide. The people, who are getting evicted from the house because they didn't pay the loan and to make like a direct

connection there. He couldn't pay the loan, he was going to get evicted, so he/she committed suicide. But I don't know, this only a part of the picture, you don't know if that person lost job or has some mental problems or family problems. I mean, I think there are so many things that you have to take into account before committing suicide and inform making this clear relationship between suicide and crisis. #01:10:19-1#

P: You are right! This colleague of mine interviewed a children psychologist, and she said it's like a snowballeffect, just as you described it. But you don't have any guidelines? #01:11:24-8#

G: Just, be very careful! #01:11:24-8#

P: Ok, so Gonzalo, thank you very much for your patience and your time and interesting things you've told me. #01:12:12-3#

La Directa, Jesus Rodriguez

Interview taken in Barcelona, Spain - November, 2014

(Introduction made beforehand)

P: We are doing at the university of Vienna with Prof. Sarikakis - this is my mentor, my supervisor for the thesis - we are doing a research project on crisis, on media in crisis and my focus on this particular theme is on the rise of independent and investigative journalism in times of crisis. I came up with the idea because there were some protests going on in Romania, because of a gold mine and it was privatized, a Canadian company came, it was about 15 years ago, and they wanted to get the rights to dig the gold out of it, but in this case it would have been an enviromental disaster and the press didn't write anything about it, I mean they did, but not so much and not objective at all. The problem was that the population actually had no idea what was happening with this (mine) project. So within this crisis so to say, new journalistic projects came up, like "Casa Jurnalistului" /"The House of the Journalist".

Jesus: "The House of the Journalist"?

P: Yes, "Casa Jurnalistului"/" The House of the Journalist" Si, Si! And they are doing independent journalism online, they finance themselves over crowdfunding. And then I came up with this idea. My Prof. is researching the crisis in Greece, because of the public broadcaster shut down, ERT, or? And other similar media projects came up.

J: In Greece there are the "Los Periodistas", a newspaper called "The Journalists", which is independent, by cooperative. You know?

P: No, I do not know that yet. Spain is my first country to do research on. I have like the "Press Project", "HotDoc", "Unfollow" and "Ephemerida Syntakton", there are the ones I founf so far. But once again, please, what's the name of the other project?

J: "The Journalists". It's the fourth newspaper institution in Greece. The fourth, it's important!

P: And it's also independent?

J: It's independent - totally, there is an ensemble of journalists, it's a cooperative. 130 workers

P: Wow, big one! So thi's is how I came to Spain. We have a colleague, Ramon Rodriguez Amat.

J: Como, como, como? Qien es? // Who is he?

P: Ramon Amat Rodriguez. It's a Prof. of ours at the university, assistant professor at the Vienna University and he leaded us into the Spanish media landscape so to say. So, the interview will be more on the crisis and about the situation of the journalists in general and then pf course about your project, how did you do it, how did you start it, I have some questions on "suicidal themes" - a colleague of mine is doing her Phd on suicadal matters.

J: Suicidal? I do not understand... (language problem)

P: Suicidal ... "suicida" in Spanish? Well, how these themes are portraited in the media.

J: Aaaah, ok! How they talk about this topic.

P: Exactly! So to start... can you perhaps tell me again for the documenting, your name and the newspaper you are conducting.

J: Jesus Rodriguez and I am journalist at the newspaper "La Directa".

P: "La Directa", perfect! So, to start with the crisis block - I want to ask you, how the crisis affected the ways in which you do your job as a journalist. How did the profession changed during the crisis.

J: In my case here, or in general?

P: You can start with general and then go into particular in your case.

J: Can I talk in Spanish?

P: As you wish, I will not understand everything what you say, but you can also talk in Spanish.

J: I will try but I cannot express so well in English...

P: Ok, then let's do Spanish. I can talk to you in English and you can answer to me in Spanish. So here are also the translated questions for you.

J (06:56): In general, the crisis affected the journalism because it limited a lot the independence of the profession. Now, the precarity of the journalists makes it more difficult that they take risks. The journalists, it's very difficult that the journalists act like the principles of the profession of the journalits. They are not rigourous... they do not risk because the precarity of their job makes them dependent on the reaction of their bosses and leadership of the media outlet. That is why many journalists striked, many journalists without jobs. Journalists in this case are more obeying and there is much fear of losing their jobs. With more fear, they cannot act due to the strict principles of their profession, because when you get an information, which you have to process very rigorously, which you have to research from all sources, which you have to show all contradictions of the political and economical power, if you have fear, you do not manage to finalize this. You stop, you censor yourself, there is more autocensor nowadays because of the crisis and because there is the fear of losing the job. Because the working conditions are different nowadays - before there were many people who have had a fix job, fix contracts at the editorial office, but now, this work is now and then, when journalists are needed. The now and then at your job, makes you more dependent and autocensored. This is from the point of view of the job. On the other hand from the point of view of production-routines, nowadays it is more difficult to produce quality content, because it is less time. Because the staff is more smaller, meaning that less people have now more to do, and that means that it also lacks of quality. More fear, less quality. This happens generally in the mainstream media.
#00:10:22-2#

J: Talking about the alternative media, I think that this two elements don't exist, there is no fear, because the staff

isn't dependent on someone who is telling them which editorial direction they have to take, which normally is discussed in the assembly. But there is still the problem of the precarity. The alternative media doesn't have a solid social base, so that they develop a work without precarity and with enough quality. This problem is still here although there is no fear or control measures which is to be found in the mass media. Now, the alternative media have to develop its capacity to reach more readers, subscribers, to extend to a broader social base, which can support and consolidate the alternative media, so that there is no more work precarity. But this is difficult now to develop, the crisis of the media generated an exponential growth of the alternative media, but this development in order to consolidate and be of quality still needs more time. Because the main problem we face is that the population in general doesn't value so much the information that they would pay for it. The information is now online but this brought the quality to a lower level. And this is why it is difficult, that the readership makes subscriptions. Because they think that the information can be received online and for free. Of course, this is quite dangerous, because the information on the web, is not contrasted, doesn't correspond to the quality principles, to ethic principles, there are also many rumours running on the web. #00:12:34-2#

P: You are totally right, and I think that there is also the problem of the instruments which are nowadays: internet, twitter, facebook. And if you do not have a product, for which you do not pay, you do not know its value actually. #00:13:08-3#

J: This is the most important problem of the alternative media: to make the fact that the information is again valuable. Because, it is true that there is a big disappointment, the most people compare journalism with lies. This happens a lot in the Spanish society. Journalism is a lie, it is also shown in statistics that the less valorized profession is the journalism, because people think, they don't do their job good, because they are in the service of the state power. To fight against this perception, journalism has to be honest and transparent, transparency regarding the financial matters of the paper, which have to be in the first line very clear, because it is difficult to regain the confidence of the people. #00:14:16-6#

P: Ok, you were telling me that journalists are limited, they are afraid, and that it is a problem regarding this image which journalists have in the society. But, how has the crisis the ways in which the news are presented, which influence has it on the themes, which are covered? #00:14:53-2#

J: Hm... it has an important influence, because the big themes, the preoccupations of the people aren't the same like before. A few years ago, the biggest themes were perhaps, the consequence of the economical model, a model of work and consume, more settled, more compact, with a big middle class, and the big medias which treated the themes about the model, talking about environment, about the ecology, about how this model impacted the environment. I think we are now in another phase, in which the interest is not any longer the impact of the model about the means, about the environment, but if this economical model can still go on like this. And what happens, if this model will change. I think what changed, are the interests and priorities of the readers. They do not care so much, if the consume model affects the environment. If this consume model can maintain or has to change, no longer because of the environmental problem, but for an unsustainability of a disbalance between rich and poor. Now, a big part of the population is concerned about how the richness is distributed, respectively about the unevenness and injustice and who gets the benefits from the production channels. A few years ago, the preoccupation was how the economy functioned, how it shared itself, and now they want to see about the impact on the environment. This was the main preoccupation but NOW the follows a broader discussion and a closer examination of the model of the distribution of the richness. #00:18:12-1#

J: Yes, before, people assumed that this system was as it was and they debate on the consequences of the environment but they didn't brought the system into question. So, now is the questioning of the system and of the distribution of the richness, which during the crisis got more of actuality - the richer got more richer and the poorer more poorer. Now the biggest themes treated by the alternative medias are: the model of distribution, what happens with this, the rights, the housing, the education, the health, of the public and private. I think these are the biggest themes. If you observe a little bit, the sections of politics, society, what you see, is that the political class is questioned because of lies, corruptions but also because of the incapacity to find solutions of the fundamental problems of the distribution of the richness of the society, of the basic rights, of the housing, of the

work, of the sanity, of education... the model of money distribution has a crisis. Before, it wasn't in a crisis! So the themes were the impacts on the society, on the environment. The biggest precrisis themes were the ozone layer, recycle, climate change. And now there are other themes which substituted these ones with some other principle themes. #00:20:50-1#

P: You were now talking in general, or in particular about your newspaper? #00:20:55-9#

J: No, I am talking about Spanish media in general.

P: And what about La Directa, because the project was before the crisis ongoing? #00:21:11-0#

J: Yes, eight years! The change above all was ... - we actually treated already the questioning of the model - we were already talking about what many medias are now during the crisis thematizing. But now, our principle force is set on the alternatives. We don't just talk why the actual model isn't functioning, but we suggest alternatives for these problems in education, sanitary system, housing problems etc. So alternatives, how there can be made possible an access at a normal different life, away from the actual model. We put much energy in trying to find these alternatives. We are discussing the post-crisis - what happens after the crisis? #00:22:13-3#

P: I really like your answer, because we also had some talk with other journalists and they were saying that now everyone is writing so much on crisis, but nobody writes about solutions. #00:22:40-1#

J: We have quite many articles about solutions, but of course, we don't know if they are absolute but probably they are little opinions, suggestions and partial solutions. Obviously it is very complex, but we are talking about this topic of the solutions in the future. #00:23:18-7#

P: Ok, so from what perspective are actually giving the solutions - how would you define yourself talking about political approach? Or is it totally apolitical? #00:23:34-7#

J: No, it's impossible not being political. Everything we do has political components. Politics is the form of governing the society, the form to understand the world, so it's impossible to talk about apolitical. It's very dangerous if I talk with someone and I say I am apolitical, it's not possible. We try to talk about us, as a difference in the information society - it's political. But it's difficult to talk about stereotypes of political right, left, or center... this is a language of the past! We talk about transformation! About more social justice! About breaking the status quo! We don't know where we go, but we know that it's necessary the transformation about more social justice, more dignification of our lives. And we give voice to all people which are talking and thinking about how can be the future. This is our topic principle! #00:26:02-1#

P: Ok, very interesting! I will continue with the next question on the working conditions. So how did media companies responded to the crisis? On the working hours, conditions of employment, stability of jobs, people fired, limitation of the independence, precarity. #00:26:40-6#

J: Yes, the most big medias have reduced its personal from 30-40%. On the other hand, they also reduced the salary by 50-60% a month and now there are a lot of journalists in Barcelona, about 800-900 EUR/month. Many many journalists in Barcelona and in the big media. And before the crisis the salary was about 1500 - 1600EUR. It was very important change for their lives. So, there are less people working in the media - it's about the double of work. If you have to write 5 articles a day, there is less quality. Less money, more hours working, more articles. It's very difficult. #00:28:29-2#

P: Regarding this - have you observed any changes about the freedom of expression during the crisis? #00:28:35-9#

J: It's what I saying before. There is an increase of the quantity of information which comes from the news agencies. And there is less quality of the sources. The informational sources have reduced. The articles have now very few sources. It is very little time for the journalist to dedicate to calling, to going outside on the street, to

contrasted the information. You really observe this when reading the mainstream press. #00:29:30-2#

P: How are journalists resisting actually to this working conditions?
#00:30:02-0#

J: Here, in Catalonia, there is a coordination - it's called "Mitjans en Lluita" (a platform of journalists and workers in media in labour conflictivity, mainly from daily press). It's an assemble of journalist, which are affected by the crisis. They are coordinating the fight against the dismissal of the jobs and they do demonstrations and they are lobbying about the situation of the journalists in the public media. There are also some private media, but it is more easy to fight for the public media than for the private ones because the government which is ruling over the public media receive more critics, are more preoccupied about their image. So the public media journalists have more possibilities to fight for their rights. They managed to stop the shortages in some media and the most desks (redaktionen) where they wanted to do cuts, they managed to save to working places but for that to split the payment shortage over the whole personal. So they lowered the salary for all with the condition that nobody should be fired. This happened at TV3. #00:32:48-3#

P: I want to talk to you actually about your project. Because I find it quite interesting, that you are functioning as an independent, investigative medium also before the crisis. So, can you broadly tell me about your journalistic initiative, about the funding, organization, about the hierarchy, selection of the themes, perhaps about the background of the journalists here. #00:33:32-6#

J: Yes, yes! La Directa finances itself mainly 70% over subscriptions. Actually there are about 1900 subscriptions. About 10% is advertisement, but we decided that there is no hierarchic publicity but a horizontal one, meaning that every ad has the same surface in the paper. It's not a publicity about one page, which costs a lot of money and the conditions would be more pressuring for the medium, because a page is very expensive, but here, there are small ads. #00:34:58-4#

P: The ads which you publish come also from the social movements or social companies, because I see here "La Cooperativa Ethica"... #00:35:18-2#

J: Yes, the most of them are social spaces, cooperatives, small companies. We try NOT to have multinationals, banks, big companies which could condition the content. Just horizontal ads. The key of this way is to get many small ads on horizontal base. Many but small, not big but few. And then the direct selling of the paper which is around 5% and then other incomes through merchandising. We sell T-Shirts and other type of stuff related to the medium. #00:37:07-3#

P: And does this model function well? #00:37:13-0#

J: The question from our point of view is to achieve the boost of the percentage of ads and to achieve at least 5000 subscribers so that the people working here don't work in precarity. Having just 2000 subscriptions it is still very precarious. A part of the people here work on voluntary basis and another is paid, but still, very little. It is not sustainable. That is why we try to start a campaign for the awareness about the value of the information and the value of having an independent medium, which is not financed by banks and we work on this also to increase our subscriptions number. #00:38:27-1#

P: This campaign - are you doing it by yourself or together with other similar medias? #00:38:37-1#

J: This campaign? Yes, it is made by us, but we are still in cooperation with other medias, like La Mareea and Diagonal. Diagonal, Mareea and Directa are like the three newspaper in paper and web but in the meanwhile, other projects appeared: diario.es, Critic... #00:39:15-9#

P: And they work just in online. #00:39:23-2#

J: Yes, we do it in paper and online, and they do it just on the web. #00:39:25-5#

P: But these projects (Diagonal, La Marea and Directa) have also a similar business model, or? #00:39:49-3#

J: Yes, very similar, it's the reduction of revenues from advertising or the direct sale and try to bind more people to subscribe for the paper. Also because these alternative medias do not receive any public financing. There is big percentage of medias which receive funding from institutions, what actually generate elements of self censorship. We depend on the financing of the readership which subscribe or buy. It's a financing model from down. #00:40:50-5#

P: This is the new way which I've observed also in the Romanian media - it's actually the way in which journalism has to be done. From the people to the people. I almost have to compare it to the public system, because this kind of independent papers generate really high democratic value because you bring the information like 1:1 without any influence from other entities like government, advertisement, other institution, and I find really great what you are doing! This is why I am also writing about it! #00:41:30-7#

P: OK, so you've also told me that the project is not so sustainable... You've told me before, that there are also other volunteers working here. Can you perhaps tell me the percentage? #00:41:51-1#

J: Now here are 10 people, which are working daily either in the morning or in the afternoon for four hours. They are receiving about 400 EUR a month. Similar to precarity haha! And the rest of the work is voluntary basis. Now we have people who collaborate with us, writing, doing pictures, like for 1-2-3 hours a week...there are about 100 people! #00:42:50-2#

P: Wow! 100?! #00:42:55-4#

J: Yes, about 100! #00:43:03-5#

P: And you wanted also to say something about the sustainability of the project. #00:43:08-0#

J: We are creating the conditions about the sustainability of the project. We have analyzed ourselves and we now know how we must increase our social base to be sustainable. We know and we are working to arrive to this point. But now, we are not sustainable, but now we are working to reach this point. #00:44:02-0#

P: Do you have other examples from other countries, where alternative projects started the way you did, and that they managed to be sustainable? Do you have any examples of such projects? #00:44:23-9#

J: There is a newspaper in Sweden and they have 25000 subscribers. They've started like us and they have now 25000 subscribers and they are sustainable now. I don't remember the name... #00:44:50-5#

P: And how long did they need to reach this number? #00:44:56-5#

J: About 20 years! #00:45:02-5#

P: You have still time! Haha! #00:45:06-8#

J: Yeah, and there are other projects like these in other countries, for example in Mexico, there is a project "desinformemonos.org/". And this project in Greece, "The Journalist" or in Germany "jungle-world.com". Independent alternative media... and with similar funding.
_ #00:46:28-8#

P: Ok, cool! I really wish you all the best to arrive to Sweden's model! #00:46:34-4#

J: (laughs) thanks! Let's see! #00:46:38-2#

P: You have twelve years ahead! You will make it! #00:46:41-3#

J: No, we want to achieve 5000 subscriptions. With 5000 we have enough money!
_ #00:46:50-2#

P: Then I will write the number down and contact you in a few years to ask you! (laughing) #00:47:00-6#

P: I came upon an article from Bernardo Diaz Nosti, he gave an interview, he wrote a book on the "Black Book of Journalism" ... (Jesus reads the translated question). #00:47:43-0#

J: I am actually no journalist! #00:47:43-4#

P: And what was your motivation to start this project? #00:47:47-4#

J: We arrived to the journalism thinking about how to explain the social movement, which were difficult to arrive to the mass media. Thinking about this, I arrived to the journalism. Thinking about the contrastation of the journalism, the sources, the official sources and the social sources. But many other people in the La Directa, they are journalists of profession, they study in the university this and they arrived at La Directa, because they were working in some mass media and they were in the situation of precarity and they think we prefer to work in an independent media with precarity then in to work in a mass media with precarity. #00:49:02-2#

P: Yes, of course, it is not difficult to choose! #00:49:06-9#

J: A few years ago in the mass-media, when the money was more and journalists received 1500-2000 EUR/month, there was not the situation. But now 800EUR in a mass media or 800 EUR in an alternative media? Well, I for instance don't want to be controlled from a bank or politics. I prefer being in a media with an assembly and I can't talk and I can propose and I can investigate. #00:50:04-3#

P: But still, the money comes as you said in the case of your journalists, before the ethical aspect of journalism.
#00:50:09-9#

J: Of course! #00:50:14-6# #00:51:17-7#

P: (Bringing my example from Rosia Montana) - I understand your personal motivation to be heard from the social movements. #00:51:32-4#

_J: Thank you!
#00:51:32-4#

P: There is another organisation, "Marea Granata", do you know about it? #00:52:27-7#

J: No, sorry ! #00:52:27-7#

P: Ok, no problem! Then let me ask you about your audience! Who is your public? #00:52:29-6#

J: It's increasing, because our public are the people who are interested in now knowing towards which direction is our society going, to the change of our society, to the alternatives. And these kind of people are increasing, because the crisis is affecting the life of the people, it's transforming their mentality, their vision, and they are transforming the thinking about all these. And this people are looking now for media talking about this. And it is increasing the potential audience we can achieve now. Before it was circumscribed about the activist, about the people in the extreme left, but now it's not about ideological concept of the model of society, but it's about the

and start to develop a horizontal channel, where there is constantly interaction between the protagonists of the news. Without this horizontal interaction, it is difficult to recover the confidence in the media. The media, for the most of the people is a communication channel of the power top to down. If this horizontal line doesn't develop, it is difficult to recover the trust in the media. Because the distrust of the readership can be broken with the implication of this reader in the elaboration of the content. So it's a very complex matter. But... #01:03:28-0#

P: So you see the salvation in the credibility. #01:03:40-3#

J: The credibility can only be real with a change in the structure of the media. The funding and the decision taking structures. How decides the editorial lines the topics, how this is decided can recover the credibility? These two have to radically change! #01:04:27-4#

P: Thank you very much for your interview! I really took much out of it! I hope you will have good luck with your newspaper, because I am also quite a big fan of this journalism and I am so happy to see that in Spain this type it already so spread. In Romania, this type of journalism just started, so I really do hope, that this journalism will slowly take the place of the mainstream journalism and yes, I am looking forward to put everything you told me into paper and when I would have finished it, I would also be glad to send you my paper, if you are of course also interested! But really thanks for the talk! #01:05:42-2#

J: (happy) Thank you too!!!

Interviews from Greece

Info War, Aris Chatzistefanou

Interview taken in Athens, Greece - Mai, 2015

P: (Introduction) #00:00:18-2#

A: My name is Aris Chatzistefanou. I work for more than 15 years as a journalist. I've started in a way illegally when I was still in highschool. I went to one of the biggest radio stations in Greece and I was working pro bono in a way for one year and then major steps in my career were - I was editor in chief of a scientific magazine in 2001, then I went to BBC World Service where I've stayed for 2 years in London as radio producer and 3 years in Istanbul as a correspondent. Came back to Greece when I've started my own radio show in the same radio station - Sky Radio. And then we decided to make our first documentaries about the crisis in Greece. The first one was called Debtocracy. I was fired just three days before the documentary went online. The second one was Catastroika and the third one FASCISM INC. And now I am working in many... I am not sure if I may call myself freelancer, but I work in many different media organizations, you know, writing for Efemerida ton Syntakton, every week writing an article in Unfollow Magazine and I still have my radio show, which I sell, it's my own production. And many other small things that added together make a real job. So that's me in onw minute. #00:02:17-8#

P: You were saying that you've been fired three days before you've aired the first documentary. What was actually the reason to being fired?

A: There were many different reasons. In my opinion the main reason was political disagreement, because even though I was working in international affairs, my radio show was mainly on international affairs, I was presenting cases in other countries where they had the same debt problem, and byu doing that I was presenting alternatives to the mainstream idea of how to overcome the crisis, so I was saying for example in Argentina, in Iceland, in Ecuador, they befold it, they didn't feel morally obliged to pay the debts, they befolded, they stopped the monetary unions that they had and things that we could also do in Greece. So this starting creating a problem in my job - even though I didn't criticize the government directly, I was doing that indirectly by presenting different examples from other countries. There was another reason which has to do with union rights, you know media in Greece were like an experimental case in imposing conditions which we haven't seen for many decades - for example they wanted to cancel the collective bargaining agreements, they wanted to cut salaries, they wanted to increase the hours and all these kind of things. So when they asked us to sign the new contract, we were 25 people in a huge media organization, something like 400 people. So I didn't want to sign this new contract, which was canceling the collective bargaining agreement. And all of us which didn't sign, we were fired after a few weeks or months. #00:04:39-4#

P: This was in the radio, or? #00:04:39-4#

A: Yes, so it was a combination of reasons - it was political and also the fact that I was supporting what the union told us to do and many other things. That was the case of many journalists at that time... under the pretext that we had a financial crisis in the media, which was true, which was a pretext to start fireing the people who had an alternative agenda to what they had to say. The first people which were fired, it wasn't just picked randomly, it was those who created problems to the mainstream picture that the media wanted to create. And I was one of them. But it were hundreds of journalists like me who lost their jobs. #00:05:45-8#

P: Do you have any data, any numbers? #00:05:46-1#

A: Not really, Dimitris Trimis, which will come later and used to be the Secretary of the Journalists Union, I am sure he will have the information. But something that Greek journalists are not accepting, was that before the crisis, the media landscape was a bubble. So there were many people, which were not in the lists officially as

journalist, hundreds of people lost their jobs but we don't have a clear image what really happened. #00:06:18-8#

P: Ok, but before you got fired, did you have the feeling that the crisis affected the way in which you were doing your job as a journalist? #00:06:36-6#

A: Yes! The first thing is that crisis affected the media in many many ways. First of all by creating this waves of unemployed journalists, it was easier for an editor in chief to impose its will and his agenda to the journalists, because there were thousands of people waiting outside. So there was no choice for a journalist. The moment he said something different from what the government wanted to hear, there was someone who replaced him immediately. Which was not the case five or ten years ago. It was more easier for the directors of media organizations to fire people and replace them immediately. So that was an indirect way of self-censorship. The other thing is... you know, the Greek media was never profitably. They were owned by big construction companies, by oil companies, by ship owners, which were using them as instruments to put pressure to the government, to take public works to do their business. But at the same time they were expecting some profits by the advertisement. So when the crisis hit, the advertisement market collapsed completely. It was mainly the banks, which had the capital to pay for advertisement. That meant that they were controlling the agenda of the newspapers and especially the TV stations and then there was this vicious circle - the media had to accept the austerity measures, the memorandum and the fact that the banks should be recapitalized. So it was the Greek tax payers, who were paying the banks and the banks were paying the media, who were saying to the Greek people, that we should save the banks - so that was one of the reasons which changed everything - the source of income for the media. Because for instance Mega Channel, it was one of the biggest stations. It had to take the loan of 95 Million Euros. A normal enterprise would never take this loan but because it was a media organization, which could promote the interests of the economic elites and the financial centers, it was easier to get such a loan. So media started to be in control of the financial institutions and that meant that you had no choice if you were just a journalist, to say something different than what the Troika and the government and banks wanted you to say. #00:11:17-0#

P: But was this censorship... or let's say external communication among the journalists also before the crisis? #00:11:13-3#

A: For me the interesting point is 2008. That's when everything changed in Greece. Before to 2008 there was a censorship, but it was indirect. You had to censor yourself. You had to understand what your boss wanted you to say and say but there was no power intervention in your job. I don't remember my editor in chief come and say write this or that. I had to understand what he wanted to say and there a space in which I could move inside or I could cross the line but not too much. After 2008 it was a direct intervention in censorship - so the editor in chief would come to your office and say that's our line, nothing else, forget it, otherwise you are out of here. So - I don't believe in a free press in a capital system but the change is huge before and after 2008. #00:12:53-4#

A: Where I work now, we are a team of journalists, it was my idea - professional journalists, professional cameramen and sound engineers and editors and everything. And we decided that we cannot make a documentary and say what we wanted to say if we had to follow the mainstream channels of production and distribution. Someone would try to intervene and impose its views. So, we decided to go crowdfunding and we asked from the people to pay for these documentaries. It was the people who gave us the money to do that, so it was an experiment - I won't say that we were the first to do it, but in this case we were the first in Greece or in Europe, to have a full lengths documentary, 100% paid by the viewers. There were no political parties, no advertisement, no corporations to support it. #00:14:22-5#

P: You were saying that you do not believe in a free press in a capital society, but actually what you just told me, the free documentary, speaks against your arguments. #00:14:45-3#

A: My own project doesn't follow the mainstream of a capital society, because first of all it's not profitable. You cannot characterize it the product as capitalist product, when it doesn't really bring an income. Actually I am not

saying that we paid ourselves, but let's say that we were working for 9 months and we got paid for two months. That means, that for seven months it was given no salary to support what we wanted to do. That's not profitable. And why I am saying that you cannot have absolute freedom in the capitalism because information itself becomes a product. In my opinion, information should be freely available to everyone... you cannot buy and sell information - it has to be out there for everyone. The capitalist society by making this information into a profitable product imposes its capitalistic rules on the information because it's advertisement, it's who pays it, it's an interference to what you should produce. What is we are trying to do is that our products are on public domain and so they are not products in the capitalistic way. It's free for everyone, not only to watch it, but to download it. to make public screenings or even to take parts of our documentary and use it for the own job. #00:16:45-5#

P: Like a common good. #00:16:51-2#

A: Yeah! I mean we are doing this in a capitalistic society, I don't say that we invented socialism again or something like that, but it's not what I would characterize the usual steps of mainstream corporate production. #00:17:07-4#

P: Don't you have the feeling the exactly this type of information does the public need. #00:17:22-4#

A: Of course, but they cannot have it in other ways. #00:17:25-0#

P: The thing is that if you are leaving in a capitalistic society and there are also people and journalists which believe in democracy, or? How could then these ideals be then supported in a monetary mean to the common goal. There has to be a middle way. #00:18:05-8#

A: Yeah! For example to do these documentaries, we had to work in parallel with other projects, which paid the bills. So I had to write in magazines and newspapers and do many other things to get a salary to survive in order to do what I wanted to do as a journalist and do the documentary in which I expressed myself and thought that it was necessary for the Greek society at the moment. So you see, that is no way for professional journalists to have the means to survive in a capital society if he is doing, what he wants to do. That's the kind of censorship in my opinion. We are getting too philosophical maybe... #00:18:54-0#

P: Not at all - I totally understand what you mean. Exactly - what about media law. Does Greece has a media law? #00:19:29-6#

A: Yes, in a way. Well it's not a law in itself, these are some guidelines, which you get from the union of journalists. There are some watchdogs that make sure, that you don't start cursing or do bad things as a journalist, but not something very concrete in a body of law, which takes care of all the aspects. #00:20:15-2#

P: Were there any changes in the law in the last 5 years? #00:20:21-5#

A: Well, one of the things in the past 5-10 years... it's easier for people to send journalists to courts, by saying for example that what you wrote it's against me, so I have the right to have a trial. They made it so easy that big corporations and people like that have attacked journalists for doing their jobs. There is a grey zone - of course you need the law to protect the citizen from the journalist but in my opinion the new laws just supported the economical lead in order to attack journalists and I have many many friends, who now are facing trials and could end up paying million EUR, which is impossible, but this is what they are asking. No - sorry, no hundred million. Well I have a friend which a big corporation is asking to pay 1 million EUR! You know, if you ask someone more than 50.000 EUR, I think it's the same - you just don't have this amount - it's just a way to destroy him completely. So that made it easier for corporations to sue journalists. #00:21:52-0#

P: In the case of your friend, may I ask what was the reason? #00:21:57-4#

A: He was saying that one of the big ship-owners has annoyingly smuggling corporation. So this guy called him. He was editor in UNFOLLOW. The owner of the company called him in office and said "I will kill you and everyone who stands around you and your family and you will never get away for that. And they saw the number and they called back and they realized that it was from the office of the company that he owns. And then he went through the courts. He never accepted that he made the phonecall but we could track the number back to his building and then he went to courts and he is asking now for 1 million EUR. So even if he gets 100.000 EUR, it's the end of the magazine. We don't have this money to pay. So it's a combination of the mafia law with the official law. There are many ways for a corporation to attack journalists right now. #00:23:09-6#

P: Did the union react? #00:23:13-5#

A: Yes, the union reacted and said this is outrageous. The guy, just to give you an example. This oil smuggler - don't say that I called her a smuggler (laughs), but for you to understand about whom I am talking about. His lawyer was a close friend to the Prime Minister, Samaras, so you understand these revolving doors. When a lawyer calls you and says my client is Melissanidis and you know that this lawyer is the best friend of the Prime Minister, you understand that your position has not only to do with the law, but it's a network of power around it. #00:24:09-8#

P: It's really outrageous!!! The saying... money makes the world go round gets a new meaning! Can you please tell me more about your project? #00:24:27-1#

A: Yeah - you know usually these things start as independent projects and then become mainstream. I follow the exactly opposite direction. I was working for BBC World Service and we had a way to making the feature stories as we call them in radio, which included music, interviews, sounds, it was like a radio documentary. So I brought that to Greece and I started InfoWar my radio, in Sky Radio, which was a success. It wasn't balanced. I explained, that editorially I will never be balanced, it was more of a news analysis and the structure of the radio documentary and it was quite well so many people started listening to the podcasts, not only online but they were downloading the podcasts later. #00:25:26-2#

A: When I was fired, I just bought some microphones and made my room like a studio and I've started this radio show like my personal production, which was uploaded for free and the people who used to download it, when I was working for SKY continued to download it, when it was then my own production. Then I managed to start selling this radio show to some radio stations and now I have a network of three or four stations in Cyprus and Greece that buy the program, so it's viable in a way, I manage to survive because of the support of the people who are saying keep going, please don't stop your work. #00:26:25-9#

P: So Info War is one person show. #00:26:26-4#

A: Yeah, yeah! Absolutely. #00:26:31-3#

P: These documentaries are also part of Info War or they are made separately? #00:26:54-8#

A: It might be a coincidence, but one of the shows I made at Info War it was about Ecuador and the way they defaulted to their debts and created an audit committee to understand which parts of the debts were illegal. So, when I broadcasted this, there was an enormous reaction from the people. Even politicians and journalists were calling me to have more information about what happened in Ecuador and in that way we said let's do a documentary about Ecuador. So it started as a radio program and then we said let's make 15 minutes a youtube video. But then, many professionals came to support this initiative. For example - technicians and camera men and musicians and said, we are interested to help you. So something which started as a 15 minutes video became a full length documentary some months later. #00:28:02-4#

P: Have you been to Ecuador for this? #00:28:03-5#

A: Yes, but not for this project. Ecuador was just what gave us the idea. I have visited Ecuador, but many years ago. It was radio becoming documentary. Because we weren't documentarists. I was a photographer besides from journalist but we had no experience in moving images. So we've started filming and we had the professional editor which could take the garbage that we were filming and make it something interesting out of it. But it was an experimental case for us. #00:28:56-5#

P: A saw a few days ago the documentary Catastroika, without even making at the beginning the connection, that it was your documentary! Wow - and now I am meeting you and talk about this. This is great! (laugh) #00:29:18-9#

A: By the way - he is the guy (a men just stepped into the Cafe), that you will ask about how many people were fired. #00:29:26-7#

P: Great, thank you! Ok, do you know, who the audience is, which is consuming this type of information, which you deliver? #00:29:44-5#

A: Not really... you know, I have a left wing rhetoric to approach the news... so for sure I would say, that they start politically speaking from the center to the extreme left. But when we made Debtocracy, even though we had.. I can characterize this as a Marxist analysis of the crisis, we had even policemen, who traditionally come from, you know, from the right wing or extreme right wing in Greece, who were calling and they were very happy that they saw this Marxist analysis of the crisis (laughs), because we were giving an alternative, we were explaining them, that they should not pay 100% the debts, we were giving a different approach to the problem. I really don't know who watched the documentary... the first two documentaries have been watched online by 5.5 Million viewers, so it's impossible to know the exact characteristics. So - as far I can understand from the Google Analytics I receive from my website, trying to understand the characteristics of my audience is people from 25 to 65 - it's quite a wide audience, politically mainly from the left, highly educated... this is from the information I got online... #00:32:05-0#

P: What are your working instruments in order to make this documentary publicly. Do you make advertisement for it, on which channels... #00:32:17-2#

A: When we started to do the first documentary, Debtocracy, we were still working in mainstream media, and we had acces to this media and because they didn't know what we were doing, they liked the vibe around it, that these guys create the first crowd-funded project, they liked the idea, because they didn't know what the outcome would be. So we had the support of mainstream media... when they saw the documentary, they were so furious against us, that they stopped. At first they attacked us, they realized that by attacking us, they were giving more publicity to us, so they stopped speaking about that, because when they did that it was too late because we created a huge network of supporters on the Internet. So on my Twitter account I have 40.000 followers or 35000 followers on FB, so immediately, when we say something now, we have a core of our audience, that can start distributing the information. But that would have been impossible if it wasn't for the mainstream media, that helped us at the first stage. So when they ask me, younger documentarists, how can they start from scratch, I don't know what to answer, because I didn't asked from scratch, I had the support from mainstream media. I managed to trick them while they were supporting me in a way. #00:34:02-7#

P: Would you work again in mainstream media? #00:34:06-8#

A: Why not? I am a professional journalist. If I have my space and freedom to express myself, it's fine. Of course, I wouldn't work in a extreme right wing of Neofascism newspaper. There is a red line, which I cannot cross. But if mainstream media accepts me and they give me the space to express myself, why not? It's my job to do that. Many people say... "he's working in corporate media... so he is..."... there are many reasons, not during a crisis, but in normal circumstances, reasons for which mainstream media would accept alternative voices, because they want they have an alibi - "look, we have all the voices". Of course, alternative voices would get 1% of their time, but they will be there and the editor can say "Look, I have an extreme left winger and the other and the other..."

" and they need you in a way. That used to be the case before 2008. There were alternative voices - all these people that you see are left wing progressive journalists, that they lost their jobs in a way after 2008 - most of them. I think the media elites were using us as alibis. But after 2008 when they felt that they should have absolute control of the information - they said enough is enough, we don't accept, we don't even want these alibis anymore - we want to give only the information we have in our minds. #00:36:03-2#

P: How do you think Greece's journalism can actually overcome this crisis? The crisis of democratic value? #00:36:14-0#

A: It's very very difficult... if we talk about professional journalism. What they are doing and what we are doing in Efemerida ton Syntakton, it's an attempt to survive by ourselves without being connected to big corporations and over things, but it's really really difficult. You have to take difficult choices, even in advertisement. You know, the story which you were talking about in Romania, that we have the same in Skouries - the company, which was controlling the mines, wanted to give advertisement to the newspaper and then you have a moral dilemma. Should I accept this advertisement in the newspaper. Some people would say yes, take the money and attack the company - some other people would say, no - it's immoral to get money because at some point they will manage to impose their agenda. These are difficult questions, which you have to answer and there is no profitable - at the moment it's not only in Greece, but in general - it's not a profitable project really working in media where you don't have to depend on big corporations and the government and other things and be really independent. #00:37:58-6#

A: We have reached a critical point where we need free information in order to keep democracy working but we don't have the economical system, which can allow information to become a common. It's one of these moments in history, where the economic system destroyed the production forces which want to move to the next step. That is something in the previous economic system, when capital was coming and it was a force of progress and liberation, it was because the previous system collapsed because at some point it couldn't evolve anymore... I think we are coming to the same top in history. I cannot predict the future, but I can predict we have a serious problem at the moment. #00:39:46-4#

P: (not clear sound - but talking about the fresh wind in journalism during the crisis in independent projects)

A: Yes, crisis always produces circumstances under which you can create new things. Crisis always has a positive side, in order to survive you have to change the way you are thinking and try to find something new, but it's not easy - when you have to survive first as a human being, it's difficult at the same time to keep your integrity and keep your professionalism and all these things, but yes - positive things can happen. I believe that some newspaper created after the crisis and after website are much more professional and much more free and open than we used to have when the economy was in a boom. But it's much more difficult for the journalists to do that. I work 5 times more than I used to work in 2007 and I am getting 5 times less money that I use to get. So it's 10 levels difference to what I get and how many hours I spent to get that. #00:41:59-3#

P: But at the same time you are saying that this information should be free for the people... #00:42:14-7#

A: That is why I cannot find the viable solution in the current economic system. For example, I would suggest that the state should pay for journalism. If we think that information belongs to the commons, it's the state, which should help the journalists provide free information. The problem is how you manage to get the money from the state and not the control from the state, which is very difficult to do. There are already some ideas about that. For example in France, some years ago the government was suggesting that the state should not pay the journalists, but they should buy the audience and the audience should have extra money to buy a newspaper... so in that way, you don't have direct control of the state to the newspaper. The state is paying the reader and the reader has the freedom to choose the newspaper, which it wants. #00:43:14-2#

P: I didn't hear about this before... #00:43:16-2#

A: You didn't hear, because it didn't work actually - but there are ideas... If you think that information is the right of the people to have it - in the same way that they have the right to have work and water and I don't know... you should also find ways to support this financially. We are not there yet, we do not have a solution for that. #00:43:44-5#

P: So you don't think that these projects would get sustainable... #00:43:45-0#

A: They are not so profitable, but they manage to survive and now it's going much better. #00:44:06-6#

P: You mean Efemerida? #00:44:06-6#

A: Yes, and Unfollow magazine... Unfollow is a little expensive, it's 5 EUR, it is a lot of money for Greece right now, but it keeps going. I've managed to keep my radio show, we've managed to do these documentaries, just by taking money from the people. So these are the successful example, but there is hope! #00:44:43-6#

P: Can you name me some other similar projects besides Efemerida, Unfollow, InfoWar #00:44:42-5#

A: There is Radio Bubble, there are some smaller initiatives like Hominia TV - I wouldn't characterize it like anarchist, but it's extreme left. I am not counting it in the media, because it's not professional.... not many other things. #00:45:28-2#

P: Actually these are also the ones, which I have in my agenda to interview... #00:45:24-3#

A: There were some smaller documentaries like "Ruins". It was about the persecution of HIV positive women in Greece, but it was a much smaller in Greece. This was just before the previous elections. The government made a witch-hunt against HIV positive women, which were characterized as prostitutes, even though they weren't prostitutes and they arrested them and they brought them in front of the cameras saying "she is dangerous for you and we the state control this problem". It was a neo-nazi approach... It's called Ruins, and it's very interesting... because this was a no budget project actually. But it had the ability to react in a very professional way what the government was doing, which is a very positive example. #00:46:53-6#

P: I have just one last question - it's for a colleague of mine on suicides... #00:48:10-6#

A: The problem with suicides is that we do not have reliable information from the state from many different reasons. The first is that sometimes the families don't give the information to the state that this was a suicide. Because they have some problems with the church. If you committed suicide, you don't have the right to be buried by the church. So many families feel ashamed and do not declare it. So there are thousands of cases from which we do not know... And the second problem is that the government at least the previous one, didn't want to give this picture that people commit suicide because of the crisis. So, they were trying to hush it up. I don't know the data - we used to say that we had 4000 suicides during the memorandum. Now I heard about 7000, but I'm telling you, this are not reliable data. The numbers are much more bigger... #00:49:50-8#
#00:50:07-8#

A: I was taking an interview the previous week with a famous professor of international and humanitarian law. He used to be special rapporteur for UN for dead and human rights. So he came here in 2013 invited by the government to assess the conditions in the country and he was telling me that the first day he arrived, he left his luggage to his room in his hotel and suddenly he heard some noises and he went downstairs to the lobby and another man from his hotel committed suicide. So imagine this guy who is coming to assess the situation and first hours in Greece someone commits suicide almost in front of him. #00:51:03-5#

P: Horrible!!! As a professional journalist.. did you write in the newspaper where you used to work on this topic? Did you have any guidelines how to write on this topic? #00:51:33-7#

A: No - I cannot answer, because I am not writing on Greek topics. It's a specific reportage. But as a professional journalist, my general understanding is that mainstream media didn't want to have this topic high on its agenda. We had for instance information that there were children, which were fainting because of lack of food in schools - so suddenly they were losing consciousness. And there was a battle in the newspapers - mainstream media were saying that this is bullshit and never happened, that not believe this, and just the communist teachers are saying this and blablabla. So we had the information and we had the most famous commentators trying to argue that this is not the case. But we knew this from the teachers. So I assume, this also happened with suicides. Mainstream media didn't want to talk on this topic and I don't remember in the big TV Stations a big documentary or a story about this... you could read this in Efemerida or other similar papers, but not in the mainstream media. You know - there was a very interesting case, where a pensioner committed suicide in Syntagma Square. His name was Kristoulas and he left a note saying that I am committing suicide because of political reasons, because I cannot search for my food in garbage and I hate this government, I hate you all and I wish that people would rebel and get you out of the country. And the mainstream media were saying that "No, this... don't try to take political advantage and present it as an anti-austerity move, but the guy was saying that in his notes... I mean, he committed suicide for this reason. And the media were saying NO, we should not connect it to the crisis. #00:54:22-5#
#00:54:30-7#

P: Ok, thank you very much! #00:54:38-8#

A: My pleasure! #00:54:40-5#

Press Project International, Dimitris Bounias

Interview taken in Athens, Greece - May 2015

P: (Introduction)

D: Sure, I'm Dimitris Bounias and I work for the Press Project International, which is the English speaking version of an independent website of news from Greece. It is a separate entity, which is autonomous in editorial manner from an already independent medium. #00:00:33-9#

P: OK, so these are different projects - the Press Project and The Press Project International. #00:00:37-9#

D: Yes, I think this might have some context for your research because it has to do with the crisis... I don't want to skip your questions, but I can explain later on how the Press Project International was created when the times come. #00:00:53-2#

P: Ok, so like to make a broad image for you, the interview will deal on questions of crisis in general, the crisis in general, how the profession changed and then we will talk about the project. #00:01:14-8#

D: Whatever works for you! #00:01:17-8#

P: Can you please tell me to what extent did the crisis changed the profession of journalism in Greece? #00:01:28-4#

D: To put this into context one has also to have in mind that the crisis came very abruptly after a brief period of sudden prosperity where for the last 10 to 15 years before the crisis, there was a rise in income, in life-style which meant also that there was a media boom - especially when it come to newspapers and TV, one would say that there were way to many newspapers. This also served not unseen before scheme of big business men, the elite,

who needed to have a medium, a newspaper, a TV channel, to complete the so called triangle of power, where you had state contractors, big conglomerates or ship-owners, having a connection with the bank and also they needed a connection with a medium, so that they could serve ... not exclusively in terms of propaganda, you don't need to go as far... of course this was as well in many cases - this has been abused. But this, also in combination with the rise in advertisement revenues and budget this was a golden booze... it goes whenever you see a community which has a rise in their income you also see a rise in the media. And this was very steep and it fell as steeply, because when the crisis hit, first of all the advertising took a huge hit and then the media followed, the cuts were immense. The average Greek journalist because the last generation of journalists, I am talking now about the people who were 55 let's say were trained in a different model... there was a sense of security - no one is prepared to lose it's job, ok? But in Greece was this sense of security because things were - as the economy was rising - things on the other front were going slowly let's say. There was a sense of security and no one was expecting what has happened. So that's why it's this false sense of non-crisis - I will explain what I mean in a second - but you see that the middle class in most journalists were defined as middle class took the biggest hit. It weren't only the poorest, which were pushed to the cracks but also the middle class, so you might see someone who was used to a specific kind of a life-style. It went very steeply - the media had to do huge budget cuts, so there were ...some fell completely, magazines for lifestyle etc. or specific types of magazines, like car magazine etc. which had to do with products closed down. And others had to reform quote and quote by means of deregulating their markets, by means of pushing journalists into precarious labour, in not hiring anymore and paying by piece etc. In conjunction to how weird the Greek system is for freelancers, that struggled the average journalist financially even those who had a little work. Prices for freelancer journalists collapsed also so would be working for pennies per piece. And generally there is a huge amount of journalists who are now unemployed or having changed jobs completely. #00:06:14-8#

P: Do you by chance have a number of fired journalists during the crisis? #00:06:23-8#

D: I have heard so many different numbers but exactly because of how the market was not regulated in a sense. There are two big guild. There is a guild of TV and newspapers and the guild for magazines, but there is no guild for Internet journalists. These people are unaccounted. We do not know how many they are. So the only people that we can count are those working for TV and newspapers. I've heard some numbers - there are up to 20.000 people. But I refrain, these are numbers which you can just find officially. And even the official numbers are weird because there were a lot of journalists, which were previously employed also on a freelance status. We have this weird status here, because a paper cannot ...well it's not here only.. it has contractors, ok - you work by piece or by day etc., but to do so you have to be classified as a freelancer, as a business-men yourself, you have your own books... So because there were so many... they stopped working, but they had their books open... it's not clear how many there are. It's not clear how many there are. You can see the number of papers, which went down - especially Sports papers, which took a big hit, and as I've told you, special-interest magazines and papers... We had new standards, they could barely hold their own weight of so many magazines and now you can see this huge holes... like an old men's teeth. But I cannot give you specific numbers, sorry! #00:08:12-7#

P: Ok! For the journalists, which were still employed, how did the profession changed, was it more pressure in terms of freedom of expression for instance. #00:08:27-1#

D: Right! As you've seen and researched better than me, we have during the years of the crisis huge collapse in the classification of Greece when it comes to freedom of expression of the press. This can be seen - there are two reasons for this. The first one is as again - you can predict that the people which remained in their positions, were either very afraid that they might lose their jobs so they had to cut some corners when they came to their reporting, which is quite understandable. Not justifiable, but you can explain it. And the second one which is a little more tricky, is that some say those who kept their jobs, were those who were more loyal to their bosses in the first place. The first who had to go, were the ones who were more combative. Ok? Ahm... the other thing that changed, was that lots of journalists had to make a choice because there was a huge Troika imposed market deregulation, labour deregulation here in Greece - they had to either stand for their standard ground, when it came to the collective labour agreement for instance OR just take the new hits, sign a new individual contract and be in a very precarious position. A big reason why lots of people left - I mean, a big group of people who left,

were people who refused as a statement to sign these new contracts. Those who remained, knew very well that they were now more dependent on their bosses and the falling revenue. #00:10:21-3#

D: Also on the revenue of advertisement - this is a very fine point and this is my speculation - is that exactly that because the pile of advertising became smaller, so became the players who were giving advertisement, so became the business men and companies that can feed the paper revenue, whatever the revenue was. So this also changed somewhat the reporting towards specific players. #00:10:56-8#

P: Before you continue - you were saying about contracts which have been changed. What kind of changes have been made? #00:11:04-8#

D: First of all the new contracts allowed for smaller wages for we had for the first time in 2012. A minimum wage, which was dictated by the Ministry and not through collective negotiations. Second of all we have now laws which changed the way someone can be fired. Like, before you would be payed your whole compensation no matter what if you have been fired. Now they have introduced this system if you get notice a month before something, you get paid half your compensation etc. So it is easier to fire people, this makes people more afraid. Also, it has introduced a lot of forms of flexible jobs like lots of people have now part-time jobs. There are very few full-time, full-insured journalists jobs on the Greek market right now. Ahm... this was made possible through the labour change aswell... and the last thing is the abolition of the collective labour agreements and the individual contracts and also the fact that to create a new contract both sides had to come to the table. This was a whole list of reforms and now if the employers don't show up for the negotiations for the collective contract, then some time passes and if that time passes the contract automatically falls at the national minimum. And also the recognition of years of experience that account towards a better salary is also off the table. So you see a lot of journalists being rolled back to salaries to someone which is hired the first time today. This way you can see cuts of around 40-50% even more sometimes. So a journalists, who has managed after 25 years of work to get for instance 1500 EUR loses his job and then gets hired in another magazine or whatever with the minimum wage. You can understand that when you have been created a life and a family around a wage which has been going on for years to be loosing 50-60% of that has repercussions to the whole market around you and also to how you approach your work because you know as I do, that journalism is a very labour intensive profession with a lot of stress and also that the health system took such a big hit. I am sure if you look at the already bad numbers of journalists health and how long they live, I am sure this have gotten way worse. This played a role aswell, because we as journalists had a good health insurance in Greece, but lots of people have fallen out of... and the stress of this job and doing it under such pressure, I am sure it has some repercussions on numbers of quality of life of journalists. #00:14:52-5#

P: You are talking about the working conditions of journalists, which are afraid of losing their job and through this fear they get more dedicated to their bosses. But in terms of ownership is it really clear that this triangle of economics, newspapers and state work together... ? #00:15:29-8#

D: Yes, it is very clear - and it is no hiding. We know the people who are running the media. There was a big initiative three or four administrators back - sorry, I've lost count with so many elections... - from Caramanlis (?) new democracy administration - 2003 - 2009. That Prime Minister and his government started an initiative to make a law that would not allow contractors of the state to own media. #00:16:18-7#

P: Sorry - by contractors you mean? #00:16:18-7#

D: Sorry - like state contractors, like people who build roads, who receive money from the state, people who participate in tenders, they cannot own media - them or their immediate family. It was huge backlash then and that initiative died down. It's worth looking in through it, it's very interesting how the whole thing happened. So it's a very clear map of faces who own the media, even though they are limited companies with stake holders, the big stake holders are known, especially when it comes to TV. Newspapers is also clear, but TV let's admit it, is the biggest weapon - by weapon I mean... it's the cutting edge of information and propaganda, ok? Here at least

in Greece it's the case, because newspapers also took an amazing hit in their sales. People stopped buying newspapers. #00:17:30-3#

P: During the crisis or the culture of reading newspapers died before that? #00:17:30-3#

D: It was not only because of that because the Sunday papers is something that you got anyway. It was directly linked to peoples income. They could not afford to buy a newspaper. There could not spent those 2-3 EUR to buy a newspaper daily or even on a Sunday. The numbers are devastating. Before the crisis, it was usually the case - people bought newspapers, so again, the numbers.. you can find the numbers from the distribution networks. There are also summaries on Greek websites - it's like 90% collapse. It has strung to a tenth. Sundays are a little better, but dailies are devastated. #00:18:45-9#

D: Back to the media owners. One thing what was also happening - as things have become more tensed in Greece with the crisis, you see that the same media owners, that were deciding what kind of issues are to be raised, to be in favour of the government, to be on their soft side to bargain for their other business, has now turned upside down and you see sometimes, it's like they are writing on contracts - like on contracts killers. Either with each other like one media conglomerate fights another media conglomerate. Or it was a huge propaganda by almost all of them in sink against the what was looking as a Syriza government coming. Ahm... you would see on the day, that some banking scandals would come out from initiatives like Swiss links for instance, you would expect the papers to run with them on the first page, but instead they would run with a big advertisement banner of the bank in question on the front page. You can make a lot conjecture there. #00:20:26-7#

P: It was this story from the owner of Hot Doc? He also linked a list... #00:20:38-9#

D: This is a separate story. It's the so called La Gaarde list. It was a list of big depositors with ??? in the last decades. It was a list of 2000 or so names with Greek depositors, which was handed to the Greek authorities for auditing. Other countries have made lots of revenues out of auditing those names, tax revenues... here in Greece there is still a huge scandal of how this list was handled. The Minister of Finance at that time was accused, he was condemned for falsification of documents just a few months ago and this journalist which you mentioned, Kostas Vaxevanis, published the list and there was a witchhunt against him, he was prosecuted the next day, he was brought to court and an amazing terms of revenge, he was exhonored and then the prosecutor appealed the fact that Vaxevanis was exhonored, he asked for a retrial. Usually you appeal when someone is condemned to ???. But this was the other way around, anyway this was the man on the black pages... Both the legislative power and judicial power... they work in tandem. #00:22:27-4#

P: Now I am really curios, was this replicated by other newspapers? #00:22:35-3#

D: It was replicated for sure on the internet. #00:22:36-9#

P: This is a really big issue. #00:22:40-9#

D: Yes, everyone was talking about the La Gaard list - they had to write on this! The fact is that this was like 3 years ago now - for sure was on the internet on very known websites. I do not remember from the top of my head if it was replicated on paper. But everyone was and is talking about the La Gaard list. There are however examples like that, where there is a huge scandal, which comes from abroad, the links come from abroad... again, like the Swiss leaks, the leaks from Luxembourg about the tax avoidance, which Lux set up with the tax planning in Greece where the same papers were mentioning as a global scadal the Swiss leaks, but they were failing to mention the Greek companies involved. So it was like looking the other way: We need to do our job as journalists and mention there is a whole scandal about whole Europe it talking about but we are not talking about our own people, which is a huge hypocrisy. The other part of the media played a very big role within the crisis and the journalists who were very good reporters, but in the same time had to save their job and had to look a little bit here and there, was about the so called need for reform - was about how you sided with the Troika or against them. So you saw that the mainstream media, most of them, would strongly favor the demands of the countries

creditors - because they needed stability and it was basically in support of the government, because the government is with the Troika so we have to support the Troika and the reform. But this really in my view fed a very toxic debate and a very toxic perception for guilt of people, because you would turn on the TV and you would have been bombarded with how the bad Greeks who were living above their means, now need to be reformed and are falling out of the Euro. So the media were including this crisis were used by the same people who had been practicing high level corruption all these years, was used as a didactic in pointing the finger tool for the average viewer to bring a sense of guilt and a sense of subjugation - "you need to do this, or else - we are on the edge, we are going to die, we need to be European, we should be ashamed by ourselves - we have been tax evading - it has been the so called 'plumber problem', you don't give receipts-problem, make no mistakes - this needs huge reforms and there is a lot of petty corruption... but it's a very big irony on a media level, that the high level reforms have been used as a tool to retrain people's thoughts in collective guilt. #00:26:33-0#

P: Like working with fear in order to manipulate... #00:26:36-9#

D: Manipulation is a strong word, but here it applies and I sign by it... it's fear and it's also guilt! I insist on guilt! It turns people against each other, because raising for instance perpetually for instance the problem of the public sector- big fat public sector... and at the same time the unemployment - it turns the private sector workers of the public sector unemployed against the public sector. It was used as a division tool and you know that dividing people is the best way to manipulate because you make them weaker. So, instead of occupying people's mind how to tackle the problem in a uniform manner together, it just created huge dividing lines between different demographic or working groups. It turned everyone against each other. Putting high in the agenda small corruption schemes like ...like 50 or so people of some island who were taking a advantage of the blindness benefit even though they were not blind, when at the same time on the agenda you have the recapitalization of the banks and how it happened, it chose a clear preference of the media to focus on small time corruption that helps manipulate people and it's more approachable as an example in the news to use in small talk like we are doing now and create this sense that it is the people's fault. #00:28:28-1#

P: You so to say started to answer on my second question - the news coverage. Was corruption before the crisis also on the agenda of main stream media? #00:28:45-5#

D: Corruption was always on the agenda of the media, even high level, but again - it was targeted! But this is not a Greek specific problem. It's something I need to stress here. You see it all around that the best cracks to the system that an investigation journalist can have access for the reader was through competing oligarchs for instance. When we both compete for a tender and I want to hurt you, I use my medium to air a scandal that concerns you and damages you. And there were of course and still are some stark examples of amazing investigation journalism, that defy threats, fueled by their conviction, ethics or even their vanity, still air with big stories for big time corruption and that's where they find a platform, either on the medium of the rival of the person they are hitting OR on the alternative media. And that was the big wager whether the people would turn to alternative media so that whatever that investigative journalism would happen or corruption coverage would be approachable. I guess I'm again cannibalizing your questions but I need to say here that the crisis and the fact that people started reacting to this coverage against them and they were seeing the austerity program fell and the traditional papers still supporting it and also at the same time that they didn't have the money anymore to buy the papers or they were disappointed by the television, the crisis actually helped the penetration of alternative and online media in the Greek market also in age groups, which were unforeseen before for this media. #00:31:27-3#

P: So this crisis was for this type of journalism actually a chance... ? #00:31:33-0#

D: It was a chance for it to be born, let's say! Because I understand that you are looking into a group of alternative media like the Press Project, Hot Doc, Unfollow, Efemerida ton Syntakton... these were all products that happened in the last 5 years. These were no coincidence. #00:32:04-9#

P: Would you describe these projects as alternative? During my research I've come upon some theories and everywhere I found that alternative journalism is actually not professional. I mean, people either come from the social movements and start their own projects and are not professional newspapers. But what I see in these projects - these are journalistic products of high quality. #00:32:45-2#

D: Right! There are two parallel movements here - there are first the ones that we mentioned, where products of professional journalists that went on the entrepreneurship side as well. Not explicitly to make money, because some didn't and some managed to, because you need to publish it one way or the other and you become the publisher yourself. And the other one was what you called, the social movements and the citizen journalism etc. Let me state for the record, let me just quote a Pulitzer prize journalist, who is the honour to work with, but I won't name him, because what he said is very provocative - he said: "I trust a citizen journalist as much as I trust a citizen surgeon." I would never allow someone who says I'm a surgeon to operate on me, I don't love the idea having someone report and try to abide by journalistic standards when they are doing it as a hobby (???). This is contradictory because social movements and citizens who play journalists, because they are not journalists, had a huge impact, a positive impact on the coverage. The problem starts, when activism and reporting melt into each other. It's confusing, because it also becomes a way of propaganda from the other side. From a side, which is much more favourable for the people, but it's also propaganda. When it comes to reporting for instance with your Iphone, like it happens all around the world, here in Greece where we had these Indignados movement and lots of violence with police etc., citizens journalism was an invaluable tool to track down what was happening on the ground. This could not and should not substitute professional journalism. Thankfully, it did now happen in Greece, because of the parallel initiative I told you about professional journalists did. So, you had a very good combination of citizens acting as eyes on the ground and very good bloggers who acted as analysts and journalists who acted as investigators. So - at the same time however you had huge potential of toxic blogs that... I like to call the camp trail movement. There is a lot of misinformation that people especially who are of older age group, who now have internet access, especially on a slow day in the office - it is a phenomenon of the guys or the girls mom calling and asking - "I read this on something which looks very professionally and it says were being bombarded with camp trails that make us numb to austerity. Is this true?!" Or it was easier to see (bank-run) narrative (???). So let's say that things were sped up also on a good and on a bad way. People were not ready to make the switch to new technologies. Again, especially older people - we have to keep in mind, in Greece we have a demographic problem, we have a very aging population here. I remember during the 2012 elections, where New Democracy won very difficult victory against Syriza, there were there rallying mottos online on FB and Twitter "Lock your Grandma in the house today - don't let her vote!" Because older people were so... if you have made it through the most of your life and you have gotten a small pension and you get by, you want some stability. Those were the people, which dictated the electoral result back then and for the same reason, which didn't allow Syriza for a larger victory this time. If you see the age breakdown in polls - people under 50 overwhelmingly voted not for New Democracy or Pasoa (?) and people over 65 overwhelmingly voted for New Democracy. So, you see that they were covered by the mainstream media by the fear and there is also an age group in the media that had information from both and it was very confused. 45 to 55 to 60. That has some penetration from the online media and the TV and they were very confused people. The average 30 years old mom or dad. #00:38:29-2#

P: What do you say about the trust of the people reading newspapers in the mainstream media? Did this also have an impact in the revenues of the newspapers? #00:38:39-4#

D: Ahm - definitely! That was the key - not in the beginning, because in the beginning it was a real - it took people a couple of years. There was some inertia for people to get really mad, because it's like the steps with coping with loss. Ok? Anger took some time to come and it came a year or two later. The loss of revenue had definitely to do with people getting angry at the mainstream media. I am not sure whether it was for reasons of ... I mean, I don't want to be unfair to people, because I can explain this... I think that large parts of this crisis can be explained not with political science but with Freudian psychology, ok... so, I believe that it was not so much the hiding of corruption and the covering of corruption of the big media that pulled people from them that the constant fear, that people grew numb to, people got bored to hear it that they would fall from the edge of the world. People just were disgusted. Of course, the fact that people felt, that big time corruption was protected... but it was in

my personal view the second factor. The first factor was that people said - how much more of that?! It was by proxy that they dismissed the mainstream-media, they dismissed the politicians that the mainstream media keep in an enormous autistic matter supporting. I stopped supporting Samaras for instance so I stop supporting the media, that look like they are supporting him. That was a common thing. #00:40:54-5#

P: Before the crisis - were there any independent journalistic projects? #00:40:50-9#

D: There have been great great journalists but their work has been bleeding through the cracks of the system - there have been better and worst papers. There has been amazing reporting in some of the bad papers as well, but because journalism was considered a luxurious profession, there was no need for that. You could find a job easily if you were good in a big paper even if there was some level of censorship. There were papers for instance, I remember one called Galera (The Pirate Ship) - it was around 2004. The guy who made it - maybe you've heard from Raft Magazine, it's a global project, it's a magazine which is sold directly by homeless people for them to make a revenue. The same guy, a Greek Australian, has created this Galera, where very many journalists from big papers, which were sitting on hot stories that could not fit in their papers would give them to Galera. I remember that! To my understanding in the good decade of prosperity, there were specific cases of very good journalists making it through the cracks, like the coverage of the Siemens scandal and the huge kickbacks, which were going years for years with the Greek state. Ahm... but there was not anything similar to what you are seeing now like Unfollow or Hot Doc etc. There were very good documentaries... Vaxevanis was doing Pandoras Box, Stelios Pouloulu (?) was doing something like Documentaries without Borders. Very interesting - Most of them were funded by the state TV, by ERT. There were also documentaries funded by private media but most of these were funded by ERT. #00:44:24-6#

P: Isn't this also some kind of contradiction? ERT was a public TV but as I've found out during discussion, was it also a big state aparat and I assume these documentaries are quite critical to the state. #00:44:46-6#

_D: Yes, it's true. But to my understanding they were external productions and I think that all these journalists, when they were annoying they were at some moment sacked. But they had enough time to do important stuff. It is as you say contradictory, but it's even harsher to do it in a private media. #00:45:27-7#

P: Can you tell me - is there a strong media law in Greece? #00:45:39-5#

D: Are you talking in terms of freedom of expression? #00:45:40-7#

P: Also the Art. 19... it has to be in the constitution - but I am talking about the protection of the journalists through law. Like a media law. #00:45:42-9#

D: Protection in terms of expression or to be assigned physical protection.... #00:46:04-1#

D: Because there is for instance a special law, which favors the defendent when it comes to defamation if defamation is in print. And there also, the journalists guild has to vary in degrees been supportive of journalists. The problem was that was very specific which journalists it included. BEcause for instance if you are an online journalist, you are barely a journalist, if you do not have acces to a guild. Guilds in Greece, when they want to they are really strong... #00:46:49-8#

P: Guilds? #00:46:53-9#

D: Unions! when they want to they are really strong - so there are cases where the unions step in and really support the journalists. I don't really know how there are different to other Western countries for journalist protection. #00:47:32-1#

P: Regarding media law change - was it just this one one given by the Troika with the contract changes #00:47:38-2#

D: It was not about the media by themselves, it was about labour. There is a discussion now about a new media law, because the airway frequencies by TV have been assigned somehow arbitrarily and not in a structured way since Private TV was created here in the last 80s. There were basically squatted by people who were friends of the last governments. This government has vowed to make a real tender, competition from the beginning to reassign the TV frequencies, because now they have been squatted arbitrarily and royalties for self frequencies have not even been dispersed. So this is a main change that can completely alter the landscape in media. That explains a big backlash of the media conglomerates against Syriza because it was one of the big promises of Syriza that when they come to power and they are working towards that now after the ERT reopening that they were reassign the media frequencies and at the same time they would introduce laws that clear the landscape when it comes to media funding. That hits one side of the triangle because what we have seen in the media, because there are largely loss making enterprises, no one did a medium to make money, just like football teams, you feed money so they have influence over people, so they do with the media. So there are very distinct funding like loans from banks against collateral that was not really there. I vaguely remember the case of a big TV station that borrowed money from a bank against collateral like digital archives of stupid TV series that have been created, it was accounted for million and million EUR as collateral against the law. It was ridiculous. As we are entitled to get millions and millions of a loan and put us collateral the production of stupid television series they made. This is thought that this government has also vowed and we will see how this will go - ok. To also tackle the link between banks and media because it's one side of the triangle. #00:50:43-4#

P: In Spain people were saying that by now most of the media is so to say owned by banks... because revenues went down - they took loans, they couldn't pay the loans and the banks gained control. For my understanding to what you are saying is that the Syriza government now tries to regulate these kind of connections? #00:51:25-2#

D: No, the banks have not ceased, have not done anything for closure to the media, they keep rolling back the loans, ok! Because they need to have a good relationship. The banks are owned by either friends or the same media owners so what they are trying to do was to not allow continue lending by the bankings to those media if those media are obviously not sustainable. Because keeping an unsustainable medium so obviously means that you are only keeping it as terms of propaganda. Tackling non-sustainable funding, means that you are tackling a business men who is obviously doing it for propaganda. #00:52:24-6#

P: So it's a very positive thing... #00:52:27-3#

D: Yes, if it follows yes! #00:52:21-0#

P: So let's start to talk about positive things! #00:52:24-1#

D: Sure! #00:52:27-5#

P: About this new wave of journalistic projects, like the Press Project. Can you tell me how this project was brought to life? #00:52:44-1#

D: First of all I need to make a distinction between the Press Project and Press Project International. I understand it's a small... I will try to make it as most uncomplicated as possible... but I cannot talk on behalf of the Press Project in general, because it was created in a different time from different people. But the Press Project International I will explain. From what I know the Press Project was created in 2010, in the beginning as a news aggregator, it was basically born out of a software company, who's people had the aspiration to create something newsrelated online - so basically gathered news from other media, filtered them and it was an aggregator but then evolved into a full news portal and the Press Project International was created in cooperation with the Greek Press Project. Ok, Nikolas Leodopoulos, my partner and friend, and I. We , we were the lucky ones let's say, because Greece at the same time, and this is an aspect of the crisis, which is also interesting, aah is on the front pages day after day after day for the last five years. This was something unforeseen. When I've started working with the New York Times, we realized that the last time when they came here was in 2004 for the

Olympics and then in 2007 because there was some guerilla attack on the American Embassy and that was it and in 2008 unrest following the Alexandros Gigo...(???) murder but this continuing foreign media in Greece, was something that never happened before. There were lots of journalists, like me, that found some work with international media. Ahm... this also created the appetite because the international media, how glorious they are, they also have less hindrances, that the smaller media have. For instance, we've seen with the European media is that even though because the Internet they are global they address a global audience, they are still stirred towards their sovereign audience. German media addresses German people, even that everyone is reading. So - we saw that while working with all sort of media. I think Nikolas and I worked for every major media on the planet. It's ridiculous. It was not because we were extreme, but because how the crisis was because it was appetite for Greek news. And there were not that many of us that... because basically it's a language issue. This has to do with the whole crisis narrative as well. The people who spoke better English were the people the media found first. We saw that a lot of good reporting did not fit, did not find the space in the international pages of Greek media and we wanted to create for an international audience with the reporting which we understood it was valuable. So we wanted to create a website, that international audiences could read from Greece. #00:56:48-4#

P: So the Press Project and Press Project International has other owners or it's the same? #00:57:01-6#

D: It is a joint venture. I will try to explain... the Press Project is a Greek thing. It's for Greeks. In 2013 after years of discussing and find trying funding, Nikolas and I approached also the company that makes the Press Project, because it was a beautiful website and we talked to the owner of the software company. And we wanted them to create an English website for us. The owner of the software company was also the owner of the Press Project. So he counteroffered and we thought it was a good idea at that time, it was a good idea - that since the Press Project has a steady growing base audience, we could create an English version for it and share whatever revenue there is. Instead of starting from scratch and make something that would be called... "The Nikolas and Dimitris Project" or whatever. Ok? Then that made sense. So, the international version of the Press Project is an autonomous entity that piggy backed on the Greek website and we could freely take some stories they had in Greek and translate them. And they could - because we mostly created the original content in English, they would translate it in Greek. So basically, there were two media that aligned a lots of ways. We had the same thinking, it is a liberal medium, we share the same views, we love the fact that the Greek Press Project had unprecedentedly levels of lack of censorship. There was almost an appetite to open all fronts at the same time. To have no friends at all - it was scary and we loved that! And that created the Press Project International that tried to illuminate sides of the reporting that was falling through the cracks or did not had space basically to counter a narrative that was forming not only for reasons of perception or even corruption, because this would be a huge conspiracy theory, we would see it replicate, where even with great media and great journalists there is a mentality of ME TOO. For instance, when one medium had the idea in looking into how many orphans there are or how many kids are hungry because of the crisis, every medium of the planet would want to do the same story. That forms a trend, that forms a narrative. If the numbers are not there for the story, so it's a weaker story, the strength of the story compensates from by how many media are doing it, so it becomes a narrative, or the tax avoiders Greek, or the lazy Greeks become a trend because journalists who come here, know each other, they hear that one of the journalists did a lazy Greek story, so we want a lazy Greek story, because the others did it. There was no space for alternative stories because it is understandable, this is how we work, this is something which cannot change over night. And this is something, that on a contained way, the alternative media like the Press Project or The Press Project International aspires to compensate for. This is what we try to do. We took stories and turned them around, we myth-busted. #01:01:17-8#

P: You were saying at the beginning Greek Press Project was like a news aggregator. Is it the same right now? #01:01:29-9#

D: No, it turned into a full flat medium circa 2013 and that was also when the PPI was created. The Press Project started as an aggregator, it aspired to become a medium in its own. Journalists from all around Greece, either because they were unemployed or because they needed to feed some stories there, found a very welcome space. It created a center of gravity. For instance I remember that, Nikolas and I had sent an email to this software

company to get an offer for a website of our own in 2011 but we never got a reply, and in 2013 Nikolas had done an investigative story with Reuters on big bank scandals and the bank had sued Nikolas and Reuters for 50 Mil EUR. So, then someone from the Press Project that we didn't know contacted Nikolas and I to tell them about the trial. They were basically the only ones interested to cover how a big Greek bank turned against Reuters over a big bank scandal. And this is how we got back in touch to them... this is how we appreciated it, how they were very liberal and there were going on with the big stories. #01:03:21-5#

P: Can you tell me about the structure of the project, about the hierarchy at the Press Project and Press Project International. #01:03:27-8#

D: The Press Project... can you turn this off for a second.... #01:03:36-8#

(OFF TOPIC STORIES about the owner at The Press Project)

Efimerida ton Syntakton, Nicholas Voulelis

E-Mail Interview taken on 03.06.2015

1) Has the crisis affected the ways in which you do your job as a journalist? How?

Of course. First of all, economic and social conditions have deteriorated for all. Secondly, the daily agenda of issues has been radically transformed, as far as the work side is concerned. Economic issues now take precedence, repercussions of the crisis on society, negotiations with creditors, alternative forms of employment, even forms of leisure time to propose to our readers, assuming they are pertinent with the new conditions.

2) Describe a working day since the crisis started. How did it differ from before the crisis?

The daily work day, for those who have work, of course, is roughly the same. Most of the time, more hours are necessary for the same job, possibly more time searching for new sources, more transfers and a greater effort for one to meet the requirements of the job, and at the same time, to cover one's basic means for survival.

3) How has journalism as a profession actually changed? + DATA

Journalism has changed to a great degree.

First, in terms of human resources, we have more unemployed professionals in Greece.

Secondly work conditions have deteriorated: more works on the job, slashed salaries and benefits, delays in payments etc.

Thirdly, the situation has worsened in terms of an asphyxiating control of the journalistic product. The owners of most media groups strictly control the content of their news product and they demand, in various ways, for their material to be compatible with their political preferences, and especially, with their financial and other interests.

4) Has it affected the ways in which the news are presented? Which influence it has on the themes covered? Can you please give me some examples?

Of course. The influence that is exerted towards adapting the journalistic product to the diktats of established political, economic and media power structure and the latter's international connections. A simple but impressive example is the e-mail uncovered by our newspaper and sent by a very close associate of the governor of the Bank of Greece with recipients being certain journalists, and with the information in the e-mail for use by the latter in the columns and news stories they were writing. The e-mail was a brief propaganda text that contained certain

financial information for the past few months, written in a manner aimed to spread fear over a “pending default” of the country.

5) Could you observe any changes in freedom of expression during the crisis? *chilling effect (fear), precarity of jobs, changes, not reporting, reliance on agencies* + examples

Freedom of expression is greatly restricted. Beyond the tight control of the flow of published information, self-censorship by journalists is increasing, as the latter are afraid of losing their job. As such, the phenomenon of poorly paid journalists grows, along with the intentional reduction of sources in order to completely control the content.

6) What kind of measures has the union of the journalists undertaken for better working conditions during the crisis?

Journalist unions can make pleas, condemn or protest, but they cannot impose decisions or take measures for the improvement of work conditions. That is exclusively the domain of employers.

7) Have there been any law changes in the media recently or in the past 5 years?

The legal framework remains the same over the past few years, including the law that strictly punishes and imposes high fines on journalists convicted of libel or slander. The only change was a new law for the re-opening of the public broadcaster (ERT), which was closed two years ago by the previous government.

8) Can you please tell me more about your journalistic initiative? Funding – organization – hierarchy – selections of the themes.

Our newspaper “I Efimerida ton Syntakton” (“The Journalists Journal”) has just completed two and a half years in circulation as an independent, collectively-run newspaper, without an owner or publisher. It is published by a society anonyme which is controlled by the collective (cooperative), and its revenues are exclusively derived from its circulation and ad revenue. The paper is managed by an elected director, a managing director and a team of chief editors of various departments. It’s at meetings of the editorial team where story selections are made, where front-pages are decided and where priorities are determined.

9) How sustainable are these projects actually?

The paper is already in the top four dailies in terms of circulation on a national basis – coming in second on Saturdays –but the revenues from circulation and advertising still do not cover total expenditures.

10) What was your journalistic employment career? What is the background of your colleagues and what is the best option in your opinion to screen the best people to work for these “democratic projects”?

I have worked for many years, decades in fact, in an executive position in newspapers, radio stations, magazine and the national news agency. Our newspaper staff is, for the most part, experienced journalists with 10-20 years of experience, on average. Their selection came through a unique procedure, given that most worked in another newspaper that closed down; therefore, most of our staff were from that newspaper, who came together and voluntarily created this collective. In this sense, there wasn’t a selection process with certain criteria. For those that were hired afterwards, a strict selection process was followed, in order to fulfill certain criteria, such as competence and an outlook conducive to working in a collective.

11) Who are you reaching with your journalistic project? Who is your public?

Our newspaper appeals to a wide audience, which in political terms, extends from the liberal right all the way to the extreme left. Our readers are, on average, of a higher educational background, with roots in the working class and lower to middle strata of society. Our readership is equally divided between the capital of Athens and other large cities in the provinces.

12) New online only sites are making waves by experimenting with new ways of storytelling and engaging audiences. What are your working instruments? *data journalism, innovative, in-depth investigations that incorporate data, narrative and interactivity*

"I Efimerida ton Syntakton" has an internet presence, one that is technologically quite advanced and with a high appeal. In both the print medium and the Internet we try to exploit every type of contemporary form of journalism, without however, abandoning new-gathering's traditional and authentic expressions.

13) Reporters should be addressing society's concerns. What are your sources for your articles?

Our sources are the classic ones employed by journalists the world over, official and unofficial; nevertheless, we pay particular attention to personal accounts, historical data, primary investigation and research when covering politics, society or even the cultural field.

14) Do you think that the public has lost its trust in the media? What is the best way to regain the trust of the readers?

The public, to a great extent, has lost a large part of its trust in mass media because the latter identified with the political and economic power structure, with many media providers abrogating their role as the monitor of all forms of power. A major and radical change is necessary to win back the public; a change in the very structures of mass media and their operation. In short, journalism's core must be re-invented.

15) In your opinion, how can Greece's journalism overcome the crisis of democratic value?

In Greece things are still difficult, because mass media are closely linked with political and economic vested interests. A radical overturn of this situation is necessary, not just in terms of structure but in the attitude of people working in mass media, so that the values of freedom and democracy in the mass media sector are restored. Such a prospect is always linked with the general political developments. Until then we are trying, as an independent and pluralistic newspaper, to operate as an example for the entire sector, demonstrating that a small revolution is possible even under the worst conditions.

Prof. Emmanouil Heretakis

National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, Communications & Mass Media

Interview taken in Greece, Athens, May 2015

P: (Introduction) #00:00:05-7#

E: My name is Emmanouil Chairidakis and I am an Associate Professor in the Kapodistrian University in Athens, Greece. #00:00:19-5#

P: Can you tell me in short words about the media landscape in Greece during the crisis. What were the problems with the media outlets, what were the pressures? #00:00:40-7#

E: Well, let's start our story in 2008. That was the year when advertisement expenditures started to get down. And it went down with a big base - just to give you an example - if that page would continue even right now, then the total advertisement expenditure in Greece should be zero. I mean, it was a very big pressure in terms of advertising because the financial situation in Greece, because people lost their jobs, they could not consume, the bank did not provide any consumer loans, so the advertising expenditure started to fall down in a very terrific way, so the media, the electronic media mostly could not support themselves financially and so they started a game - the banks also, the private banks were saved because of the tax-payers by law established by the Troika,

gave money to the private banks. So in fact, there no private banks, they were socialized in a way, because they were supported by tax payer money. So those banks were the life line for Greek ...(???) TV stations, because they gave them loans and until they ... (???) this practice continued in spite of the fact that those private banks were not supposed to do so. But at the same time, after the Troika came here, we had two types of TROIKA. The Troika of the exterior and we had the TROIKA of the internal which was formed mainly by the parties of the right and the Greek oligarchs and the Greek cryptocrats. So we had two TROIKA's - the troika of the interior provided the Troika of the exterior with information about what we impose by law in Greece and of course a big part of the things which were imposed, were moves of the interior Troika in Greece. #00:04:07-2#

P: What about the print sector? #00:04:08-0#

E: The print sector - I could say that it is almost dead! #00:04:13-7#

P: Don't you see a rise during this crisis among new journalistic projects? #00:04:18-4#

E: No, circulation figures are falling down with a bigger velocity than the advertising income of TV stations. To tell you the truth, I consider that the print sector in Greece is already dead. But what you have are some - two or three mainstream newspapers, supported by money under the table from the government of the right in order to exist and propagate what the Troika wants to propagate to the Greek population and at the same time we had huge number of journalists who lost their jobs. The number should be about 5000 journalists since 2008-2009. #00:05:28-5#

P: Just in the print sector? #00:05:29-8#

E: Yes, in the print sector. At the same time, we had the formation of another kind of journalism of magazines like the ones you were saying in your email - Efemerida ton Syntakton, Unfollow etc., which were created by journalists who lost their jobs and went to help the formation of another kind of journalism, much more closer to the left. But at the same time you had the real problem which exists not only in Greece - but the transformation towards the digital means for the mass media in the world that from now on their profits will be squeezed. There is no possibility of having very big profits from the digital transition. So, profits have squeezed and the new formation of the journalism moves on with just a tiny amount of money. Almost no profit! They just exist! #00:07:35-9#

P: So they have to change something in their structure of doing this kind of journalism. #00:07:44-9#

E: At the same time we had an online journalism in which the bad habits of the print media and TV journalists were implanted in this new kind of journalism on the web. You had the replication of these, you had political sites which were just propaganda. Just to give you an example. My hobby is reading a lot about dictatorships. So - this means that I can assure you that the level of propaganda in Greece these 3-4 years was much greater than the Nazi propaganda. #00:08:51-7#

P: The Nazi propaganda didn't have the same technological possibilities. #00:08:51-7#

E: They had the radio and the press. But to give a picture - the intensity of the propaganda, the huge amount of lies - it could be compared only with Goebbels and the propaganda ministry of the Third Reich. It was a huge propaganda machine, but I can tell you about an author who wrote about his kind of constructions, in order to have people obeying your order or your dictates, you must create people full of debts. So you can control them by using counter-fear. This is usual - because for example, Naomi Klein has a lot of books on that. #00:10:28-5#

P: Naomi Klein - I've bought yesterday a book of hers on the environment! #00:10:28-5#

E: Ah - yes! It's her latest book! But I can tell you, there is an Italian, can I write here? Maurizio L (note:??? written on the interview paper from Greece) I am writing it here! This is the author, this is the title and this is the publishing house. You can find it on the web . #00:11:20-7#

P: Thank you very much! #00:11:25-0#

E: So you have to construct in the imagination of people FEAR. In order to control them in a political way. This is what is being done to Greece. Being afraid of losing your job, being afraid of this and that and in the same time, obliging the total relations except the kleptocrats of course to pay huge taxes. When I say huge taxes, just to give you two numbers. The increase for the tax raise for the rich Greeks during those 5 years compared to years before was 9%, but the increase of the tax rates of all Greeks, during those years starting with those years, 2008-2009 was 332%. So you had huge taxations - in fact you had in reality the elimination of the middle class and the total defeat of the petit bourgeois. That has happened to Greece. #00:13:12-3#

P: With the fear, which were talking about created for the people is also for a journalist a threat to the freedom of expression. #00:13:33-4#

E: Sure - the journalists became parrots. They propagated the official propaganda. Every night in the news bulletins of the mainstream TV stations, which were saved by these so called private banks, they propagated the sentiment of fear, we will be destroyed if you don't obey what your government says. So all these current was created and it resulted into a victory of Syriza. But in the same time you have the mainstream media, which even now express the propaganda of the former government. So it is lots of people have only information from TV etc. mostly TV because now they buy less and less newspapers, because they don't have money... TV is so to say called free, which is not right, of course, but it's their only source of information and when the TV is full of fear and propaganda, then you have the feeling of being threatened. This is a nice book - it shows in 150 pages how you construct this imaginary. #00:15:26-2#

P: Noam Chomsky also wrote in this direction... #00:15:30-1#

E: Yes, but he is better than Chomsky. #00:15:34-9#

P: To come back to this new kind of journalism. Ok, perhaps it is not the most profitable way in monetary terms, but ... #00:15:45-2#

E: It is written in quite an understandable Greek - which is not an easy task and it tries to present a more true picture of what is happening right now than the mainstream media, which are instruments of propaganda of the right. #00:16:10-6#

P: Do you think that this kind of journalism will succeed over the crisis? #00:16:17-5#

E: The exact thing what I was saying before - I don't think they would get money. I mean lots of people working at Efemerida ton Syntakton. They have a wage of not more than 500 EUR/month. It could be 600 EUR. #00:16:46-0#

P: What was the approximate wage for a journalist working for mainstream journalism? #00:16:40-4#

E: You had two groups. You can be a very well known journalist and get for example 30.000 per month - because he is a master of propaganda. And you have a lower section, which is paid something around 500-600 EUR/month at the best. So you have two layers - let's say the private owned mainstream Television stations - you have a personnel of 100. Of these 100, 95% are the lower based and 5%, which are very well known journalists.... #00:18:53-8#

E: But this is the nice side of the story. In fact in most companies the rulers of the companies usually forget to pay the wages they have to pay. They do not pay the wages for six months or for nine months and for one year. #00:19:27-5#

P: How do these people survive?! #00:19:27-5#

E: They survive because they are asking for money from their friends, family. This is very usual... except for the big wage cuts. I think I am lucky guy, because I had the decrease of my salary of only 50%. Which means, that an Associate Professor I receive 1800 EUR a month, but I am not a consumer type so I can survive. And I have no loans. I am against of having a loan from the bank more than 0.10 EUR. #00:20:41-4#

P: Are you aware of media law in Greece? Is there a media law in Greece? #00:21:02-1#

E: Little bit, I only know a few things about law, but I can tell you one thing. That for example the private owned TV channels started back in 1988. So there was a law to which those new channels had to follow. But the then ruling politicians made another treat. They gave a provisional OK for six months. And this is being repeated for the operation of the channel. And this is being repeated from 1988 since then. I mean, every six months, they give a six month period in which to operate and if the product is no good for politicians, then they can repeat the licence, but this has not happened because the mainstream private channels are the real voices of the Troika of both exterior and interior. This is what I was telling you, because I insist that the propaganda in Greece is much higher than Goebbels. #00:22:47-4#

E: Are you from Austria? #00:22:50-3#

P: No, from Romania. #00:22:52-3#

E: It was like Securitate! #00:22:58-6#

P: For me it was interesting to observe... (talking about Rosia Montana and then about the fresh journalistic projects which grew during the crisis - good journalistic projects, but not sustainable. Advertisement is also a source of income, but most of them, don't want to accept it, because they think it influences. #00:26:15-4#

_E: It depends what kind of advertisement are you selling. If you sell the advertisement of the former private banks, which in reality they belong to the people - this is not an ethical thing. #00:26:32-8#

P: But in the opinion of a political economist, what would be the solution for you that these kind of journalistic projects, which really do the right reporting, can get sustainable. #00:26:55-5#

E: You know, there are huge forces - not only in Greece, but all over the world - that are very intense on creating a neoliberal world. This is because the monetary system is in pieces. So the real question is, what will fall first. The Euro or the World Economy, which will be broken? Just to give you an example, the total GDP of the whole world in 2015 is 65 Trillions. But the banks of the world now, there in debts... in reality the money they have is only tiny in respect to the loans they have provided. So - they have started a new game of how to call it - long chain new banking products, like the CDS (Credit Default Swap = ein Kreditderivat, das es erlaubt, Ausfallrisiken von Krediten, Anleihen oder Schuldnamen zu handeln) etc. SO, this is the material production and the immaterial production of the products loaned by the banks is 1200 Trillion, which means that this sum is an immaterial sum, it doesn't exist. But in reality it's written on the books and the distance between reality and imagination is always increasing, also during in our times. I think that this will create a huge back all over the world, because you can read for example - do you know OXFAM? There is a study during those weeks talking about 1% and 99% for 2015. OXFAM says that the 1% of the world has for 2015 as much money as the 99%, which is a huge disparison. This has never existed before. #00:30:23-4#

P: So you are pessimistic regarding the change in the journalism. #00:30:39-9#

E: I can tell you this - I belong to the kind of conservative Marxists way of thinking but also pessimism is also inscribed in the game. It is a natural condition. When you think with these numbers, it's just natural. #00:31:13-6#

P: Talking about the trust in the system of journalism - people lost their trust in the journalists. There are studies which say that journalism in Greece has one of lowest trust level among the people. #00:31:30-7#

E: Even the internet is falling down in terms of truthfulness. Everything in Greece is falling down - TV, newspapers, magazines... of course, but we have mainly lifestyle magazines for young people to feel better. We have no political magazines. #00:32:01-9#

P: How do you think that Greece' journalism can overcome the crisis of democratic value? #00:32:08-9#

E: Yes, I think it can, but in the meantime there are problems everywhere - even in the parties of right. And at the same time at the Syriza party. There are hierarchies so you have different sorts of people. And some people are very keen on becoming (???). Some people like having their every-day reality, but all these tensions across the whole Greek society. Even Tsipras - he is a magnificent young man, I trust young people - because I think that what we need in Greece is the ability to think for ourselves, not copy-pasting TV. So, you have different sorts of people with different realities for themselves. A number of them are influenced by advertisement and lifestyle. They imagine that their actual position should be higher. But at the same time they lack of position to so. I am not sure, Tsipras, is like a magician, he is trying to solidify the party, but I know that people who are very keen on grabbing governmental positions. As for me, I have other options - I like talking with people, I like sleeping a lot, reading a lot - I have no dreams of achieving high positions, which I could actually do in advertising, but when I was in advertising, in my 10th year, I was trying already to find a way out. #00:35:04-7#

P: Didn't it any longer resonate with your own beliefs? #00:35:01-9#

E: Yes - because, you know! Having a car means nothing to me, but I like to have friends with car. And I am proud of them. But having a car for myself, doesn't mean anything. #00:35:30-0#

P: May I ask you what kind of newspapers you are reading? #00:35:30-0#

E: Efemerida ton Syntakton! And I have a reason for that! Because a number of my ex students are working for that. So in a way, I read it to support my students, and I know for at least 30 years the director of the newspaper and because of Voulelis, who is also a very fine guy and he also taught at the university of Athens. It is funny, because I am a newspaper man, for the last 40 years of my life I am reading lots of newspapers and the books I write are full of quotations of this papers, because I think this is a good way of representing a part of the other. But, I have past through quite a number of newspapers, mostly center left. But those center-left newspaper of the past have become the mouth pieces of the TROIKA so I have to have some distance. #00:36:57-9#

P: I will meet tomorrow Dimitris Trimis from The Press Project International. #00:37:04-8#

E: Oh yeaah! Dimitris Trimis is a very fine guy! #00:37:14-8#

P: I met him yesterday and tomorrow I will also have an interview with him. #00:37:22-9#

E: He is writing for Efemerida, yes! He was the former president of the union of journalists, so he knows the story from the inside. #00:37:43-0#

P: Yes, I really hope that this kind of journalism finds its way, because this is actually the way it should be. #00:37:49-8#

E: You know, I love magazine like the American "The Nation" or websites, the UK "Red Pepper" and usually watch ERT, because until some months I was watching BBC, Deutsche Welle the Greek edition but there were so full of propaganda... I think my time is a very high asset to waste my time on these idiots. #00:38:46-3#

P: By the way - the closure of the ERT - how did it affected the Greek journalism? #00:39:03-2#

E: At the same time - 2500 working in the ERT lost their jobs and the private channels, thought that it was a very nice movement of the government of Samaras because it provided them to form a constellation of private channels towards the movement through the digital age - which became this DIGEA movement, which became a monopoly. Because before the closure of ERT, the transition to the digital should be realised by ERT and by the private channels. But when you close ERT, that DIGEA becomes a monopoly? #00:40:08-5#

P: And what is your opinion now on reopening the ERT? #00:40:12-4#

E: Yes, my opinion is that it is a good provider, that will have nothing to do with government interference... it was also a government mouth piece, but it tried to have a quite of balance, which did not exist in the private TV. IF the ERT has the same kind of saying things out of an open governmental intervention. I would not like a government mouth piece. #00:41:07-1#

P: This is their challenge now! #00:41:12-8#

E: Yes! In fact ERT is a big organisation and it was a state controlled channel. But at the very first day it closed down, but then in reality ERT became a PUBLIC station. The funny thing is that I was writing this big book of Greece' media 2000-2010, I was writing a chapter about the push towards privatization of ERT. I was writing it for twenty days and when I finish writing it - this was in June two years ago... I have learned that ERT closed down and it was terrific! Because, I knew these effects of the closure. Because the real thing - just to give you two pictures in terms of advertisement. The ERT, during I was working in advertising, had a very nice profile of its audience. The audience were people of middle income, but a good part of them had a high education. But there was only one problem - vs the private channels. The private channels, could decrease the advertising at one stroke, even at 95%. They could decrease some time... This ERT could never make. Because it was controlled by the state financial services and it had to follow a policy. ERT was not antagonistic, so it was not preferred, in spite of the fact that the audience of ERT had a better power. Can you understand it? It's a funny thing but it's true. #00:44:40-7#

E: I like collecting a lot of stuff - I am a man of archives. And those books I was telling you about have a very good part of my archive, which I had to give away, because I have a two room apartment in Athens and I have not space and to have more space I have to get rid of book archives. What I have there it is public history of Greece from 1960 until 2010. These are 50 years. So I am getting older and I get now rid of these things *laughs*. I will write other books. #00:46:05-9#

P: Thank you very much!
_ #00:46:12-3#

_E: Try to find the articles, you could use them! It's something around 4000 pages! #00:46:25-0#

P: Wow! Thank you!

Interviews from Romania

Romania Curata, Mihai Gotiu

Skype Interview in June 2015

(Introduction part - Presenting my project - Reminding him about my participation in the Rosia Montana Movement in September in Vienna and my personal motivation for selecting this theme) #00:04:32-3#

P: Can you please tell me about the situation of the Romanian journalism? In general, but also in particular during the crisis. I am also very interested what your opinion is on how has journalism as a profession actually changed? #00:04:55-4#

M: Ok, now the situation of the press in Romania wasn't either good before the crisis. So here is a whole story, which also has to do with the fact that Romania has a very young and imature press. In 1990 it actually started almost from the ground. The press didn't have the time to professionalize itself. There have been a lot of changes, it had to appear new people, the new people, which appeared were mostly after having some experience - let's say 7-10 years - many quit the press - it didn't get to professionalize itself, although there were projects, which used to run well - in 2008... well the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009 destroyed what could have functioned. The most affected projects were the ones which based on the classical and honest scheme. You make audience rating and you sell advertisement based on the rating and without any interventions and with a very clear delimitation of the editorial and communication departments. (...) Anyway, also in this scheme there were problems, because to an extent the editorial material was still influenced by advertisement. A project of this type was specially targeted to the commercial audience. And then the way of approaching the articles and the themes targeted especially just one category of a society - and mainly the category, which had a good material situation, which were also easily influenced by advertisement. It was either way a certain amount of balance. You could write without having any restrictions, themes which were not so commercial and you had let's say half of the content of a paper commercial themes and half of the content which could be investigations, social problems and so on. #00:08:02-6#

M: Ahm... when the crisis came and the advertisement funds were cut, of course that the first projects which stopped, were these projects which functioned quite honest, because, there was no more money for the advertisement, and the projects which remained were financed with other purposes than the journalistic product itself. Because out of political reasons, out of reasons to support some economical interest groups, so the head of the papers assumed the losses which they actually had, because they were compensating them, through the collateral winnings. If they could influence for instance a law, out of which, they could have developed a business, out of which they could have profits of 10-20 or 50 mil. Euros, they could afford to lose some million Euros in the media institution, which had it's contribution to the influence the law makers. #00:09:18-8#

P: Was it the same with Rosia Montana? #00:09:18-8#

M: Well, no, Rosia Montana is actually a case before the crisis hit Romania. Rosia Montana was around 2006-2007 a blocked subject in the most of Romanian mainstream press. This were also the conditions of advertisement, which I was talking before about. And in many editorial rooms, it functioned, well... I actually calculated - between 2008 and 2012, based on the activity reports of Gabriel Ressources (n.a.: Gabriel Ressources, the mining company) which were made for the "BURSA" from Toronto and the amount of money which they spent for "external communication", which is actually the advertisement, were at about 60 Mil \$, which they spent during 5 years (2008-2012) in external communication. In the report they don't say exactly where, but either way, next to this there were also spendings for lawyers, like lobbying for instance. For Romania this amount of money was enourmous. These reports appeared somewhere in 2010 or 2011 and then RMGC appeared on the third place in the top of the companies which spent the most for advertisement purposes in Romania. On the first two places, were mobile companies (Orange and Vodafone), then RMGC, then... this was just in the written

advertisement... and then appeared retailers, banks, car dealers and so on, which are usually in the top of the companies, which do advertisement. All these were topped by RMGC and the mobile companies. The difference is that RMGC wasn't actually selling anything, so they couldn't get their money back through selling something. Each company, which sells a product or a service, gets the money back. Their only scope was to create a public acceptability of the project. Well, this money had a lot of directions. On one side there was the typical advertisement - TV spots, which appeared hallucinatingly often and which were also declared by the CNA (The National Audio-Visual Council) and even by the Ethical Council of the Advertisement Companies from Romania as "lying" advertisements. This situation that the Ethical Council of the Advertisement Companies would declare an advertisement as being lying is very seldom, because they use to protect themselves, it's like a self-regulating mechanism. They normally protect each other... On the first side was the massive advertisement. Next, they also tried to block the critical articles, what they mostly managed and in the third place they managed to buy favorable opinions of the journalists. First it was general and then they started to go directly to the journalists: the famous paid visits for informing about other projects of RMGC to New Zealand, in which the cost of a trip for one person was about 10.000 Eur. This isn't any informing visit anymore, of course. It was also a journalist, Ioan Temorariu, which went to this trip and wrote on his blog, that he is going on vacation. It was really clear that it was a vacation and not an informing visit. Rares Bogdan was writing on his blog, that he takes his golf shoes, because he wanted to play golf in New Zealand. It was clear that it wasn't an informing visit, but a visit, from which they come back and they write "Wow, the project they do is so cool, look, how it can be done." Very illustrative for the trip to New Zealand, well it wasn't just New Zealand, it was also the Nordic countries and in Spain and so on, but the one from New Zealand is very illustrative, because a month before their visit, exactly because of the project, which they were sent to see in Waikato, there were protests in the street and the government took the decision not to approve any other mining projects, which were at about 60 Billion \$ and this happened like one month before, also the protests and also the decision not to accept this project. Well, they came to Romania with information like "Wow, what a cool project are in New Zealand!" in the same time, while New Zealand actually refused to do any similar mining projects. Obviously, they didn't write anything about this. This information was on the website of the Waikato mine. It was a study made by the Queensland University from Australia about the social impact of the mine, which would have been a disaster. Well if you used the place to compare with Romania it didn't have such a bad manage, but if you would compare Waikato with another place in the neighbourhood, all indicators were much more worse. From the tendency to leave the place, the sanity state, the higher level of crimes, smaller incomes than in the neighbourhood. The journalists didn't see these details in their informing visit (ironical) they saw just how they play golf in New Zealand. Well, the "external communication" money was actually used for these kind of things. Before 2013 and also before the crisis, the first massive campaigns started in 2006-2007. Actually then was their project given in to the Ministry of Environment and the public debates started. And since then, they started to buy the press so that they block critical articles. By the beginning of 2000 there were quite a few critical articles - especially about the first shareholder and the funding parents of the business Tender, Timis... there were articles during 2003-2004, but after 2006-2007 lesser and lesser to almost none. 2010 there were - I was calculating by then - a few journalists and some media institutions, which were publishing on this topic. It was Formula AS - they had the advantage that it is one of the few projects in Romania which, doesn't base exclusively on advertisement, but by the sales paper by paper. They don't depend on the commercial public, not even on the advertisement funds. #00:18:20-6#

P: Formula AS, really?! #00:18:21-3#

M: Yeah, they have a non-commercial classic audience. You will see there recipes for medicines, alternative medicine, but they have the big advantage, that they come to a non-commercial audience and live out of the sales. Now it's a disadvantage, because the emission problems kills them too. But then, they constantly written critical about the case. There were also Kamikaze, which detached from the Academia Catavencu and which one of the motives was the case of Rosia Montana. In Academia Catavencu they started to block critical articles on the project. This blocking was justified by the agenda of several NGOs paid by I don't know whom and which make profits from the actions they do. That is when journalists from Academia Catavencu started Kamikaze, which continued to write. #00:19:48-9#

M: 2010 for a short period of time the journalists from Adevarul received green light to write on this critical subject, but this was a thing related to the owner. The owner, Dinu Patriciu, was at war with the ones who had the business with Rosia Montana and then automatically - well, it wasn't an appointed theme to write on, but the people working there had the possibility to act and to do their job right because the owner was at war with the people around the business of RMGC. Dinu Patriciu was betrayed in business by Tender by the mid of 2000 and then he decided not to take any advertisement from RMGC and our journalists can write what they wanted on this theme. #00:20:58-1#

M: So these were the places where the topic was discussed... ok, there were also some journalists which wrote independently. Three to five media institutions and some 4-5 independent journalists related to hundreds of media institutions (TV, print, online and thousands of journalists). This was the proportion in 2010 when it was the most critical time - 2010 and 2011. #00:21:33-1#

P: How would you differentiate the crisis in journalism in Romania? You were talking about the Rosia Montana crisis. But how did the economical crisis have repercussions on the journalism itself? #00:22:01-3#

M: Of course, the beginning of 2008 was the last year, when journalism functioned. In Romania there was a trend on the campaigning newspapers, which appeared a year before the major electoral campaigns. They disappeared afterwards. Then the market was distracted... it was also in a good sense, because these campaign papers were paying their journalists far more better and this put pressure on the other more honest media institutions, to raise the salaries. If I would have paid for an experienced investigation journalist 1700-1800 Lei, the campaigning newspapers would offer him 3000-4000 Lei. These high salaries were explicable, because they knew that these papers were time limited. But, this of course put pressure on the other journalists, that they also should have higher salaries to compensate what happened on the market. Since 2009 it was really hard in this domain. As I said, the first papers which disappeared were the ones which based on the scheme advertisement sold on audience. I don't even know anymore, but in 2010 the statistics said that around 5000 lost their job in the first year of crisis. Afterwards, I refused to follow... it was a total disaster. There were really few new media institutions. The most of them radically reduced the editorial departments. Think about it, until 2008 at a local newspaper weekly and online, I had two to three editors at the cultural department. Local newspaper with two to three editors at the cultural department! Now, a national newspaper, has one editor which has to cover two to three departments - from culture, to investigation to politics, social. #00:25:26-5#

P: The quality lowers, of course... #00:25:26-5#

G: Exactly! And the most affected was the investigation journalism where you need a lot of resources. An investigation journalist works one month, a few weeks for a subject. You need money for travel expenses, you have to pay him a whole salary, that he produces one to two articles a month, which in online is within a few hours consumed away. It is taken over, it is multiplied and other sell then advertisement on the reads of these articles, so that practically, everything what that person worked and you as a editorial house paid one month, it gets consumed away in a few hours... So this type of journalism was the most affected. #00:26:33-2#

G: What appeared new, was the project based journalism. Which practically, the whole funding from the salaries to the other expenses of the project... for an editing house, the salary costs are at about 20-30%, the other expensed are the ones for the rent, transport, travelling, telephones and so on. And the products are distributed so to say free... the beneficiary doesn't pay for the content, because the content is paid out from the project funding. But this way is also difficult... #00:27:37-7#

P: What do you mean by projects? Like funds from different institutions? #00:27:43-2#

G: With several funds.... There are many funds, which are not in Romania and there are journalists which apply for grants and projects - but these are projects which are funded by foundations, by the Norwegian fund, several organizations which function in other Western countries and Romanian journalists applied for this funds. I've also applied for the Milena Jesenská grant for three months. So there are two types of grants: 1. The ones which

support a media project in which a particular part of materials appear or 2. Individual projects, where journalists can apply and their products appear then in several media institutions. Last year I applied for instance for a project which dealt with environment problems and had the topic of forests. My problem was that I didn't have where to publish outside Romania and I figured out in the last moment that one condition was to publish the articles outside Romanias. But what I wanted to say was that it was a grant of 15 000 \$ for six months - there were also the money of the journalist but also the effective costs of the documenting. So on one side it's this type of funding and on the other side it's what projects like Rise Project or what we do now at Romania Curata. These are projects, which do journalism and you have at the end a product, which looks alike to a editorial department, or there are combined projects: On Romania Curata we offer space for other people, which can publish the results of their own projects. Or to this extent, the journalists from Casa Jurnalistului do the same thing. If they get a grant or a project, they publish there. Practically, it's a website, which aggregates more ...it get's some several funds on the project itself or on subjects, which journalists work on. #00:32:08-9#

P: I understand - we will talk about funding also a little bit later... Can you tell me about the freedom of the press in Romania? I followed a time being the report from Active Watch and there are extremely many cases where I still think that there is still no good functioning of the freedom of expression regarding journalism. Did you experienced during the crisis changes among the freedom of expression? When I talk about crisis, I don't mean necessarily the issue about Rosia Montana, but in general the financial crisis which also affected in some ways the system of the journalism. #00:33:01-2#

M: Well, I wouldn't say that in Romania there is no freedom of expression or of the press. There is a lot of pressure, which could stop it. I would start it from this concept. Just how much I wrote on the Rosia Montana, but also about other sensible issue - so if I my location were somewhere more Eastern, probably we wouldn't have this discussion here online about the Romanian press - haha! There are a lot of pressures, but the most from the exterior of the press and the problem is that there are editorial chiefs or editorial coordinators, which conform to these pressures. Another problem is also that the journalists in the given economic situations, although they have been doing this also before 2008, they conformed these type of pressures. Here it's a combined thing between a lack of maturity and a critical mass of journalists, which impose some rules and the external pressures. Freedom of the press does exist in Romania, but the pressures on the freedom of expression intensified during the crisis. So this would be the main idea. #00:34:36-0#

P: You were saying that there is a lack of maturity of the journalists. What about unions? Are there strong unions in Romania? #00:34:50-8#

M: 2006-2007 it has been worked a lot for a self-regulation of the journalism in Romania... until 2008 the most journalistic and press associations from Romania in the conventions of the media organisations did a statute of the journalism, like a deontological code and in the same time it has been tried to introduce a certificate of good practice in the press. Which would have mean that every media institution of every independent journalist could have attained such a certificate of good practice based on keeping the conditions of the deontological code of good practice. And this was somehow like an etiquette, which every media institution could have received. Like an ISO Certificate, this was a certificate of good practice, which attentions the audience "Look, the professional organizations in the media certificate that we follow the journalistic rules." Which you could also lose very easily if you violated the code. #00:36:24-1#

M: Unfortunately, this was really affected by the crisis, because it started in 2008-2009, after like two years of elaboration discussions. They tried the implementation of this project. The problem was that when the crisis came, the majority which fought for this implementation, remained without any jobs, many left the press. The negotiation position between the professional organizations, journalists and owners disbalanced a lot. Until 2008-2009 it still existed a negotiation balance. After 2009 it changed a lot - the force disproportion was huge and the project unfortunately died. If the crisis wouldn't have come, probably they would have done it, and now we would have had some media institutions which could have received this certificate of good practices. #00:37:57-5#

P: Ok, so this wasn't implemented? #00:38:03-5#

M: No, but here the principle cause in my opinion was the crisis. And of course the professional organizations weakened a lot. I think that the Association of the Press Professionals from Cluj, which had in the mid of 2000 about 200 members, has now about 30-40 active members. Other are just in the documents, because nobody removed the names, because one is to talk in the name of 150-200 journalists from Cluj and it's another story to talk in the name of 30-40 journalists and also these 30-40 which remained from the ones which conform the given situations... #00:39:11-3#

P: What are you doing actually in these kind of associations? #00:39:13-7#

M: Well, I could say what it has been done, not what they are doing now... We used to interfere into the relations between the press and political factor and ownership. We were taking positions when there were conflictual situations, we tried to defend the journalists from the association but also other journalists which were not in the association and invoke our help. 2009 I recall was the last action which demonstrated that had force - when the President of the Local Council wanted to buy the local press during the crisis and to offer 250.000 EUR the local press under the pretext that it helps the press during the crisis, but actually it tried to buy the local press. And then, I know, from the press we were the ones from Clujeanul, which opposed and the Association of the Press Professionals. I was also in the board of the Association. We had the power to stop using some public money on the purchase of the press by a politician. But afterwards... many people from the Association were lost. Now - the ones which remained, tried to apply for projects similar to those I was talking about, meaning to be part of different projects, but unfortunately it didn't ran that well. The partnership which was made, was made also with politicians... plus the strange situation in the autumn of 2013 when the Association asked the security to intervene against the journalists which put annoying questions during conferences. There was a case with a colleague from Cluj, Oana Moisil... #00:42:48-1#

M: It's no secret that Romania is infiltrated with journalists on the payroll of the public services.. but until 2009 they were the minority. 2013 they were the majority. As I've said before... the most affected were the honest journalists. These were the first journalists which were fired, because the media institutions, which are now on the market, are the ones which make different games, and then journalists also have to conform. So that of course, the active ones are ... the force raport changed - if from 150 there were like 20-30 of this kind... now there are 20-30 out of 40... so this is the raport. It's an estimative number. #00:43:57-0#

P: How about the media law in ROmania? Were there any law changes in the last 5 years? #00:44:08-4#

M: Not really and there are people who say, there has to be a media law and some which say it doesn't have to be one. Why? The reason of the ones who say they want a press law, is because they are trying to limit the abuses. I am one of those who say that we do not need any law change and I am saying this, because there have been existed more media law drafts, which were made also against the journalists and advantaged the owners and the interests of the owners. As long we do not have a Parliament which there can be honest discussions regarding a media law and argumented and not on the base of interest, it is better that we do not have any! An example for the famous "Ghise" law project, proposed by a Brasov Parliamentarian, Ghise, in which were accused press campaigns... this can limitate a lot - it sounds well, in the context, where you can see a person, politician, star, which image is ruined in a press campaign - to say, yeah! it's ok, to be such a reglementation, so that you stop press campaign. But at the same time, it shows us that the press campaigns are to be made actually at the most honest way. If I do now a press campaign - let's say on the law of the financing of political parties or on the Microsoft issue - these are press campaigns. The owner can easily act - he has an extra weapon in front of the journalists, he can intervene and say - "Stop this campaign! You are against the law!" Theoretically it's not bad.... but the practice can be dangerous - it goes against the journalists and gives more force to the owners. (...) #00:47:17-5#

M: What else changed negatively - modification of the civil code regarding the responsibility of the journalists and of the media institutions... which permits the judges to easily judge journalists which wrote things about people which image was affected. This stuff is extremely relative and subjective... image of a politicians or stars

or of a doctor... it was a severe case, because it also was sentenced...it's affected by what appears in the press... but what does appear in the press it's most of time - ok, now we talk about the honest press - it's the truth. Or, how it was with the case from Cluj with the doctor, where a journalist wrote that there is a person, which accused the doctor that after an operation the person lost its sight, the college of the doctors didn't take a decision regarding this case after six months... that patient requested huge damage costs and the journalist reported very honest and correct on this case with public interest. The patient went for an esthetic surgery without knowing what risks he is exposing to, the medical college didn't give any.... let's say that perhaps the doctor was right, but that doesn't mean... being right in the meaning that it wasn't so serious how the patient actually claimed. But this cannot stop you write on this topic, because you cannot wait some years, until someone gives a verdict in a case and then it's very easy.... look, this is an illustrative case, because it doesn't have any political or economical interest behind it, where one can say that the image is affected. And you if you are not a prosecutor to bring the evidence, than around 90% of the investigation topics could not be written on, because the image of the involved could be affected. Although, practically, it's not affected by what the journalist is writing, but about what the journalist is writing, is what affects the image. And here is a lot of space of interpretation and to ruin you as a journalist. The journalist had to pay 5000 Eur moral damage and about 1000EUR on judicial costs. For one article, which from the journalistic point of view, could be taught at the Faculty of Journalism....with citing the sources, with documenting and waiting for the answers of the people... and the journalist remained without a job... the executors went even to his parents to execute their pensions and so on...they transformed him in a social case, although he was one of the last investigation journalists from Cluj. To this can come when talking about law changes. #00:51:16-6#

P: In Austria at the Faculty we had a case in a lecture on media law and it was about the presumption of innocence - that you as a journalist are now allowed to attack a person which is judged until it has been proved that the condemned is guilty. #00:51:34-3#

M: But here is nothing about penal law, but civil law. And the journalist doesn't accuse the doctor, he just presents some facts. Well, there is a patient which presents some documents, these are facts. The medical college didn't take any decision, although normally this should have been done in the first 30 days. After six months they didn't comment on this issue. Just after the topic appeared in the newspaper, the medical college took a decision. These are some accusations, which were not made by the paper, but by a person. As a journalist you have to do... it's after the deontological code, you have to give voice to all parts involved, to make it balanced, which the journalist did. But when there is an accusation - with threatening the journalist with court hearing - at some moment on FB the story with Udrea (note: Elena Udrea - case of Microsoft), where also a advertising company is involved, the boss of another advertising company publishes on FB a message - "At least they come the other advertising company, they are also investigated" - a message which was taken by the press. The ones from this agency threatend the person, which posted this message and this guy took back its message. Then the agency sent a message to this journalist to also take back its article from the website, while he didn't do anything else then tell a fact. The concurrent company posted this message on FB, the journalist wrote about this fact - so judge with the source, not with the journalist which wrote about a real fact. FB is a public space. But exactly on this new change in the civil law, this journalist also risks a trial because he refused to delete his article on this real fact. #00:54:26-7#

P: Where can I find this new law change? #00:54:40-1#

M: I have to search for it... but remind me to ask for it! #00:54:48-6#

P: Do you still have time? I still have questions for you, but we can also continue the talk someother time. #00:54:53-4#

M: It's no problem! #00:55:01-0#

P: I want you to tell me about "Romania Curata". In which category you would embed this project? Is it journalism? What kind of journalism is it? #00:55:11-1#

M: Well, practically, Romania Curata is not a media institution. It's a project of the Academical Society of Romania - SART - on Norwegian funds. The financing can be tracked on the website. It's scope is to encourage people to involve in a better governing, in following the public money, in the way they are spent, the organization of public debates when there are decision taken in a community or at national level and also the way the civil society of Romania actions and the encouraging of the civil society of Romania to action, the creation of a network of civil groups which action in Romania. This would be the project in a few words. Romania Curata is practically the journalistic interface of the project. The way in which we present what the volunteers are doing, the civil groups, the monitoring of the legislative process, requests are sent on the base of the law 544 - the free acces to information - which topics are presented in a journalistic matter. Investigation subjects which have to do with the spending of public money or with the actions of civil society. Actually what you see on Romania Curata and what seems to be a media institution is just the interface of a NGO project. I was saying before that there are two types of financing, which appeared new on the market - some which are on subjects... there are also collateral, which transform in press subjects or on journalistic projects. Practically this is it. It's a 2 years project, the first year has already passed. It went really well and we have of course the wish to continue it. And this means to continue it also after April 2016. This means either trying to find funding sources on this type of projects, or in other projects, which are made by the Academical Society from Romania or in partnership with other NGO's and Foundations, where positions of journalists can be designed, which reflect the particular project and to write on the themes of the particular project. Now for example we apply with the coalition Natura 2000 for a project, where this coalition does everything it has to do with their domain but in the same time in the project there is also a journalist, which attribute is to relate in a journalistic way on the problems dealing with the topics of this organization. The journalist has the freedom to select its subjects and the platform Romania Curata had than the right to undertake these journalistic products. On one hand it reflects the activity of the coalition and on the other hand it's the journalistic product for the website. And this is another possibility to continue with the other projects from other domains. #00:59:24-1#

P: What you are actually doing is actually either way what a good journalistic investigation product has to be, or? This is also its scope. #00:59:38-6#

M: Romania Curata is actually mainly journalistic production. There is also an aggregation of press releases about the actions of several NGOs, which also at an informative level, are also journalism, but at a minimal level and on the other hand it's investigation, editorial opinion, which are specific to the journalist, of course. #01:00:13-2#

P: What are your working instruments? What are the innovations in your project? #01:00:33-5#

M: From the point of view of the new instruments, we didn't bring any innovations. We don't do anything new. I wanted to say that at the beginning you were saying about what changed in the journalism during the crisis. Nothing happened from the point of view of the journalist - of the work of documenting and investigation, of analysis. It's the same thing. New instruments appeared, but this doesn't have to do with the crisis, but with the technological development: more video, more images, addapting at the mobile telephony, but these are technical stuff, not stuff which have to do with the essence of journalism. What is new was the orientation of the civil societies activity. Here was an ache of mine, because I was always saying the colleagues from the press - "We have an active civil society, which isn't really developed, but still it's not perceived at its real value - because the mainstream press doesn't write about it. The arguments, which honest journalists brought, were that these kind of subjects don't sell. As in why would it be of national interest why people fight in Bucharest to save 5 trees from a green place, or why it is of national interest that in Arad or Iasi to build a parking lot under a park. These are some examples.. well these are subjects of interest because they are examples of an action way of civil implication or because these are problems which make a precedent. And I was right in the end. I participated starting from July in this project, although the project started in April - I was also collaborating - but starting from July I undertook the website and the coordination and orientating on this civic activity... from 7000 unique readers a week, it came to a maximum in the electoral period to 154.000 per day. It was the electoral campaign, it were the last days . It was obvious that the number... the deal with the funding was that the project had to get to 2 Mil

unique users. And at an average of... per week it was at about 30.000 unique user... the problem was how we get to these 2 Millions unique... and to those 2 Mil it's not hard to get, because in my opinion, there are at least this number of Romanian talking people interested in these kind of subjects. But we have to get to them... it's not 2Mil at a time, but cummulated and on different themes and so on. Already, in 9 months we got to these 2 Million people... we already passed this milestone, so everything what will be after this first year, it's already a bonus. #01:04:46-5#

M: And this is the best part, which make me really happy - is the fact that also at least partially other media institutions started to use us as sources. I was seeing it, it wasn't cited the whole time, but this is their problem, but it makes me happy that this had a snowball effect. I saw last autumn, that there were sources, people with whom I was talking in the Diaspora, and then I saw they were taken of other media institutions. You can imagine, that the probability was really low that when I had 3-4 people, which I talked to in Paris, London and I was seeing the same sources quoted, of course that they were searching after these names at Romania Curata, because else they could have find out of hundreds Romanians abroad enough other sources. #01:05:57-2#

P: Do you feel that you managed to be a model for the Romanian press? #01:05:57-2#

M: Not a model... but a source, which could inspire them also to other subjects. I've also seen the stories with the parks, which transformed into a coalition of the parks in Romania and the investigation subjects, which are taken and presented by other media institutions. Among the press there was also a competing regarding subjects. If a subject is good and it's being understood by a smart editorial chief, that it's a subject which matters and is of interest - you don't have the restraint anymore that on this subject also others wrote, but you have the motivation that common let's also write on this and let's do it better and bring new elements, which is the normal reaction in the press... and the fact that this happens from time to time it has a good influence. The topic on Certej (note: mining project) ...imagine what happened to Rosia Montana... let's not deceive ourselves... the most part of the mainstream press ignores it, but still I saw media institutions from mainstream which write on this topic and present and develop it. It has been made a breakthrough because journalists understand that if there is a petition on a topic where there are about 10-13.000 signatures, the subject gets really important and you cannot ignore this kind of subjects. This is a change which takes place... and also is Romania Curata stops after one year and these themes impose in the society and other media institutions take them, the project succeeded! After all this is the scope of the project - not to make a press institution, but to give visibility and to impose some themes which are on the agenda of the civil society but aren't reflected on the mainstream media or even political agenda. #01:08:22-8#

P: Are the people working on this project employed or do you write on voluntary basis? How is the project organized? #01:08:31-2#

M: Well, no - employees. I am employed because I have to coordinate the project - the administrative, buerocratic work, which is different than the journalistic part... we have also employees in the administrative department. The most of the materials comes from volunteers. We also have collaborateurs as journalists, which have like a pay on article, which take topics, develop them, give them a journalistic form. But there are not employed for the project. They work in other projects, as I've said before, in which they reflect the ideas of the project in a journalistic form, or they are collaborateurs from several cities of Romania, which develop topics of the agenda of the civil society. #01:09:42-6#

P: So the collaborateurs, are not necessary journalists, are they? #01:09:44-4#

M: The ones which transform and give a journalistic interface are of course journalists. They respect the journalistic rules. There are seldom cases when we get materials or information, which we publish they way we get them. Let's say that in the case of opinions it's more easy, it's an opinion, the person assumes responsibility for the article and then it's more easier to respect some rules. And for the others, the articles have to get through a journalistic filter. #01:10:38-4#

P: Which are your main sources for an investigation article? #01:10:40-5#

M: All classical sources of a journalists (laughs) - what should I say? The citizen from the place x, which is mad that the mayor took a decision without consulting the community. A biologist from Cluj, which found out that some people want to build a hydroelectric plant in one of the oldest virgin valleys from Romania and so on. #01:11:33-0#

P: Direct source... #01:11:37-3#

M: And of course the sources of each investigation journalist - when it's about public institutions. Collaborators, which we have, now we have to see - a week ago we talked about new collaborations with some investigation journalists - perhaps there will be new sources, new approaches. #01:12:07-1#

P: How easy is it to find documents at the public institutions? Is there enough transparency or is it a hard way to get to the truth? #01:12:07-9#

M: It depends from institution to institution... "Periodigma" (???) it's a project made by SART (The Romania Academical Society), which analyzes the degree of transparency of public institutions, from which I have also published on Romania Curata starting from acquisition contracts, contracts of the public budgets and so on... there is also an article, how transparent are the county councillor, the townhalls and so on. And there are cases where the authorities understand and made their information public before one would ask for them. There are also cases in which you have to sue them to receive information. Starting from the townhall until the Finance Ministry, where we wait for 30 days to sue them, to get the impact study on the change of the fiscal code - this is now a general theme. They have a new fiscal code and theoretically there has to be an impact study, which they say that it is not public... but we know that it has to be public! ***Certej story*** #01:14:28-8#

_P + M: Certej stories / El Dorado Gold/Johannis/Holzindustrie Schweighofer - off the record 01:18 #01:24:53-5#

P: Going back to our questions - who is reading Romania Curata?

_M: We don't have any clear demographical studies, but I can tell you according on the topics, that it is an audience, which is interested of the civic implication. This estimation also comes because I am also looking on what FB groups our articles are posted - the groups which fights for the parks, the public which is interested of a city for people, which means more bicycle roads, less cars and then I can see what kind of people are these, which are people between 20-45 years old with education higher than the average and also in liberal domains like architecture, urbanism, environment, the way in which corporations influence the political decisions... a lot of readers from diaspora (data from google analytics, data.ro) - somewhere between 25-30% are from the diaspora and also with peaks - during the period of elections, there were somewhere around 40-45% from the diaspora. #01:28:04-5#

P: It's interesting what you are say, because after the elections it was clear that the new President was chosen actually by the diaspora. #01:28:21-1#

M: Yeah! After the elections, there were many discussions about who got the right to say that we made the difference regarding the votes. I could show clear dates - look who made the difference - the people which signed that letter in the diaspora, a letter which I've wrote already last year - not the whole diaspora assumes this letter, but there are groups, which were active last year and made the difference. In 2009 in the second Presidential voting tour, there were about 90.000 in the diaspora. And in 2014 - about 160.000 votants. And some other tens of thousands which didn't managed to vote, because the queue was too long. So these people came from these active zone starting from 2013-2014 in the diaspora. From there came the plus which ruined the plans of the counter political candidate. (...) I was actually already saying and writing during the whole last year, that the diaspora will count a lot at the presidential elections. I presented them the data... Our competition like "Contributors" or "Dilema Veche" ...this type of educated people, which is capable, either if it looks little, but because it's active, it produces changes in the society or influences the dominant cultural discourse. Last year in

November, we showed them clearly, we fought in audience with generalist newspapers - we were over Hot News, B1TV, over EVZ. Practically we had on a niche, more readers than the generalists online mediums had. #01:31:53-9#

P: What about the Romanian audience and trust in media. I really have the feeling that Romanian people started to distrust more and more the Romanian main stream journalism, because it is clearly, that behind the most newspapers/TV is a controverse boss. So - I think that the people started to value more the information which projects like yours deliver. #01:32:18-4#

M: It's just about a type of audience. The biggest changes came during the autumn of 2013, when I also have statistical data, that it's the first time, when on a particular topic, the audience on topics in online beaten the audience in TVs - the subject of Rosia Montana. It's a google indicator - if you search it with two words, it gives you the impact on what it has been written. And I was comparing that in September 2013, Rosia Montana had impact 100. 100 is the maximum impact, which a topic can achieve. Even if it's more than 100, it still remains in numbers at 100. I took than Victor Ponta and Traian Basescu in their electoral campaigns. They had maximum during the campaign months impact about 30-45 points. But none achieved at least 50 points impact. In September 2013 it was somewhere at 7-8 points the President and Prime Minister and Rosia Montana was already at impact of 100. I compared it with the celebrity subjects (celebrity divorce) and also these also had a maximum impact of about 35. I also had on Zelist - also a viewership tracking website - the viewership on Rosia Montana in the same period was at about 20 Millions viewers. It's a fabulous number. These are still not unique visitors, one could have read also 10-20 articles on this topic, but still, it's a high number. And it was far more higher that a TV Station in Romania could even achieve. #01:34:35-4#

M: What happened then? Because you were saying about the press which didn't report on this topic. Then it happened the first time, that the topic was taken from ONLINE to OFFLINE and the subject came like this into the public debates. Either way the information in Online and Offline slightly differed. For instance September 2013 - when there were like 20.000 protesters on the streets in Cluj and Romania TV was like reporting that 20.000 protesters went to the streets to support Victor Ponta (prime minister). And this was an episode, where I also posted a short video on "This is Cluj" with the protest from Cluj, which from the evening until morning made about 100.000 views. During the night! From 12 am to 7-8 am when I woke up, it had 100.000. Now it has around 500.000 views, but just on Romania Curata - because these clip was taken from other medias/TV aswell. Or when I had the article on the first Romanian which voted in the diaspora - it was a guy from New Zeeland, which is actually a really good friend of mine (his sister is btw in Vienna) and my website was so overwealmed, that I thought there was an Internet attack, but it was so much visited. #01:37:11-3#

P: GREAT! It has to be a great feeling to see how much you influence people through your articles!

_M: Yeah! Haha! But also very risky! It's a little bit odd... I sometimes ask myself - did I do well or not! Of course, when you write, you write, that what you write, I mean the arguments and the facts influence and helps the public opinion to take a well informed decision. #01:37:50-2#

P: Did you have until now any problems because of your writing? #01:37:59-2#

M: What kind of problems? People like smashed the tyres of my car, I was like helped by the security guys and the police from the guard of RMGC... Well yes, I also had threatings on FB. My car knows very well how often I had problems with the tyre, the glass was also broken and so on... and I thought... if this is everything that you can do... it's not a problem. #01:38:36-0#

_M: We are thankfully not so to the East... there, they wouldn't just limit themselves to the car... #01:38:58-3#

P: It shouldn't be like this... I still cannot understand, how can you be so disturbed by the truth...It's like the the value system of this country is still upside-down... I have the feeling that this is a sickness, which we carry particularly after the fall of the communism #01:39:43-5#

M: Well yeah, a generation passed - I would say another one needs to pass. Change is already happening... if I look what happened from 2011 until now, one can see the change. #01:40:16-7#

P: In your opinion, Mihai, how can Romanias journalism overcome the crisis of democratic value? #01:40:15-3#

M: Mmmh... well, with stretching nerves and crunching teeth... (laughing) It's obvious that there is a certain point, which was overcome, from which we cannot go more below... inevitability, the inverse reaction comes - new projects appear, at the beginning, more niche projects with several funds from here and there. New coalitions appear, a certain cartelize in a good sense - where more journalists and projects try to cooperate, to make topics in common or to promote the projects from each other and this can be really seen like since a year now. Also the fact that some projects were at the beginning niche products, managed to have a higher visibility. You cannot say now about Romania Curata, about Rise Project and Casa Jurnalistului that they are underground products. They are already mainstream, not such a total high audience, but still if we want to put into relation the audience which produces social change, well the active public - we are not bad at all in terms of visibility. We are in the phase now, in which the critical social change mass of the Romanian society was already formed. There are also some new communication networks built and from this point one can work more uphill. #01:42:51-6#

P: This is a quote, which I will integrate for sure in my thesis - because exactly this is the thing! That the civil society gets moved by such communication networks, that it gets a voice, which is everywhere heard. #01:43:07-3#

M: Also through journalism, but not only. From my point of view the press has to be part of the civil society! There is that theory that as a journalist you have to be equidistant and so on, but from my point of view it's nowadays false. At this moment the press justifies itself - I mean now not the entertainment press - if they assume their camp - the civil society. Because it's a disproportioned fight between a system/establishment, which has a lot of resources, which has many communication paths and possibilities to transmit its messages, it has to be the press and in my opinion, this is one of the main functions is to verify and to contest the official discourse. You cannot talk about equidistance, because you would just play the game and you would just intensify the canyon between establishment and society ... if you would just start to amplify the social discourse, which a big number of media institutions do, you don't do anything else, then abolish yourself as press, because at a moment there would be no longer needed this type of press anymore, because they would transform at each political party and from each businessmen the PR Department into the Press Department, where you would get the official information on his website - look what happens with Johannes and FB. He has practically some press people there, which gives you the official stuff. Now, there is somebody else needed, which takes this information, verify it and to contest and to see if it's true or not. I don't need as a journalist to multiply that information! I just have to verify and contest. This is what I think that it's something vital for the press from all over the world - no multipliers anymore, but verifying, contesting information. #01:45:24-0#

P: You were saying about Romania Curata, Casa Jurnalistului, Rise Project that these projects are now mainstream. When you say mainstream, what do you mean - the audience? Because in my opinion, these are everything else than mainstream - perhaps alternative? #01:45:53-5#

M: When I say mainstream, I mean, that it is a medium, which has a significative audience, which can make changes in the society, can determine mentalities into the society. I cannot say about this press, that it is alternative as in some freaks or some groups which are interested by this story, but nobody pays attention on them. Well you see, that many ideas from us come in the political discourse, are taken into the cultural discourse - starting point: the information from these websites. You can see how it can influence the society. This is what I understand through mainstream - the acceptance on the level of the audience, which can do a social change - which is at about 10% in the good times. #01:47:33-6#

M: Let's talk again about what happened in autumn 2013. What appeared on Romania Curata influenced a lot the public debate, but also because the mainstream press undertook these information and brought these topics

further. One cannot say, that if these other media institutions wouldn't exist, that Romania Curata could really do a change. Of course - if it wouldn't existed, nothing would have happened. But in the same time, the mainstream was also needed - it was so to say a convergence between online and TV. There were a lot of TV Stations which took information from the online and put them on air. The first ones which undertook the news on the elections were the ones from Realitatea TV, and if it was on Realitatea TV, other papers also undertook the topics ... In this sense it does influence and is mainstream, because it gets a valuable accepted source. Look, for example "Stiri pe surse" - it's a website which has an audience three of four times bigger than Romania Curata, but you will not see any information from there, which will be taken into the official cultural discourse. Although they have such a high audience, they cannot say, that they influence so much... they remained so to stay on a niche, underground, they didn't manage to change something. #01:49:59-4#

P: What kind of other independent qualitative journalistic projects are in Romania at the moment? #01:50:01-6#

M: There are also some beautiful projects, but I would not say, that they influence a lot... For example: Decat o Revista, Vice for instance or... look these have good materials, they are well written, but they do not have a direction, an orientation - it's the genre of let's say "we make press for the sake of press" but without direct effects in society? #01:51:15-3#

P: De la Zero? Do you know this project? These are actually also the projects which I want to investigate - like Casa Jurnalistului, Rise Project and Romania Curata. #01:51:48-9#

M: Well, unfortunately it's just these... #01:51:49-1#

P: Centrul de Investigatii Media? Ovidiu Vanghele? #01:52:03-7#

M: They produce subjects, but they do not have any direction or influence. #01:52:19-6#

M: For instance a thing from mainstream... the most consistent investigation medium in the past few years is Gazeta Sporturilor! They had on their sport domains investigative topics: the transfer files, gala Bute etc. And this paper didn't get its information from the prosecutors - but the other way around. #01:53:20-6#

P: Wow, bravo to them! #01:53:20-6#

M: Well, this is Voiculescu media institution/trust ... at least theoretically. They had the biggest advantage that they were financially strong, they didn't have to depend on their owner, they were on profit. And Torontan (journalist) told Voiculescu - "you stay back". You get your money from the business, but that's it! #01:53:41-1#

P: Haha! Very well! I wanted to ask you, what do you think about the sustainability of such media projects like Rise Project, Casa Jurnalistului, Romania Curata? #01:54:07-5#

M: In my opinion - if we managed to resist the period 2009-2011, which was totally horror, the chances, that we manage it in the future, are far more higher. First, because, also in the domain we get some experience, expertise, the projects get known more and more. All the funding sources get to get known, the way you can attract public subscriptions for a project or a topic... These type of funding is actually a know-how. In a moment when the market starts to improve and you also have the know-how and if you managed to resist between these years, then I do not see any problems. #01:55:27-9#

M: The question should be, how long would it take to develop projects of these type - well this depends on how the society changes its mindset, that these kind of projects have to be supported by them. #01:55:49-3#

P: Did you have a journalistic model from abroad, which is already established? For Romania Curata but for the others as well? #01:56:00-7#

M: Well, Rise Project is an international project, they are part of an international network. What we do is not necessarily inspired by a project from abroad, because we didn't change as much as one would think the way we approach the subjects, but we just chose some themes... Practically... what we have brought new, is that we targeted to follow a good governance, civic implications, social movements. #01:57:00-1#

P: If the crisis wouldn't be, do you still think that your projects would still be so successful? #01:57:06-2#

M: I don't know if they would be necessary! Because, if the crisis wouldn't be... the topics which I write on at Romania Curata, I would have done at Clujeanul, or another newspaper. Probably the ones from Casa Jurnalistului would have had good jobs at good newspapers. That is why I say that it perhaps wouldn't be necessary. The scope is not to do a project per se, but to bring another type of information in the public debate. If the crisis wouldn't be, I think that the mainstream press could have done these topics. #01:58:20-7#

P: (My hypothesis that crisis was a change for this type of journalism/Stories about Spain's journalism) #02:00:14-3#

M: I was telling my colleagues by the start/end of 2008, because it was obvious what was happening, I was giving a quote from Einstein: That the crisis helps you and... your real creativity and the real change comes during a period of crisis! You have to find new solutions at these problems. But again, here solutions are being searched, to problems which were induced by the crisis. I would prefer, that these problems don't exist. I was giving you that example with the implementing of the certificate of good journalistic practices, which if the crisis wouldn't have come, probably it would manage to resolve at least, to attention the public about the quality of the journalistic act in a media institution and help him choose. In this case, a period of time has to pass so that these projects impose at a larger level of the society. They influence now, but ...I was giving that example... the lack of the mainstream media, which should undertake the the messages and what I wrote on Romania Curata, probably, nothing would have changed so much - 500.000- 600.000 unique visitors it's an important number, but it would have represented 1% out of the people which voted. If the articles from RM wouldn't have been taken and multiplied by other papers, you also couldn't change anything... I wouldn't put it as an advantage from this point of view... #02:02:07-1#

P: I also think it depends a lot of the motivation of starting the project... #02:02:14-2#

M: Now - you cannot compare the press situation in Romania with the press situation from a Western state. Romania would need at least 10-15 years so that the press can get mature. The crisis stopped this process of getting mature... It removed again a big number of journalists, which managed to get some good experience and know how in the domain...and which are now lost people for the press. That a team survived, that some new teams formed - very less in comparison to what has been lost. Well, there are hundreds of journalists, 20-50 has been saved and started new projects... but if we put the central and local press altogether - there are about over 1000 investigation journalists with 10-15 years experience lost. A long time has to pass in order to redo a mass of investigation journalists, which can count at a local level. You see Romania Curata or Rise Project, but think about it, these are some projects like national projects. Think about that in each county or bigger city, you would need at least 4-5 investigation journalists. And I do think, that in some counties, there is almost none other left... This is the problem. #02:03:59-7#

P: You were saying that a generation has to pass so that the system of journalism revives. (Well the Spain story - the fall of Fascism - the Golden Age of journalism - but now crisis - they weren't able in this period to create a body, which protects the journalists or a favorable law situation. Ownership by banks) #02:04:53-9#

M: I don't know as well the situation from Spain, I studied once the situation from Holland... and in Italy... and one could really see - where you had a democratical press which also had some generations - I saw family newspapers in a place with 4000 inhabitants, which was about 100 years and appeared twice or once a week, depending on the subjects, and the paper was just for this community. This is what I understand through

expertise, professionalization. I was in a local and regional editorial house - they had some 20 editions, they were changing all the time - it was a huge hall, where 10 people were working, aged between 45-50 years old. "What about the new generation, young journalists don't work there?" "Aaah - they are on the field." They were transferring information for the ones in the editorial house, which were writing on these topics. They had the layout of the paper made already starting from the morning and they were writing the article directly in the layout. There it looked like fabulous. You didn't have chances until the age of 40 to get department chief - you needed experience and expertise. This was in 2007. But in Romania I barely knew any editorial chief older than 45. Here you could see the differences. At the same time, we had the capitalization problem - "Die Telegraph", which was a tabloid, but had the highest audience... we had at Cluj at Media Pro a more performant printer, than they did. They were printing on a huge printer from the 80s at which they applied some new updates. I was then asking them... "But there are new printers now, why are you using this one?" Well the answer was "we still didn't manage to amortize our investment - we cannot afford to buy a newer one, although it would be perhaps cheaper" They couldn't quit this investment until in their legal bookkeeping documents was black in white that the investment was amortized. I come to Spain - perhaps they also had this same problem. They also didn't manage to capitalize themselves, and if we see this from the 80-90 they also had also just a democratic press-generation. It isn't perhaps the best example of democratic press. #02:08:33-8#

P: Either way, it's a very interesting wave in the journalism, which just developed - also in Greece (talking about Greece). Thank you very much for the interview! I have very very good insights from you! #02:09:28-8#

M: After you transcribed the interview, and you still have questions, we will find the time, it's no problem! It was a pleasure! #02:09:28-1#

P: Thank you very much! #02:10:17-2#

Mihai Gotiu - Jurnalist Romania Curata #00:00:15-7#

(Introduction part - Presenting my project - Reminding him about my participation in the Rosia Montana Movement in September in Vienna and my personal motivation for selecting this theme) #00:04:32-3#

P: Can you please tell me about the situation of the Romanian journalism? In general, but also in particular during the crisis. I am also very interested what your opinion is on how has journalism as a profession actually changed? #00:04:55-4#

M: Ok, now the situation of the press in Romania wasn't either good before the crisis. So here is a whole story, which also has to do with the fact that Romania has a very young and immature press. In 1990 it actually started almost from the ground. The press didn't have the time to professionalize itself. There have been a lot of changes, it had to appear new people, the new people, which appeared were mostly after having some experience - let's say 7-10 years - many quit the press - it didn't get to professionalize itself, although there were projects, which used to run well - in 2008... well the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009 destroyed what could have functioned. The most affected projects were the ones which based on the classical and honest scheme. You make audience rating and you sell advertisement based on the rating and without any interventions and with a very clear delimitation of the editorial and communication departments. (...) Anyway, also in this scheme there were problems, because to an extent the editorial material was still influenced by advertisement. A project of this type was specially targeted to the commercial audience. And then the way of approaching the articles and the themes targeted especially just one category of a society - and mainly the category, which had a good material situation, which were also easily influenced by advertisement. It was either way a certain amount of balance. You could write without having any restrictions, themes which were not so commercial and you had let's say half of the content of a paper commercial themes and half of the content which could be investigations, social problems and so on. #00:08:02-6#

M: Ahm... when the crisis came and the advertisement funds were cut, of course that the first projects which stopped, were these projects which functioned quite honest, because, there was no more money for the advertisement, and the projects which remained were financed with other purposes than the journalistic product

itself. Because out of political reasons, out of reasons to support some economical interest groups, so the head of the papers assumed the losses which they actually had, because they were compensating them, through the collateral winnings. If they could influence for instance a law, out of which, they could have developed a business, out of which they could have profits of 10-20 or 50 mil. Euros, they could afford to lose some million Euros in the media institution, which had it's contribution to the influence the law makers. #00:09:18-8#

P: Was it the same with Rosia Montana? #00:09:18-8#

M: Well, no, Rosia Montana is actually a case before the crisis hit Romania. Rosia Montana was around 2006-2007 a blocked subject in the most of Romanian mainstream press. This were also the conditions of advertisement, which I was talking before about. And in many editorial rooms, it functioned, well... I actually calculated - between 2008 and 2012, based on the activity reports of Gabriel Ressources (n.a.: Gabriel Ressources, the mining company) which were made for the "BURSA" from Toronto and the amount of money which they spent for "external communication", which is actually the advertisement, were at about 60 Mil \$, which they spent during 5 years (2008-2012) in external communication. In the report they don't say exactly where, but either way, next to this there were also spendings for lawyers, like lobbying for instance. For Romania this amount of money was enormous. These reports appeared somewhere in 2010 or 2011 and then RMGC appeared on the third place in the top of the companies which spent the most for advertisement purposes in Romania. On the first two places, were mobile companies (Orange and Vodafone), then RMGC, then... this was just in the written advertisement... and then appeared retailers, banks, car dealers and so on, which are usually in the top of the companies, which do advertisement. All these were topped by RMGC and the mobile companies. The difference is that RMGC wasn't actually selling anything, so they couldn't get their money back through selling something. Each company, which sells a product or a service, gets the money back. Their only scope was to create a public acceptability of the project. Well, this money had a lot directions. On one side there was the typical advertisement - TV spots, which appeared hallucinatingly often and which were also declared by the CNA (The National Audio-Visual Council) and even by the Ethical Council of the Advertisement Companies from Romania as "lying" advertisements. This situation that the Ethical Council of the Advertisement Companies would declares an advertisement as being lying is very seldom, because they use to protect themselves, it's like a selfregulating mechanism. They normally protect eachother... On the first side was the massive advertisement. Next, they also tried to block the critical articles, what they mostly managed and in the third place they managed to buy favorable opinions of the journalists. First it was general and then they started to go directly to the journalists: the famous paid visits for informing about other projects of RMGC to New Zealand, in which the cost of a trip for one person was about 10.000 Eur. This isn't any informing visit anymore, of course. It was also a journalist, Ioan Temorar, which went to this trip and wrote on his blog, that he is going on vacation. It was really clear that it was a vacation and not an informing visit. Rares Bogdan was writing on his blog, that he takes him golf shoes, because he wanted to play golf in New Zealand. It was clear that it wasn't an informing visit, but a visit, from which they come back and they write "Wow, the project they do is so cool, look, how it can be done." Very illustrative for the trip to New Zealand, well it wasn't just New Zealand, it were also the Nordic countries and in Spain and so on, but the one from New Zealand is very illustrative, because a month before their visit, exactly because of the project, which they were send to see in Waifi, there were protest in the street and the government took the decision not to approve any other mining projects, which were at about 60 Miliard \$ and this happened like one month before, also the protests and also the decision not to accept this project. Well, they came to Romania with information like "Wow, what a cool project are in New Zealand!" in the same time, while New Zealand actually refused to do any similar mining projects. Obviously, they didn't write anything about this. This information was on the website of the Waifi mine. It was a study made by the Queensland University from Australia about the social impact of the mine, which would have been a disaster. Well if you used the place to compare with Romania it didn't have such a bad manage, but if you would compare Waifi with another place in the neighbourhood, all indicators were much more worse. From the tendency to leave the place, the sanity state, the higher level of crimes, smaller incomes then in the neighbourhood. The journalists didn't see these details in their informing visit (ironical) they saw just how they play golf in New Zealand. Well, the "external communication" money was actually used for these kind of things. Before 2013 and also before the crisis, the first massive campaigns started in 2006-2007. Actually then was their project given in to the Ministry of Enviroment and the public debates started. And since then, they started to buy the press so that they block critical articles. By the beginning of 2000 there were quite

a few critical articles - especially about the first shareholder and the funding parents of the business Tender, Timis... there were articles during 2003-2004, but after 2006-2007 lesser and lesser to almost none. 2010 there were - I was calculating by then - a few journalists and some media institutions, which were publishing on this topic. It was Formula AS - they had the advantage that it is one of the few projects in Romania which, doesn't base exclusively on advertisement, but by the sales paper by paper. They don't depend on the commercial public, not even on the advertisement funds. #00:18:20-6#

P: Formula AS, really?! #00:18:21-3#

M: Yeah, they have a non-commercial classic audience. You will see there recepies for medicines, alternative medicine, but they have the big advantage, that they come to a non-commercial audience and live out of the sales. Now it's a disadvantage, because the emition problems kills them too. But then, they constantly written critical about the case. There were also Kamikaze, which detached from the Academy of Catavencu and which one of the motivs was the case of Rosia Montana. In Academia Catavencu they started to block critical articles on the project. This blocking was justified by the agenda of several NGOs paid by I don't know whom and which make profits from the actions they do. That is when journalists from Academia Catavencu started Kamikaze, which continued to write. #00:19:48-9#

M: 2010 for a short period of time the journalists from Adevarul received green light to write on this critical subject, but this was a thing related to the owner. The owner, Dinu Patriciu, was at war with the ones with had the business with Rosia Montana and then automatically - well, it wasn't an appointed theme to write on, but the people working there had the possibility to action and to do their job right because the owner was at war with the people around the business of RMGC. Dinu Patriciu was betrayed in business by Tender by the mid of 2000 and then he decided not to take any advertisement from RMGC and our journalists can write what they wanted on this theme. #00:20:58-1#

M: So these were the places where the topic was discussed... ok, there were also some journalists which wrote independently. Three to five media institutions and some 4-5 independent journalists related to hundreds of media institutions (TV, print, online and thousands of journalists). This was the proportion in 2010 when it was the most critical time - 2010 and 2011. #00:21:33-1#

P: How would you differentiate the crisis in journalism in Romania? You were talking about the Rosia Montana crisis. But how did the economical crisis had repercurssions on the journalism itself? #00:22:01-3#

M: Of course, the beginning of 2008 was the last year, when journalism functioned. In Romania there was a trend on the campaigning newspapers, which appeared a year before the major electoral campaigns. They disappeared afterwards. Then the market was distracted... it was also in a good sense, because these campaign papers were paying their journalists far more better and this put pressure on the other more honest media institutions, to raise the salaries. If I would have paid for an experienced investigation journalist 1700-1800 Lei, the campaigning newspapers would offer him 3000-4000 Lei. These high salaries were explicable, because they knew that these papers were time limited. But, this of course put pressure on the other journalists, that they also should have higher salaries to compensate what happened on the market. Since 2009 it was really hard in this domain. As I said, the first papers which disappeared were the ones which based on the scheme advertisement sold on audience. I don't even know anymore, but in 2010 the statistics said that around 5000 lost their job in the first year of crisis. Afterwards, I refused to follow... it was a total desaster. There were really few new media institutions. The most of them radically reduced the editorial departments. Think about it, until 2008 at a local newspaper weekly and online, I had two to three editors at the cultural department. Local newspaper with two to three editors at the cultural department! Now, a national newspaper, has one editor which has to cover two to three departments - from culture, to investigation to politics, social. #00:25:26-5#

P: The quality lowers, of course... #00:25:26-5#

G: Exactly! And the most affected was the investigation journalism where you need a lot of resources. An investigation journalist works one month, a few weeks for a subject. You need money for travel expenses, you have to pay him a whole salary, that he produces one to two articles a month, which in online is within a few hours consumed away. It is taken over, it is multiplied and other sell then advertisement on the reads of these articles, so that practically, everything what that person worked and you as a editorial house paid one month, it gets consumed away in a few hours... So this type of journalism was the most affected. #00:26:33-2#

G: What appeared new, was the project based journalism. Which practically, the whole funding from the salaries to the other expenses of the project... for an editing house, the salary costs are at about 20-30%, the other expensed are the ones for the rent, transport, travelling, telephones and so on. And the products are distributed so to say free... the beneficiary doesn't pay for the content, because the content is paid out from the project funding. But this way is also difficult... #00:27:37-7#

P: What do you mean by projects? Like funds from different institutions? #00:27:43-2#

G: With several funds.... There are many funds, which are not in Romania and there are journalists which apply for grants and projects - but these are projects which are funded by foundations, by the Norwegian fund, several organizations which function in other Western countries and Romanian journalists applied for this funds. I've also applied for the Milena Jesenská grant for three months. So there are two types of grants: 1. The ones which support a media project in which a particular part of materials appear or 2. Individual projects, where journalists can apply and their products appear then in several media institutions. Last year I applied for instance for a project which dealt with environment problems and had the topic of forests. My problem was that I didn't have where to publish outside Romania and I figured out in the last moment that one condition was to publish the articles outside Romanias. But what I wanted to say was that it was a grant of 15 000 \$ for six months - there were also the money of the journalist but also the effective costs of the documenting. So on one side it's this type of funding and on the other side it's what projects like Rise Project or what we do now at Romania Curata. These are projects, which do journalism and you have at the end a product, which looks alike to a editorial department, or there are combined projects: On Romania Curata we offer space for other people, which can publish the results of their own projects. Or to this extent, the journalists from Casa Jurnalistului do the same thing. If they get a grant or a project, they publish there. Practically, it's a website, which aggregates more ...it get's some several funds on the project itself or on subjects, which journalists work on. #00:32:08-9#

P: I understand - we will talk about funding also a little bit later... Can you tell me about the freedom of the press in Romania? I followed a time being the report from Active Watch and there are extremely many cases where I still think that there is still no good functioning of the freedom of expression regarding journalism. Did you experienced during the crisis changes among the freedom of expression? When I talk about crisis, I don't mean necessarily the issue about Rosia Montana, but in general the financial crisis which also affected in some ways the system of the journalism. #00:33:01-2#

M: Well, I wouldn't say that in Romania there is no freedom of expression or of the press. There is a lot of pressure, which could stop it. I would start it from this concept. Just how much I wrote on the Rosia Montana, but also about other sensible issue - so if I my location were somewhere more Eastern, probably we wouldn't have this discussion here online about the Romanian press - haha! There are a lot of pressures, but the most from the exterior of the press and the problem is that there are editorial chiefs or editorial coordinators, which conform to these pressures. Another problem is also that the journalists in the given economic situations, although they have been doing this also before 2008, they conformed these type of pressures. Here it's a combined thing between a lack of maturity and a critical mass of journalists, which impose some rules and the external pressures. Freedom of the press does exist in Romania, but the pressures on the freedom of expression intensified during the crisis. So this would be the main idea. #00:34:36-0#

P: You were saying that there is a lack of maturity of the journalists. What about unions? Are there strong unions in Romania? #00:34:50-8#

M: 2006-2007 it has been worked a lot for a self-regulation of the journalism in Romania... until 2008 the most journalistic and press associations from Romania in the conventions of the media organisations did a statute of the journalism, like a deontological code and in the same time it has been tried to introduce a certificate of good practice in the press. Which would have mean that every media institution of every independent journalist could have attained such a certificate of good practice based on keeping the conditions of the deontological code of good practice. And this was somehow like an etiquette, which every media institution could have received. Like an ISO Certificate, this was a certificate of good practice, which attentions the audience "Look, the professional organizations in the media certificate that we follow the journalistic rules." Which you could also lose very easily if you violated the code. #00:36:24-1#

M: Unfortunately, this was really affected by the crisis, because it started in 2008-2009, after like two years of elaboration discussions. They tried the implementation of this project. The problem was that when the crisis came, the majority which fought for this implementation, remained without any jobs, many left the press. The negotiation position between the professional organizations, journalists and owners disbalanced a lot. Until 2008-2009 it still existed a negotiation balance. After 2009 it changed a lot - the force disproportion was huge and the project unfortunately died. If the crisis wouldn't have come, probably they would have done it, and now we would have had some media institutions which could have received this certificate of good practices. #00:37:57-5#

P: Ok, so this wasn't implemented? #00:38:03-5#

M: No, but here the principle cause in my opinion was the crisis. And of course the professional organizations weakened a lot. I think that the Association of the Press Professionals from Cluj, which had in the mid of 2000 about 200 members, has now about 30-40 active members. Other are just in the documents, because nobody removed the names, because one is to talk in the name of 150-200 journalists from Cluj and it's another story to talk in the name of 30-40 journalists and also these 30-40 which remained from the ones which conform the given situations... #00:39:11-3#

P: What are you doing actually in these kind of associations? #00:39:13-7#

M: Well, I could say what it has been done, not what they are doing now... We used to interfere into the relations between the press and political factor and ownership. We were taking positions when there were conflictual situations, we tried to defend the journalists from the association but also other journalists which were not in the association and invoke our help. 2009 I recall was the last action which demonstrated that had force - when the President of the Local Council wanted to buy the local press during the crisis and to offer 250.000 EUR the local press under the pretext that it helps the press during the crisis, but actually it tried to buy the local press. And then, I know, from the press we were the ones from Clujeanul, which opposed and the Association of the Press Professionals. I was also in the board of the Association. We had the power to stop using some public money on the purchase of the press by a politician. But afterwards... many people from the Association were lost. Now - the ones which remained, tried to apply for projects similar to those I was talking about, meaning to be part of different projects, but unfortunately it didn't ran that well. The partnership which was made, was made also with politicians... plus the strange situation in the autumn of 2013 when the Association asked the security to intervene against the journalists which put annoying questions during conferences. There was a case with a colleague from Cluj, Oana Moisil... #00:42:48-1#

M: It's no secret that Romania is infiltrated with journalists on the payroll of the public services.. but until 2009 they were the minority. 2013 they were the majority. As I've said before... the most affected were the honest journalists. These were the first journalists which were fired, because the media institutions, which are now on the market, are the ones which make different games, and then journalists also have to conform. So that of course, the active ones are ... the force raport changed - if from 150 there were like 20-30 of this kind... now there are 20-30 out of 40... so this is the raport. It's an estimative number. #00:43:57-0#

P: How about the media law in Romania? Were there any law changes in the last 5 years? #00:44:08-4#

M: Not really and there are people who say, there has to be a media law and some which say it doesn't have to be one. Why? The reason of the ones who say they want a press law, is because they are trying to limit the abuses. I am one of those who say that we do not need any law change and I am saying this, because there have been existed more media law drafts, which were made also against the journalists and advantaged the owners and the interests of the owners. As long we do not have a Parliament which there can be honest discussions regarding a media law and argued and not on the base of interest, it is better that we do not have any! An example for the famous "Ghise" law project, proposed by a Brasov Parliamentarian, Ghise, in which were accused press campaigns... this can limitate a lot - it sounds well, in the context, where you can see a person, politician, star, which image is ruined in a press campaign - to say, yeah! it's ok, to be such a regulation, so that you stop press campaign. But at the same time, it shows us that the press campaigns are to be made actually at the most honest way. If I do now a press campaign - let's say on the law of the financing of political parties or on the Microsoft issue - these are press campaigns. The owner can easily act - he has an extra weapon in front of the journalists, he can intervene and say - "Stop this campaign! You are against the law!" Theoretically it's not bad.... but the practice can be dangerous - it goes against the journalists and gives more force to the owners. (...)
#00:47:17-5#

M: What else changed negatively - modification of the civil code regarding the responsibility of the journalists and of the media institutions... which permits the judges to easily judge journalists which wrote things about people which image was affected. This stuff is extremely relative and subjective... image of a politicians or stars or of a doctor... it was a severe case, because it also was sentenced...it's affected by what appears in the press... but what does appear in the press it's most of time - ok, now we talk about the honest press - it's the truth. Or, how it was with the case from Cluj with the doctor, where a journalist wrote that there is a person, which accused the doctor that after an operation the person lost its sight, the college of the doctors didn't take a decision regarding this case after six months... that patient requested huge damage costs and the journalist reported very honest and correct on this case with public interest. The patient went for an esthetic surgery without knowing what risks he is exposing to, the medical college didn't give any.... let's say that perhaps the doctor was right, but that doesn't mean... being right in the meaning that it wasn't so serious how the patient actually claimed. But this cannot stop you write on this topic, because you cannot wait some years, until someone gives a verdict in a case and then it's very easy.... look, this is an illustrative case, because it doesn't have any political or economical interest behind it, where one can say that the image is affected. And you if you are not a prosecutor to bring the evidence, than around 90% of the investigation topics could not be written on, because the image of the involved could be affected. Although, practically, it's not affected by what the journalist is writing, but about what the journalist is writing, is what affects the image. And here is a lot of space of interpretation and to ruin you as a journalist. The journalist had to pay 5000 Eur moral damage and about 1000EUR on judicial costs. For one article, which from the journalistic point of view, could be taught at the Faculty of Journalism....with citing the sources, with documenting and waiting for the answers of the people... and the journalist remained without a job... the executors went even to his parents to execute their pensions and so on...they transformed him in a social case, although he was one of the last investigation journalists from Cluj. To this can come when talking about law changes. #00:51:16-6#

P: In Austria at the Faculty we had a case in a lecture on media law and it was about the presumption of innocence - that you as a journalist are now allowed to attack a person which is judged until it has been proved that the condemned is guilty. #00:51:34-3#

M: But here is nothing about penal law, but civil law. And the journalist doesn't accuse the doctor, he just presents some facts. Well, there is a patient which presents some documents, these are facts. The medical college didn't take any decision, although normally this should have been done in the first 30 days. After six months they didn't comment on this issue. Just after the topic appeared in the newspaper, the medical college took a decision. These are some accusations, which were not made by the paper, but by a person. As a journalist you have to do... it's after the deontological code, you have to give voice to all parts involved, to make it balanced, which the journalist did. But when there is an accusation - with threatening the journalist with court hearing - at some moment on FB the story with Udrea (note: Elena Udrea - case of Microsoft), where also a advertising company is involved, the boss of another advertising company publishes on FB a message - "At least they come the other advertising

company, they are also investigated" - a message which was taken by the press. The ones from this agency threaten the person, which posted this message and this guy took back its message. Then the agency sent a message to this journalist to also take back its article from the website, while he didn't do anything else then tell a fact. The concurrent company posted this message on FB, the journalist wrote about this fact - so judge with the source, not with the journalist which wrote about a real fact. FB is a public space. But exactly on this new change in the civil law, this journalist also risks a trial because he refused to delete his article on this real fact. #00:54:26-7#

P: Where can I find this new law change? #00:54:40-1#

M: I have to search for it... but remind me to ask for it! #00:54:48-6#

P: Do you still have time? I still have questions for you, but we can also continue the talk someother time. #00:54:53-4#

M: It's no problem! #00:55:01-0#

P: I want you to tell me about "Romania Curata". In which category you would embed this project? Is it journalism? What kind of journalism is it? #00:55:11-1#

M: Well, practically, Romania Curata is not a media institution. It's a project of the Academical Society of Romania - SART - on Norwegian funds. The financing can be tracked on the website. It's scope is to encourage people to involve in a better governing, in following the public money, in the way they are spent, the organization of public debates when there are decision taken in a community or at national level and also the way the civil society of Romania actions and the encouraging of the civil society of Romania to action, the creation of a network of civil groups which action in Romania. This would be the project in a few words. Romania Curata is practically the journalistic interface of the project. The way in which we present what the volunteers are doing, the civil groups, the monitoring of the legislative process, requests are sent on the base of the law 544 - the free acces to information - which topics are presented in a journalistic matter. Investigation subjects which have to do with the spending of public money or with the actions of civil society. Actually what you see on Romania Curata and what seems to be a media institution is just the interface of a NGO project. I was saying before that there are two types of financing, which appeared new on the market - some which are on subjects... there are also collateral, which transform in press subjects or on journalistic projects. Practically this is it. It's a 2 years project, the first year has already passed. It went really well and we have of course the wish to continue it. And this means to continue it also after April 2016. This means either trying to find funding sources on this type of projects, or in other projects, which are made by the Academical Society from Romania or in partnership with other NGO's and Foundations, where positions of journalists can be designed, which reflect the particular project and to write on the themes of the particular project. Now for example we apply with the coalition Natura 2000 for a project, where this coalition does everything it has to do with their domain but in the same time in the project there is also a journalist, which attribute is to relate in a journalistic way on the problems dealing with the topics of this organization. The journalist has the freedom to select its subjects and the platform Romania Curata had than the right to undertake these journalistic products. On one hand it reflects the activity of the coalition and on the other hand it's the journalistic product for the website. And this is another possibility to continue with the other projects from other domains. #00:59:24-1#

P: What you are actually doing is actually either way what a good journalistic investigation product has to be, or? This is also its scope. #00:59:38-6#

M: Romania Curata is actually mainly journalistic production. There is also an aggregation of press releases about the actions of several NGOs, which also at an informative level, are also journalism, but at a minimal level and on the other hand it's investigation, editorial opinion, which are specific to the journalist, of course. #01:00:13-2#

P: What are your working instruments? What are the innovations in your project? #01:00:33-5#

M: From the point of view of the new instruments, we didn't bring any innovations. We don't do anything new. I wanted to say that at the beginning you were saying about what changed in the journalism during the crisis. Nothing happened from the point of view of the journalist - of the work of documenting and investigation, of analysis. It's the same thing. New instruments appeared, but this doesn't have to do with the crisis, but with the technological development: more video, more images, adapting at the mobile telephony, but these are technical stuff, not stuff which have to do with the essence of journalism. What is new was the orientation of the civil societies activity. Here was an ache of mine, because I was always saying the colleagues from the press - "We have an active civil society, which isn't really developed, but still it's not perceived at its real value - because the mainstream press doesn't write about it. The arguments, which honest journalists brought, were that these kind of subjects don't sell. As in why would it be of national interest why people fight in Bucharest to save 5 trees from a green place, or why it is of national interest that in Arad or Iasi to build a parking lot under a park. These are some examples.. well these are subjects of interest because they are examples of an action way of civil implication or because these are problems which make a precedent. And I was right in the end. I participated starting from July in this project, although the project started in April - I was also collaborating - but starting from July I undertook the website and the coordination and orientating on this civic activity... from 7000 unique readers a week, it came to a maximum in the electoral period to 154.000 per day. It was the electoral campaign, it were the last days. It was obvious that the number... the deal with the funding was that the project had to get to 2 Mil unique users. And at an average of... per week it was at about 30.000 unique user... the problem was how we get to these 2 Millions unique... and to those 2 Mil it's not hard to get, because in my opinion, there are at least this number of Romanian talking people interested in these kind of subjects. But we have to get to them... it's not 2Mil at a time, but cumulated and on different themes and so on. Already, in 9 months we got to these 2 Million people... we already passed this milestone, so everything what will be after this first year, it's already a bonus. #01:04:46-5#

M: And this is the best part, which make me really happy - is the fact that also at least partially other media institutions started to use us as sources. I was seeing it, it wasn't cited the whole time, but this is their problem, but it makes me happy that this had a snowball effect. I saw last autumn, that there were sources, people with whom I was talking in the Diaspora, and then I saw they were taken of other media institutions. You can imagine, that the probability was really low that when I had 3-4 people, which I talked to in Paris, London and I was seeing the same sources quoted, of course that they were searching after these names at Romania Curata, because else they could have find out of hundreds Romanians abroad enough other sources. #01:05:57-2#

P: Do you feel that you managed to be a model for the Romanian press? #01:05:57-2#

M: Not a model... but a source, which could inspire them also to other subjects. I've also seen the stories with the parks, which transformed into a coalition of the parks in Romania and the investigation subjects, which are taken and presented by other media institutions. Among the press there was also a competing regarding subjects. If a subject is good and it's being understood by a smart editorial chief, that it's a subject which matters and is of interest - you don't have the restraint anymore that on this subject also others wrote, but you have the motivation that common let's also write on this and let's do it better and bring new elements, which is the normal reaction in the press... and the fact that this happens from time to time it has a good influence. The topic on Certej (note: mining project) ...imagine what happened to Rosia Montana... let's not deceive ourselves... the most part of the mainstream press ignores it, but still I saw media institutions from mainstream which write on this topic and present and develop it. It has been made a breakthrough because journalists understand that if there is a petition on a topic where there are about 10-13.000 signatures, the subject gets really important and you cannot ignore this kind of subjects. This is a change which takes place... and also is Romania Curata stops after one year and these themes impose in the society and other media institutions take them, the project succeeded! After all this is the scope of the project - not to make a press institution, but to give visibility and to impose some themes which are on the agenda of the civil society but aren't reflected on the mainstream media or even political agenda. #01:08:22-8#

P: Are the people working on this project employed or do you write on voluntary basis? How is the project organized? #01:08:31-2#

M: Well, no - employees. I am employed because I have to coordinate the project - the administrative, buerocratic work, which is different than the journalistic part... we have also employees in the administrative department. The most of the materials comes from volunteers. We also have collaborateurs as journalists, which have like a pay on article, which take topics, develop them, give them a journalistic form. But there are not employed for the project. They work in other projects, as I've said before, in which they reflect the ideas of the project in a journalistic form, or they are collaborateurs from several cities of Romania, which develop topics of the agenda of the civil society. #01:09:42-6#

P: So the collaborateurs, are not necesarry journalists, are they? #01:09:44-4#

M: The ones which transform and give a journalistic interface are of course journalists. They respect the journalistic rules. There are seldom cases when we get materials or information, which we publish they way we get them. Let's say that in the case of opinions it's more easy, it's an opinion, the person assumes responsibility for the article and then it's more easier to respect some rules. And for the others, the articles have to get through a journalistic filter. #01:10:38-4#

P: Which are your main sources for an investigation article? #01:10:40-5#

M: All classical sources of a journalists (laughs) - what should I say? The citizen from the place x, which is mad that the mayor took a decision without consulting the community. A biologist from Cluj, which found out that some people want to build a hydroelectric plant in one of the oldest virgin valleys from Romania and so on. #01:11:33-0#

P: Direct source... #01:11:37-3#

M: And of course the sources of each investigation journalist - when it's about public institutions. Collaborators, which we have, now we have to see - a week ago we talked about new collaborations with some investigation journalists - perhaps there will be new sources, new approaches. #01:12:07-1#

P: How easy is it to find documents at the public institutions? Is there enough transparency or is it a hard way to get to the truth? #01:12:07-9#

M: It depends from institution to institution... "Periodigma" (???) it's a project made by SART (The Romania Academical Society), which analyzes the degree of transparency of public institutions, from which I have also published on Romania Curata starting from acquisition contracts, contracts of the public budgets and so on... there is also an article, how transparent are the county councillor, the townhalls and so on. And there are cases where the authorities understand and made their information public before one would ask for them. There are also cases in which you have to sue them to receive information. Starting from the townhall until the Finance Ministry, where we wait for 30 days to sue them, to get the impact study on the change of the fiscal code - this is now a general theme. They have a new fiscal code and theoretically there has to be an impact study, which they say that it is not public... but we know that it has to be public! ***Certej story*** #01:14:28-8#

_P + M: Certej stories / El Dorado Gold/Johannis/Holzindustrie Schweighofer - off the record 01:18 #01:24:53-5#

P: Going back to our questions - who is reading Romania Curata?

_M: We don't have any clear demographical studies, but I can tell you according on the topics, that it is an audience, which is interested of the civic implication. This estimation also comes because I am also looking on what FB groups our articles are posted - the groups which fights for the parks, the public which is interested of a city for people, which means more bicycle roads, less cars and then I can see what kind of people are these, which

are people between 20-45 years old with education higher than the average and also in liberal domains like architecture, urbanism, environment, the way in which corporations influence the political decisions... a lot of readers from diaspora (data from google analytics, data.ro) - somewhere between 25-30% are from the diaspora and also with peaks - during the period of elections, there were somewhere around 40-45% from the diaspora. #01:28:04-5#

P: It's interesting what you are say, because after the elections it was clear that the new President was chosen actually by the diaspora. #01:28:21-1#

M: Yeah! After the elections, there were many discussions about who got the right to say that we made the difference regarding the votes. I could show clear dates - look who made the difference - the people which signed that letter in the diaspora, a letter which I've wrote already last year - not the whole diaspora assumes this letter, but there are groups, which were active last year and made the difference. In 2009 in the second Presidential voting tour, there were about 90.000 in the diaspora. And in 2014 - about 160.000 votants. And some other tens of thousands which didn't managed to vote, because the queue was too long. So these people came from these active zone starting from 2013-2014 in the diaspora. From there came the plus which ruined the plans of the counter political candidate. (...) I was actually already saying and writing during the whole last year, that the diaspora will count a lot at the presidential elections. I presented them the data... Our competition like "Contributors" or "Dilema Veche" ...this type of educated people, which is capable, either if it looks little, but because it's active, it produces changes in the society or influences the dominant cultural discourse. Last year in November, we showed them clearly, we fought in audience with generalist newspapers - we were over Hot News, B1TV, over EVZ. Practically we had on a niche, more readers than the generalists online mediums had. #01:31:53-9#

P: What about the Romanian audience and trust in media. I really have the feeling that Romanian people started to distrust more and more the Romanian main stream journalism, because it is clearly, that behind the most newspapers/TV is a controverse boss. So - I think that the people started to value more the information which projects like yours deliver. #01:32:18-4#

M: It's just about a type of audience. The biggest changes came during the autumn of 2013, when I also have statistical data, that it's the first time, when on a particular topic, the audience on topics in online beaten the audience in TVs - the subject of Rosia Montana. It's a google indicator - if you search it with two words, it gives you the impact on what it has been written. And I was comparing that in September 2013, Rosia Montana had impact 100. 100 is the maximum impact, which a topic can achieve. Even if it's more than 100, it still remains in numbers at 100. I took than Victor Ponta and Traian Basescu in their electoral campaigns. They had maximum during the campaign months impact about 30-45 points. But none achieved at least 50 points impact. In September 2013 it was somewhere at 7-8 points the President and Prime Minister and Rosia Montana was already at impact of 100. I compared it with the celebrity subjects (celebrity divorce) and also these also had a maximum impact of about 35. I also had on Zelist - also a viewership tracking website - the viewership on Rosia Montana in the same period was at about 20 Milions viewers. It's a fabulous number. These are still not unique viseters, one could have read also 10-20 articles on this topic, but still, it's a high number. And it was far more higher that a TV Station in Romania could even achieve. #01:34:35-4#

M: What happened then? Because you were saying about the press which didn't report on this topic. Then it happened the first time, that the topic was taken from ONLINE to OFFLINE and the subject came like this into the public debates. Either way the information in Online and Offline slightly differed. For instance September 2013 - when there were like 20.000 protesters on the streets in Cluj and Romania TV was like reporting that 20.000 protesters went to the streets to support Victor Ponta (prime minister). And this was an episode, where I also posted a short video on "This is Cluj" with the protest from Cluj, which from the evening until morning made about 100.000 views. During the night! From 12 am to 7-8 am when I woke up, it had 100.000. Now it has around 500.000 views, but just on Romania Curata - because these clip was taken from other medias/TV aswell. Or when I had the article on the first Romanian which voted in the diaspora - it was a guy from New Zeeland, which is actually a really good friend of mine (his sister is btw in Vienna) and my website was so overwealmed, that I thought there was an Internet attack, but it was so much visited. #01:37:11-3#

P: GREAT! It has to be a great feeling to see how much you influence people through your articles!

_M: Yeah! Haha! But also very risky! It's a little bit odd... I sometimes ask myself - did I do well or not! Of course, when you write, you write, that what you write, I mean the arguments and the facts influence and helps the public opinion to take a well informed decision. #01:37:50-2#

P: Did you have until now any problems because of your writing? #01:37:59-2#

M: What kind of problems? People like smashed the tyres of my car, I was like helped by the security guys and the police from the guard of RMGC... Well yes, I also had threatings on FB. My car knows very well how often I had problems with the tyre, the glass was also broken and so on... and I thought... if this is everything that you can do... it's not a problem. #01:38:36-0#

_M: We are thankfully not so to the East... there, they wouldn't just limit themselves to the car... #01:38:58-3#

P: It shouldn't be like this... I still cannot understand, how can you be so disturbed by the truth...It's like the value system of this country is still upside-down... I have the feeling that this is a sickness, which we carry particularly after the fall of the communism #01:39:43-5#

M: Well yeah, a generation passed - I would say another one needs to pass. Change is already happening... if I look what happened from 2011 until now, one can see the change. #01:40:16-7#

P: In your opinion, Mihai, how can Romanias journalism overcome the crisis of democratic value? #01:40:15-3#

M: Mmmh... well, with stretching nerves and crunching teeth... (laughing) It's obvious that there is a certain point, which was overcome, from which we cannot go more below... inevitability, the inverse reaction comes - new projects appear, at the beginning, more niche projects with several funds from here and there. New coalitions appear, a certain cartelize in a good sense - where more journalists and projects try to cooperate, to make topics in common or to promote the projects from each other and this can be really seen like since a year now. Also the fact that some projects were at the beginning niche products, managed to have a higher visibility. You cannot say now about Romania Curata, about Rise Project and Casa Jurnalistului that they are underground products. They are already mainstream, not such a total high audience, but still if we want to put into relation the audience which produces social change, well the active public - we are not bad at all in terms of visibility. We are in the phase now, in which the critical social change mass of the Romanian society was already formed. There are also some new communication networks built and from this point one can work more uphill. #01:42:51-6#

P: This is a quote, which I will integrate for sure in my thesis - because exactly this is the thing! That the civil society gets moved by such communication networks, that it gets a voice, which is everywhere heard. #01:43:07-3#

M: Also through journalism, but not only. From my point of view the press has to be part of the civil society! There is that theory that as a journalist you have to be equidistant and so on, but from my point of view it's nowadays false. At this moment the press justifies itself - I mean now not the entertainment press - if they assume their camp - the civil society. Because it's a disproportioned fight between a system/establishment, which has a lot of resources, which has many communication paths and possibilities to transmit its messages, it has to be the press and in my opinion, this is one of the main functions is to verify and to contest the official discourse. You cannot talk about equidistance, because you would just play the game and you would just intensify the canyon between establishment and society ... if you would just start to amplify the social discourse, which a big number of media institutions do, you don't do anything else, then abolish yourself as press, because at a moment there would be no longer needed this type of press anymore, because they would transform at each political party and from each businessmen the PR Department into the Press Department, where you would get the official information on his website - look what happens with Johannis and FB. He has practically some press people there, which gives you

the official stuff. Now, there is somebody else needed, which takes this information, verify it and to contest and to see if it's true or not. I don't need as a journalist to multiply that information! I just have to verify and contest. This is what I think that it's something vital for the press from all over the world - no multipliers anymore, but verifying, contesting information. #01:45:24-0#

P: You were saying about Romania Curata, Casa Jurnalistului, Rise Project that these projects are now main stream. When you say mainstream, what do you mean - the audience? Because in my opinion, these are everything else than mainstream - perhaps alternative? #01:45:53-5#

M: When I say mainstream, I mean, that it is a medium, which has a significative audience, which can make changes in the society, can determine mentalities into the society. I cannot say about this press, that it is alternative as in some freaks or some groups which are interested by this story, but nobody pays attention on them. Well you see, that many ideas from us come in the political discourse, are taken into the cultural discourse - starting point: the information from these websites. You can see how it can influence the society. This is what I understand through mainstream - the acceptance on the level of the audience, which can do a social change - which is at about 10% in the good times. #01:47:33-6#

M: Let's talk again about what happened in autumn 2013. What appeared on Romania Curata influenced a lot the public debate, but also because the mainstream press undertook these information and brought these topics further. One cannot say, that if these other media institutions wouldn't exist, that Romania Curata could really do a change. Of course - if it wouldn't existed, nothing would have happened. But in the same time, the mainstream was also needed - it was so to say a convergence between online and TV. There were a lot of TV Stations which took information from the online and put them on air. The first ones which undertook the news on the elections were the ones from Realitatea TV, and if it was on Realitatea TV, other papers also undertook the topics ... In this sense it does influence and is mainstream, because it gets a valuable accepted source. Look, for example "Stiri pe surse" - it's a website which has an audience three of four times bigger than Romania Curata, but you will not see any information from there, which will be taken into the official cultural discourse. Although they have such a high audience, they cannot say, that they influence so much... they remained so to stay on a niche, underground, they didn't manage to change something. #01:49:59-4#

P: What kind of other independent qualitative journalistic projects are in Romania at the moment? #01:50:01-6#

M: There are also some beautiful projects, but I would not say, that they influence a lot... For example: Decat o Revista, Vice for instance or... look these have good materials, they are well written, but they do not have a direction, an orientation - it's the genre of let's say "we make press for the sake of press" but without direct effects in society? #01:51:15-3#

P: De la Zero? Do you know this project? These are actually also the projects which I want to investigate - like Casa Jurnalistului, Rise Project and Romania Curata. #01:51:48-9#

M: Well, unfortunately it's just these... #01:51:49-1#

P: Centrul de Investigatii Media? Ovidiu Vanghele? #01:52:03-7#

M: They produce subjects, but they do not have any direction or influence. #01:52:19-6#

M: For instance a thing from mainstream... the most consistent investigation medium in the past few years is Gazeta Sporturilor! They had on their sport domains investigative topics: the transfer files, gala Bute etc. And this paper didn't got it's information from the prosecutors - but the other way around. #01:53:20-6#

P: Wow, bravo to them! #01:53:20-6#

M: Well, this is Voiculescu media institution/trust ... at least theoretically. They had the biggest advantage that they were financially strong, they didn't have to depend on their owner, they were on profit. And Torontan (journalist) told Voiculescu -"you stay back". You get your money from the business, but that's it! #01:53:41-1#

P: Haha! Very well! I wanted to ask you, what do you think about the sustainability of such media projects like Rise Project, Casa Jurnalistului, Romania Curata? #01:54:07-5#

M: In my opinion - if we managed to resist the period 2009-2011, which was totally horror, the chances, that we manage it in the future, are far more higher. First, because, also in the domain we get some experience, expertize, the projects get known more and more. All the funding sources get to get known, the way you can attract public subscriptions for a project or a topic... These type of funding is actually a know-how. In a moment when the market starts to improve and you also have the know-how and if you managed to resist between these years, then I do not see any problems. #01:55:27-9#

M: The question should be, how long would it take to develop projects of these type - well this depends on how the society changes its mindset, that these kind of projects have to be supported by them. #01:55:49-3#

P: Did you have a journalistic model from abroad, which is already established? For Romania Curata but for the others aswell? #01:56:00-7#

M: Well, Rise Project is an international project, they are part of an international network. What we do is not necessarily inspired by a project from abroad, because we didn't change as much as one would think the way we approach the subjects, but we just we chose some themes... Practically... what we have brought new, is that we targeted to follow a good governance, civic implications, social movements. #01:57:00-1#

P: If the crisis wouldn't be, do you still think that your projects would still be so successful? #01:57:06-2#

M: I don't know if they would be necessary! Because, if the crisis wouldn't be... the topics which I write on at Romania Curata, I would have done at Clujeanul, or another newspaper. Probably the ones from Casa Jurnalistului would have have good jobs at good newspapers. That is why I say that it perhaps wouldn't be necessary. The scope is not to do a project per se, but to bring another type of information in the public debate. If the crisis wouldn't be, I think that the mainstream press could have done these topics. #01:58:20-7#

P: (My hypothesis that crisis was a change for this type of journalism/Stories about Spains journalism) #02:00:14-3#

M: I was telling my colleagues by the start end of 2008, because it was obvious what was happening, I was giving a quote from Einstein: That the crisis helps you and... your real creativity and the real change comes during a period of crisis! You have to find new solutions at these problems. But again, here solutions are being searched, to problems which were induced by the crisis. I would prefer, that these problems don't exist. I was giving you that example with the implementing of the certificate of good journalistic practices, which if the crisis wouldn't have come, probably it would manage to resolve at least, to attention the public about the quality of the journalistic act in a media institution and help him choose. In this case, a period of time has to pass so that these projects impose at a larger level of the society. They influence now, but ...I was giving that example... the lack of the mainstream media, which should undertake the the messages and what I wrote on Romania Curata, probably, nothing would have changed so much - 500.000- 600.000 unique visitors it's an important number, but it would have represented 1% out of the people which voted. If the articles from RM wouldn't have been taken and multiplied by other papers, you also couldn't change anything... I wouldn't put it as an advantage from this point of view... #02:02:07-1#

P: I also think it depends a lot of the motivation of starting the project... #02:02:14-2#

M: Now - you cannot compare the press situation in Romania with the press situation from a Western state. Romania would need at least 10-15 years so that the press can get mature. The crisis stopped this process of getting mature... It removed again a big number of journalists, which managed to get some good experience and know how in the domain...and which are now lost people for the press. That a team survived, that some new teams formed - very less in comparison to what has been lost. Well, there are hundreds of journalists, 20-50 has been saved and started new projects... but if we put the central and local press altogether - there are about over 1000 investigation journalists with 10-15 years experience lost. O long time has to pass in order to redo a mass of investigation journalists, which can count at a local level. You see Romania Curata or Rise Project, but think about it, these are some projects like national projects. Think about that in each county or bigger city, you would need at least 4-5 investigation journalists. And I do think, that in some counties, there is almost none other left... This is the problem. #02:03:59-7#

P: You were saying that a generation has to pass so that the system of journalism revives. (Well the Spain story - the fall of Fascism - the Golden Age of journalism - but now crisis - they weren't able in this period to create a body, which protects the journalists or a favorable law situation. Ownership by banks) #02:04:53-9#

M: I don't know as well the situation from Spain, I studied once the situation from Holland... and in Italy... and one could really see - where you had a democratical press which also had some generations - I saw family newspapers in a place with 4000 inhabitants, which was about 100 years and appeared twice or once a week, depending on the subjects, and the paper was just for this community. This is what I understand through expertise, professionalization. I was in a local and regional editorial house - they had some 20 editions, they were changing all the time - it was a huge hall, where 10 people were working, aged between 45-50 years old. "What about the new generation, young journalists don't work there?" "Aaah - they are on the field." They were transferring information for the ones in the editorial house, which were writing on these topics. They had the layout of the paper made already starting from the morning and they were writing the article directly in the layout. There it looked like fabulous. You didn't have chances until the age of 40 to get department chief - you needed experience and expertise. This was in 2007. But in Romania I barely knew any editorial chief older than 45. Here you could see the differences. At the same time, we had the capitalization problem - "Die Telegraph", which was a tabloid, but had the highest audience... we had at Cluj at Media Pro a more performant printer, than they did. They were printing on a huge printer from the 80s at which they applied some new updates. I was then asking them... "But there are new printers now, why are you using this one?" Well the answer was "we still didn't manage to amortize our investment - we cannot afford to buy a newer one, although it would be perhaps cheaper" They couldn't quit this investment until in their legal bookkeeping documents was black in white that the investment was amortized. I come to Spain - perhaps they also had this same problem. They also didn't manage to capitalize themselves, and if we see this from the 80-90 they also had also just a democratisation press-generation. It isn't perhaps the best example of democratic press. #02:08:33-8#

P: Either way, it's a very interesting wave in the journalism, which just developed - also in Greece (talking about Greece). Thank you very much for the interview! I have very very good insights from you! #02:09:28-8#

M: After you transcribed the interview, and you still have questions, we will find the time, it's no problem! It was a pleasure! #02:09:28-1#

P: Thank you very much! #02:10:17-2#

Casa Jurnalistului, Vlad Ursulean

Skype Interview, June 2015

P: Hello Vlad!

V: Hello!

P: Well, Vlad, thanks for your time! I've received your telephone number from Mihai Gotiu. I'm not sure if you

remember about the purpose of the interview, but I am currently writing my master thesis and I am analyzing journalistic initiatives, which emerged out of the crisis and work independent, alternative, investigative and treat sensitive issues in a critical way and whose goal is social change. What I do is a map for such initiatives from Romania, Spain and Greece, countries that were affected by the crisis and which have at least one common point, namely social movements, as the Rosia Montana movement in Romania. I was very active in 2013 in Vienna about it and the information about Rosia Montana I've mainly taken from journalistic initiatives like yours, or Rise Project, or Mihai Gotiu's, Romania Curata. The interview has several parts, namely the crisis in general, the crisis in journalism, media freedom, and of course about on your project, what you do, how do you work and how you are organized...

P: So, can you tell me something about the situation of journalism in the country in general and particularly during the crisis? I'm interested to what extent did the crisis in Romania affected the work of a journalist and how the profession has changed during this period.

V: The media in Romania has always been done on a very shaky basis, its relationship with politics has always been lousy and journalists were unprofessional. There were all kinds of structural problems in the press, but it somehow worked, there was a period when it actually worked, but the crisis came and smashed away everything of that shaky construction and at this point we only have these channels of news, propaganda with different political opinions and newspapers practically no longer exist and the internet is like a very amorphous mass of sources of information.

P: Is online journalism officially recognized?

V: I do not see much difference because all who are on television are also online, so there is no distinction here, the question is rather what is meant with online journalism and independent journalism? I would say that the differentiation it's rather between old school and new school.

P: You said that the Romanian press before the crisis was not professional, how did it changed during the crisis, which were the critical points?

V: Practically the salaries stopped to be paid. Journalists were fired, the management of course remained. So there were many newspaper with only the bosses employed and with a handful of bellboys, who were asked to look after news on the internet and to repost them with changed titles, according to the political sympathies of the management. Practically the newspapers converted into some agents of influence, the bosses were still paid very well, and reached the point where the editor-in-chief had higher salaries than all the reporters together. It's quite common....

P: Excuse me, but isn't there a common working agreement?

V: Yes, there was, but now journalists are no longer employed on working contracts, they are employed on contracts of copyright and this does not provide any protection and the associations that should defend the rights of journalists weren't of much help, like ACTIVE Watch or CRP... they have basically no influence anymore.

P: Well, it's obviously, the journalistic system communicates a lot with the economic and political one but before the crisis, were there independent newspapers, where the media owners didn't put the value only on the economic interests?

V: It depends what you mean by newspaper, what you mean by independent, there were better and weaker newspapers but there was no independent newspaper because a newspaper must be sustainable and therefore has a lot of points where it has to be dependent, some are inevitable other avoidable, but most publications were dependent in every respect. Before the crisis, however, you had at least sources of information, you could have received a whole picture of the reality by what you read in the press, now this isn't happening anymore.

P: Can you tell me how the way of presenting the news has changed during the time of crisis? The themes for instance... Can you give me some examples?

V: Basically reportages and investigations disappeared, they are now quasi-inexistent. There are a few good reportage and investigative shows on TV, every channel has got at least one, PRO TV and Antena 3 have one good and DIGI TV. However, they are used as pretext... the journalists are allowed to do what they want, as long as they do not thematise some subjects. There are good people there, very professional people. As I've said, some reports are used to legitimize the hateful propaganda of the entire construction of the station, and are very "good" reporters like Gadea, go and pick up awards from New York...

P: Gadea? The journalist, which made the gaffe with Julio Iglesias, right?! You know, when I am back home in Romania, I cannot even turn the TV...

V: Well, this media system will endlessly generate these kind of people, but they are perishable, I would not focus on them, a media system is very volatile and very unstable and that you cannot get to control the media system, to systematize it too much, because the interference in the editorial independence appears and either way from the start is it very difficult, but here is absolutely awful, it is a system of influence traffic, basically this is what happens.

P: More or less almost everywhere it is happening; did you heard that in France they tried to introduce a new system several years ago. The government realized that the newspapers are no longer successful, mostly because of the transition to the digital. So the state tried to support newspapers by demanding less taxes to the people which buy newspapers. So there was the triangle-state, reader and journalists, but the state didn't interfere at all in the media, just tried to attract more readers and newspaper buyers. However, the mechanism didn't work.

V: What went wrong?

P: Well, people didn't use this offer from the state...

V: The governments are trying to solve this problem through some stuff that create bigger problems and that seems to me a good example. In Romania, there are odious things which happen. They want to make all kinds of laws of the media, to "help" journalism but basically it is a poisoned gift, because in this way you get to control, you become the one who gives the help and then you say who lives and who dies; a power that the state should not have.

P: The more the laws the higher the corruption...

P: From an organizational point of view, you said that many journalists were fired. Can you tell me more about the structure of the media companies; number of working hours, conditions of employment, stability of the jobs, layoffs... Do you have any clear data?

V: For this thing you to have to talk to those from Active Watch or the CJI, actually with Active Watch. Maria Popa did a study on the local press and in the report you can find these kind of information. Or search the FREEEX Report. 2014-2015.

P: Oh yes, I already have this report! Thanks for the tip!

V: You can find there this kind of information and if you want more you can contact them and they will respond immediately

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P: Great, another thing, I looked over the reports from FreeEx of the past few years, but I didn't find anything about you, about these new initiatives..

V: FreeEx report is about the violation of the liberty of speech, freedom of expression and we unfortunately appear because our journalists were beaten...we have appeared over the years in the victim chapter, Stefan Mako was in fact beaten a few days ago by the police during a documentation.

P: I'm sorry for him!!! Hm... press freedom is quite shady back home... Did you noticed any changes during the crisis in terms of freedom of speech? Were there better or worse condition for journalists?

V: Beyond the fact that it's very dramatic, I was thinking that especially in the province it's a very interesting case. There were before local publications, which did their job of informing the population in a quite good way. OK, there were also political partisans, but still...the local people had the information; in the world it is not only politics, what is happening, but all sorts of things. Nowadays, the most disappeared and the people take now their information mostly over TV... What happens in their own garden, they do not know! And from this point of view it is very bad, but for me there is also a positive side, because it became clear that our media system cannot function this way. At least for me it was clear that within this system, I cannot and do not want to do anything, so it became for me clear that something must be independent.

The problem is that this system has a lot of experience in this filth and usually it survives just by swallowing and perverting the items that appear new, the same as in politics. A new independent political initiative appears and the system first tries to hit them hard, if it doesn't succeed, then try to swallow or try to attract them somehow to come to the system.

And if not with us personally, it is clear for me that the idea of independent journalism in the near future will boom now and we'll have a bunch of "independent projects" with the same people who actually broke the press, for example Robert Turcescu, which now has a project of independent journalism on the Internet, you know Robert Turcescu, right? Mr. undercover officer from the Securitate and so on.

P: What project has R.T.?

V: He wants to make an online television based on donations from people for independent journalism; and this in the context of self-denunciating himself that he was an undercover officer from the Securitate. So when you say something like that, you shouldn't even be taken seriously anymore as a journalist.

People do not know, they don't have any media culture and then one does not know what should be right. In general worldwide there are so many questions about how should the things work in the media, how should journalism look like...

P: You referred to the law, how does the press legislation looks like in Romania? Have there been any changes in the recent years?

V: You should really talk to Active Watch about this, but I know that Romania has a quite ok law regarding freedom of expression, meaning that there are enough weapons of defense and not too many constraints, the legislation is ok, just as there were many attempts to introduce media law in recent years to regulate these things, but none passed because they were stupid, trying to give some benefits to those who are registered journalists.

P: What do you mean?

V: Well, in general they want to register the journalists and one must register in order to be a journalist and receive an official badge. Moreover, they want to introduce some mechanisms to arbitrate the conflicts in all media, something like the CNA and some also want to give some tax benefits to the registered channels, which behave nice. Can you imagine what it would be?

P: Ok, but who decides which channel is behaving nice??? (ironical)

V: It's important to also see from which sources these initiatives come from. It's the lack of self-regulation, you don't have journalists, which are able to put their foot down and say this is good, this is not good, apart from a few, Tolontan for instance, which tried to start a debate on the ethics, but unfortunately you do not have any associations, which can tell their point of view...

P: In your opinion, is a code of ethics good or not?

V: It actually exists, and every media has a code of ethics, but unfortunately this doesn't mean anything...

P: Michael Gotiu told me that Journalists Association in Cluj tried long before the crisis to introduce such a code of ethics and would have succeeded if the big wave of layoffs wouldn't have come...

V: Well, there are associations, which have made a lot of steps and convinced people to sign the code of good practices, everyone signed and after that each minded their own business.

P: Tell me more about your initiative, Casa Jurnalistului! In which category would you include the Journalist House project, what kind of journalism are you doing?

V: Journalism – DOT! We do not have any rules regarding this, it is a very personalized thing, the most interesting topics that you can think come from these people, so, no we do not have an editorial policy.

P: Great, so you have the liberty to search, research and write!

V: Casa Jurnalistului was planned like an ark for saving the journalists, which don't want to do their job through these murky waters. The project is centred on the journalist – the journalist, which joins us, has the liberty to look for his subjects, to look for his/her own approach and has the benefit to be able to discuss with other good journalists and access some resources, some equipment.

P: Did you all work for the mainstream press before starting Casa Jurnalistului?

V: Well, we are a lot of people!

P: How many?

V: Hard to say, four people really live in the house, there are about ten people who come often and work here on various articles, there are 20-30 people who have published at us now, many others who have contributed in various ways. There is a group without clear borders and I want it to stay this way, everyone is involved to the extent that he wants and has no obligations.

P: So the "Journalist's house" is not just a name, but also a house!

V: Yes, it works as a residence, offered to journalists to stay somewhere and have it insured in the period when there is work to do for a project, to have no worries and can concentrate just on that topic.

P: How are you financed?

V: Well through donations coming from people.

P: Is it still working, do people donate constantly?

V: Those donations are recurrent.

P: So, some kind of crowd funding?

V: Two years ago, I have made a section on the website and I said let's do this and were about 150-200 people which joined, and these are the recurring donations. Then we publish a lot and people see a button "Donate money". And then there are also the awards we receive and we also apply for various funding. Basically, these recurring donations cover the household expenses, sometimes we acquire equipment or pay for our documenting trips. But it's not enough for daily living of people. Then we also search for grants... and will try in the fall to do another crowdfunding campaign to collect enough donations.

P: Do you have actually salaries? The same people who collaborate with you, do they get something, or the people are working pro bono?

V: You shouldn't take it as a fact, those who work on several topics, do receive something, they get the expertise of a team of very good journalists, these are people which did great stuff, each material is edited by 5-6 people, there are some people who have done cool things and they help others to do the same as them, then the equipment and people who can shoot, and you get the chance you do not have, the opportunity to publish

P: You were saying that there are four people living in the house and ten people collaborating. From which areas do you colleagues come from?

V: Most journalists have graduated and then there are all sorts of people together...there are people from Communication, there are people who write one material and are very, very different and it can be basically anyone but I was referring to those who make larger materials, large investigations, they have to have of course a solid background.

P: Can you tell me if there is a hierarchy, how do you organize yourselves?

V: We don't have anything like that. The others perhaps see me in a privileged position, because I've started this project, it's the way they see it, but we don't need anything like this, here we don't have formalities. The organizing is spontaneous on various projects, depends on what we want to do.

P: What was your main motivation to start the project?

V: I wanted to do the subjects, to document stuff and do it in a setting where I waste lesser time so I can also earn money, live, have to eat but do not waste time, so I could get a job somewhere and win some money and do these projects in my leisure time to, but it was rather less effective, I would have wasted 6-8 hours per day, or wanted to spend as much time doing this and this was the solution we found it and by now it is also the solution for other people working here.

P: What are your working instruments? This question sounds a little bit strange but what innovations did you bring with your initiative? I mean the sort of writing, what makes you different from other newspapers or other online projects?

V: Compared to newspapers are more differences than similarities and the online projects are just a few, you can count them on one hand, it's our project, RISE, OUT OF THE BOX? And who else? I have no idea; these are the most active, everyone has a quite different profile, the journalism beach is a very wide one and there's room for many things, but there are still few projects, and the spaces between them big.

P: Can you please tell in which category you would integrate the journalism you do?

V: Exactly this is what I do not want to do! We do not know yet, there is no category, we do not know what is to do, we do not want to enter a category, we are in an exploration phase, if you want a category to say one exploratory journalism, journalistic innovation and survival.

P: In what sense innovation journalism, where did you inspire for this project, did you have a source in another

country of a similar journalistic project?

V: No, I took it from the base, I wanted to be able to survive and to do this, and I thought about what I need, and I said I need a house, because we had no place to stay and so came the name Casa Journalistului came. Then I needed a source of income and I tried all kinds of stuff and I realized that I will not go on forever with freelancing. We are doing the subjects, articles and sell them for an absolutely ok price, much lower than the used. And I noticed that they are very reluctant to these things, that they would have made more money diffusing our subjects than not diffusing them and when this failed, then I tried all kinds collaborations but this failed because firms and associations have all kinds of constraints and we did not agree with constraints, and so we've came on the public, so at this moment we can do anything, we received a as green card from our readers and supporters.

P: How do you selected your topics?

V: It hits us on the street, I have a list of twenty pages of topics and each day I add something. Sometimes five four additional topics... The problem is how you choose between them and here are a bunch of things to take into account. For instance, if you can get the funding for that documentation could be a criterion, but I do not agree at all, it should not be a criterion, you shouldn't choose your topics depending on funding.

P: What kind of funds are you applying for? For the project or for topics?

V: For subjects, now for a subject on education, domestic violence and are ok but I do not like that we need them.

P: And out of the people's money how long do you think you can survive?

V: The people's money come every month, you can stay on two feet with it, the question is whether we can grow with this money, and what would that growth mean. These things are more abstract, I do not really know. At this scale the project is sustainable. If we continue this way, we will remain sustainable. But the question is how to increase the project itself and how can it be systematized so that it can become replicable for others. I would prefer instead to build a media empire let's say, to build a media group or conglomerate or monolith, I would prefer that a decentralized network of all kinds of centers, institutes, journalistic groups, which can cover a wide range of approaches, of functioning philosophies. But this network should be decentralized. Than this would be much less vulnerable to external pressures. When you have a large media group, which is led pyramid, you rely and put your whole trust in the people at the top, and if people at the top are not from the Securitate, businessmen, pimps, whatever... so these are examples of our reality.

Even if this people weren't here and instead would be some people which are really OK, but when you put them there on the top, they are extremely vulnerable, you know, and it is not OK. You need a handful of superhumans, who also have a lot of money to do stuff or find an alternative solution. I do not believe in superhuman, but I think that the system should be superok and give people decent things to do, that would be the solution, not only in Romania but also elsewhere.

P: In Spain for instance I've found a lot of alternative projects that have started to grow during social movements, can you tell me, how everything started here?

P: What was your first topic?

V: No the initiative started in late 2011 and the first thing that exploded before even having furniture in the house, was the protest in 2012 Januar. Protests are in general more visible but I don't think that journalism can or should build around a social movement. I think that at that time it stops to be a group of journalists and becomes an activist group, it's not bad at all, it's just stuff a bit different. More, I think it's actually a threat to journalists because there is the risk of being swallowed by these movements. I, for example in 2012 I was already writing about all sort of things that interested me for four years and published in Romania Libera. Some articles were

popular some others were less popular, I was still writing in the same way, just as we did with this movement from 2012. It was simply a subject, I documented well, I wrote, I published but what was different, was the reaction of the audience and the context made the topic blow a bit, but for me the topic does not mean more than another topic.

P: Who is your audience?

V: We don't have a target or stuff, but from what I noticed, well, this danger always exist, the average age is close to our age, there are people in cities with computer and internet, educated most of them, which actually doesn't delight me at all, not because I wish to have a more diverse audience, but the problem is that the public, both educated and uneducated isn't educated in media terms. Far few people have media education in Romania, very few people know what news are, what a media reportage is, they don't how to judge or how to smell the misinformers, to know how to distinguish a fake news that appears on the internet from a good news. So basically, we then started from the ground and to try to educate our readers in terms of media. In the first two years these were our most FB posts, they were based on this question: what is journalism, what is manipulation, we searched for all kind of manipulating stories and explained to the people what really happened. We made graphics and charts to show them how manipulation functions and how should journalism look like. We overcame this basic phase and know we educate our public through our own example, quality journalism. People already started to see the differences, just it is very difficult.

P: Romanian public has lost its confidence in the media and in journalism, many journalists I've spoked to, told me that journalism is the profession, which is bascially the longer hand of economic, political interests...

V: It is absolutely true!!! We take what we find on the field, this is the truth! If there is anything that looks like an anomaly of the system, then we are the anomaly!!!

P: Look, there are people who believe in change after a crisis, that a downfall can bring something positive, like the Phoenix arose from the ashes... How do you think is the best way to regain the trust of the readers, what does a media system have to do to recover from this crisis of democratic values?

V: This functions on the principle of a revolution let's say! As a country you have a very corrupt system and in a dictatorship to let's say, very corrupt oligarchy, you cannot reform in the sense that they take those leaders and say "heeeey, you should be more OK!", in order to have some economic performance, well, this is seldom thing doesn't really work. And then revolutions start or a media revolution would mean a breakdown of the existing institutions and the building of new ones on some new principles using all the new techniques we have ever Major and having all sorts of internal checks and balances in the media system to be able to ensure the inside and not the outside, having someone come and say to do so and so and the media inside the system to be able to self-regulate itself and to be able to be sustainable.

How to do this is very hard to say, the whole mass media in the world is in a ideological crisis, it's of course not only the money problem and basically this new digital natives generation has to grow that only after some years spent in a digital world, one can see what really would work.

V: From my point of view, this decentralized system seems very ok and it already starts to become a reality, a lot of media products that appear on television abroad especially, investigations, in-depth materials are more and more made by these independent media networks, which then sell the products as packages to TVs for instance. We have done this several times, I worked with publications and foreign television, basically we have built a story,

P: At what televisions? Which country?

V: Ive worked with many, I wrote for Al Jazeera, The Guardian, Radu worked with Chanel 4, Mako with Vice International, he has made a documentary, I think together with some Danish people, either way it was a little bit problematic, I began to dislike this option and I've started to see all sorts of trouble in this big media and try to

concentrate on things made by us 100%.

P: I understand, that the collaboration with foreign press was also a source of income, wasn't it?

V: Yes, I forgot to tell you before! So it's ok, we did some good materials, we've received decent money, but it's not enough, I actually found the same mechanism just at a more delicate level. But still, it's a huge difference! They have some standards and you can get something and beyond that information, there are all kinds of power games, tricks but beyond all of it is beyond the doorstep. In Romania, this doorstep doesn't even exist. It is basically a mess!

P: Who is your competition? Or don't you see competition in journalism?

V: Competition for us means that you look at a friend and see, for example now as I looked at Mako's article, I tried to make my own even better; the only competition I see, is competition between us; good journalists know each other or journalists which try to be good, also know each other. I made a list on Facebook with all the good journalists in Romania, a newsfeed of about 73 people, it's called "JURNALISM MISTO IN ROMANIA" ("Cool journalism in Romania").

P: Did you made it?

V: Yes, I did, I gathered all the names, it can be useful in various situations.

P: You know what upsets me most, that this kind of journalism, which you do, has to be the mainstream journalism!!! And not be labeled as alternative or... I don't know! (monologue about my perception about journalism and neoliberalism etc.)

V: Yeah! Journalism is a very difficult job and if there is no motivation, it really should mean very very much to you that you can do it. You do not have any financial motivation. I mean any of us could to do things that could bring much more money, fame or something. We do this somehow irrational. There is why there not so many chances that a lot of people do this... until there is no financial motivation or something... because people do stuff for money usually.

P: The ideological system actually does not allow you...

V: No, no one stops you, but do the maths! Why should I do this stuff, which is very difficult and to obtain these benefits, which are not monetary, when I can do with the same effort something which can bring me a lot of money, a lot fans... a lot of whatever...

P: Vlad, I do so hope for you to find a solution for your future, you need to remain on the market to do cool stuff in Romania!

V: We will remain, this is clear! The question is what will happen with the rest!

P: You said that 4 are living there and 20 are collaborators.

V: Yes!

P: And these people are all journalist or are just interested to come and help?

V: It depends, there are many kinds of people and it depends on the closeness of those who live in the house, the ones who leave here, do not need other jobs. But the others must pay their rent, they have to pay all sorts of stuff, and then they need another job and may not engage bot. So each chooses what he needs. It's a platform which helps interested people!

P: Ok, Vlad! Thank you very much for your interesting interview!!!

V: You are welcome! Good luck with your thesis!

P: Thank you!!!

V: Bye!

P: Bye!

Decat o Revista, Cristian Lupsa

Skype Interview on 31.05.2015

C: Hello, can you hear me? #00:00:06-6#

P: Yeah, sure! #00:00:06-6#

C: I am happy it works, because I haven't used Skype like in ages! #00:00:15-3#

P: Thank you very much for your disposal for the interview! #00:00:27-8#

C: No problem, I would have made it even earlier, but just yesterday we've finished the magazine and until yesterday it was crazy! #00:00:37-1#

P: I cannot remember if I wrote to you about what this talk is. (Describing the project) Now, I know that "DoR" doesn't have a similar agenda, what the other projects I am investigating have, but I know that you are independent, isn't that true? #00:01:11-4#

C: Yes, totally independent - we are also an NGO, so... we have the needed characteristics from this point of view. #00:02:14-5#

C: And you do this paper in Austria? #00:02:15-9#

P: Yes, it's my Master thesis. #00:02:19-5#

C: And for my curiosity - what did you find in Greece and Spain? #00:02:31-4#

P: (Telling about some findings...) #00:05:19-0#

C: Ok! I would love to read your paper!!! #00:05:21-9#

P: Yes, sure, it's gonna last longer, but perhaps I will publish some papers before that!!! :-) #00:05:30-1#
#00:05:28-1#

C: Yeah, please! I'm really interested!!! Ok, shoot with the questions! #00:05:41-5#

P: Shoot! Yeah - so please tell me about the situation of the journalism in Romania before and after the crisis. I am also interested in the fact how the profession of journalism changed during this time. I've did a little digging on you and I've found out, that you were also working in different other media before DoR. #00:07:13-6#

C: Yeah, I did! I have also done a Master in the States before I came back to Romania, I came back in 2007. The crisis wasn't there... My perspective is very subjective, because I was never content of the Romanian journalism, also before the crisis started. When I came back in 2007, I was very disappointed of everything what existed. And when I say disappointed, I don't mean this area of political pressures or financial pressures, or this stuff which are still serious problem, but are easy to identified. My problem was about the way journalists used to work and at the way the journalists refer to their jobs and profession and it didn't looked like my ideal way of doing journalism and I had the feeling that they are lazy and they complain a lot. Well, we don't have any time, we don't have any ressources - and this in a time, when in Romania the economic situation was pretty stable. But the journalism was further on superficial, the daily journalism, the magazine journalism was beneath criticism. I didn't had so many fans at that time. I started to teach some course and then started to work at Esquire Romania, when it appeared and I used all the time to argue with my bosses or other colleagues because of these problems. People used to tell me all the time that we cannot do these topics and I was of course not approving this. At that time, this magazine could really afford to make the wished stories and I was in the position when this magazine afforded to pay collaborateurs and also these people who were complaining that they cannot do the proposed topics - also didn't come with other suggestions, ideas, propositions. And there wasn't a topic, which we couldn't have done because some sort of pressures. So, I felt all the time, I also think, that we complain as journalists much more than needed, actually much more than how bad it actually is. #00:10:27-5#

C: I also think that one of the main problems of the crisis in Romania is... well you also know - the economic crisis dubbed the crisis of techonological development, of adapting to new media, of adapting to new ways of consuming information especially from our generation. People which want to be spoken in another way, in other channels and so on. And when all these changes, happen to a journalism, which is mediocre, in the Romanian journalism I've never seen better than mediocre... the hit is horrible, because as much as The Guardian or The New York Times messes it up, those are newspapers, where you feel why they have to survive!!! The question is if it pays off to pay the paper in a digital form when they adapt to the new times. But in Romania, very few times we questioned ourselves among the readers if I would even give money for Adevarul online, EVZ?! And the response is NO, because they are pretty irrelevant for my life now. They are made mediocre, based on opinion and scandals. #00:11:59-0#

C: And yes, all these crisis tieded up the mainstream press a lot. You can observe it at the newspaper best. Now, if you look the numbers, Romania scores really bad at newspaper consume compared to the population number. We buy little, we read little and we do not really know. We score "very well" at TV, the most of the people take their information from TV. What happened during the crisis - the TV stations sprang up like mushrooms - newschannels of 24H, but we don't speak actually about news, we talk about the cheaper version of journalism - you put three people in the studio, where three people put in their two cents (a-si da cu parerea) for three hours. It doesn't cost as much to sent journalists on field to make coverages, serios and relevant stuff. So - if you analyse what happened here, you can see some mini-apocalypse series, which came on a non-solid background. I consume very little from the mainstream press, because, I don't think it reflects the reality of the country - sometimes out of bad faith, because , because now everybody has it's small media trust, website, little thing... TV produces really rarely something, which can be seriously taken into account - it sounds somehow apocalyptical, but I still haven't manage to answer the question, which I get all the time from people coming from abroad - "How come it doesn't exist in a country like Romania a reference media?!" ...nothing... TV, newspapers, online... etc. #0:57:07#

P: But in your opinion, why is it like this?! What is the source of these problems? The fact that the Romanian press is really so mediocre, or the fact that there are also some economic, political pressures? When I say, economic, I mean these people who run this media trusts...In Greece, I was quite shocked. The most newspapers and TV are run by some moguls, which communicate their interests through the media they own. Well, I wasn't so shocked, because in Romania is more or less the same... #00:16:00#

C: It was the same in Romania, I don't know the opinion of the people with whom you talked in Romania, but in my opinion, after the last electoral cycle, the big mogul-time in Romania, which of course existed in Romania in the past 10 years, is now kind of gone. One died, two are in prison, another one was just released. All media trusts

were closed. Of course, there were big interests and according to the political and economical interests, there were tabu-zones. But mostly, when there was money, when there was no economical problems, there were zones, which were not tabu... let's say – we cover biased the political space, but it was not the same command, when willing to write on what happened in the Romanian society, in health and education etc. There was most a lack of vision, because I would say that there is no money, but the few monet was mostly badly administrated and in the same time, the editorial plans and vision of a lot of these media trusts, publications, TV, nearly are missing.

C: I recently had a meeting with some people, which try to start from zero a news-website (niche – sports news) also with investment... and they were ready to push the button, to start the project, but they didn't have any editorial strategy and they didn't know, with whom they would work together. And I think, that we still live in Romania with this thought in mind, that the content is very easy to do. Or that comes the last – first we need money and an office... And I think this is a very damaging mentality because, from a point, you need for your existence, that someone validates the need of your existence – and the only ones which can and should do this within this profession are the readers. And if you generate mediocre content, at some point the readers will abandon you.

C: This is a thought at DoR, which we also had – and although we had moments when we were clumsy in content so to say, but we really struggle, that what we deliver is GOOD! Quality is more important, than everything else. And unfortunately I think this is not a philosophy which is much applied.

P: Sure, this has to be the visit card of a paper... Cristian, you have been in Romania since 2007.

C: Yes, I finished in 2003, when we thought it's already apocalyptic – we saw this way the world, and I came back in 2007 when it was milk and honey.

P: Then I can ask you, if you observed a difference in the way the news are presented – before and after the crisis. What kind of influence had the crisis on the presented topics in the news?

C: This is an interesting question! The first thing which comes to my mind is – a thing which is very strong felt in Romania, I don't know about Spain and Greece – and I think mostly on the online space, it's a desperately wish to get more and more traffic. This despair transformed every news into a contest, who gives the most spectacular title to receive traffic. If you look at business sites or sports sites or political news sites, all work on a similar principle. "Press here, to see what incredible stuff happened to X" and I press there and it didn't happened nothing so incredible. So this is an interesting fact about presenting the news – the effort made to transmit something relevant to the audience went down – mostly in this media, media trust inheritance or TV, the depth reduced a lot and the tendency moved to much more speed and we modify along the way if needed... this working type is inherited from the digital era, from the way TV functions with breaking news and so on. I think this is the biggest inheritance of the crisis regarding news journalism. A lot of the news journalism is being made from the office – there are 1-2 press agencies, which have to go out and there are tens or hundreds of media outlets, which rewrite mostly everything what comes from there. So this is so to say the mainstream. And when you have this traditional space, which functions like this, the development space for anyone who tries to do something else is very BIG, and I think that all the new alternative, independent projects which appeared, fill some gaps, which others don't cover.

C: Well we don't talk about alternative stuff from the way the social area, or protests or investigations are covered and others don't cover but we talk also about food, fashion, cars magazines, whereas these magazines didn't really needed an alternative because they were corrupt. This sustained or get alternative, because there is place for more voices and those dominating voices, where were enough ressources were pretty blunt.

P: From an organizational point of view, did you feel a change in this period... for instance more precarious working conditions, the stability of a job.

C: Well... everything I can tell you here, is anecdotic... I know from people, which still stayed in this media trusts: salaries are smaller, the ways in which contracts are done, are much more creative in order to save more taxes. There are less and less people on each domain. Every week I meet at least one journalist which works and says he is his own boss and it's extraordinary frustrating to be alone in one department – because you have no one to consult, to edit, to exchange ideas and although it looks like you are very free, it's still very difficult to decide for yourself daily how you should fill your space without any feedback... I think, it's not such a good life in these traditional media... there is no money, there are no resources, the energy is very low, innovation is almost inexistent. Paradoxical now, that the things are now so bad, that also the pressures to not discuss some topics are much more felt. This pressures are mostly more visible, when there is no more money, when there are more resources... When there was money and we were 200, it didn't matter that there were 5 which had to write on "appointed" topics, but when we are still 16, than the stuff are more tragical.

P: Ok! If you referred to the pressures, which are now being more felt in this critical time – regarding the freedom of the press – did you observe other type of changes regarding the freedom of speech?

C: Here I think you have to look in the FREEEX Reports. I don't know what I can tell you, because I do not feel this type of pressures what concerns me. I am sure that they exist, I know that they exist, I know there are journalists, which face more difficult realities than the ones we face. In the same time I think I cannot talk about the Romanian space like a censored space, because I think that the content which gets published regardless from where it comes, comes either way somehow to light. There can be places, where there is less freedom, but I think the times in which something cannot come to light are over.

P: This is why I was asking you, because as I was talking to more people about this – some have told me, that yes, the freedom of the press is lower because of the pressures, because of lack of money – on the other hand some others told me, that the freedom of the speech grew also because of the technology has developed – in terms of social media.

C: Yeah, absolutely!!! I totally agree with you! For me, this freedom of the press, the understanding for this topic is somehow inappropriate for the times in which live, because let's not lie to ourselves. Regardless on how bad we have it here in Romania, this country is still a state in the European Union, in which there are no crimes against the journalists, your car doesn't explode, there are of course pressures and fears, but the information come up to light. In the end we have to assume the risk if we want to bring something to light! But how the information is now circulating, you can cover mainly every issue/topic regardless to what happens.

P: But let's talk about more pleasant things! About "Decat o Revista"! In which journalistic category would you include your initiative? What kind of journalism are you practicing there?

C: Everything what we mainly do comes more from an anglo-saxon heritage. We mainly do narrative journalism and we do story-telling, portraits, reportages, personal essays – everything based on a lot of documentation and discussions with the people about we are writing and after wards a lot of editing work and rewriting so that what comes out is a really good story. And this is the direction from which we come to the people. We try to tell some relevant stories for today's Romania, not necessary very common, but some which talk about a social and cultural temperature – for instance the questioning what does it mean to be a Romanian, what does it mean to be Romanian is today's Romania, how we get along with ourselves because of the cultural, historical heritages and so on. I think this country is in a huge confusion regarding its own identity and we try through some well written stories to illuminate a little bit these difficult questions.

P: How did your magazine actually came to light? How old is DoR?

C: Since 2009. The idea came to life in April 2009 and the first number was in November 2009 and it had to be the only one. We made the magazine out of a sort of frustration, a need for the stuff I was telling you before, because we were a group of people, which used to work for different magazines and media trusts and regardless of the fact that the crisis was there, which effect we didn't feel that strong – and we were tired to hear that NO,

this we cannot do, and that you cannot do because we do not have any resources. We wanted to make a good magazine and the way we thought that quality is made and to demonstrate that you don't need so big resources but with enough dedication and implications you can make a very good magazine. So this was at the beginning our bet! Now we are more ... we have other missions with respect to what I told you before... but this is how it was born! Out of a desire to do something which was different to everything what was being done in the Romanian media landscape. When we came to life, this independent, alternative space, with other ways of funding was quite empty. By the end of 2009 it wasn't almost anything. For sure not on paper. Now... the things are different! There are many different initiatives, which is wonderful!

P: What kind of other independent alternative journalistic initiatives are in Romania besides DoR?

C: Wait... I have recently done a list! "Think Outside the Box", are since recently very independent – they were gathering money to restart in a new form. "De la Zero", which are not so active anymore [gives other examples on cultural media]. Vice, I don't know to what category comes Vice, but in Romania they don't do so much investigative journalism as in other countries, but it also exists in Romania. Ahm... yes, of course, Rise Project and Casa Jurnalistului. Now it's a really big wave of similar projects, but the biggest and most well known are these ones.

C: Now there is a time in Romania, in which we also administrated some grants – from companies, which give grants so journalists cover some topics. It's an alternative way of funding for journalists, which want to cover more complex stories. But still, when the money comes from a company, there are some limitations or imposed directions, but still, I think you can also work well in the box.

P: And TotB... they belonged to a newspaper, didn't they?

C: They were part of Hotnews, but they stopped the collaboration for a time being, afterwards, they remained with the funder, which was "Tusnad" (water company) by then, but now the company didn't fund any more, but now they did an NGO and try to gather money by themselves.

P: Indeed – I am on their website now! Do you by chance know someone from there?

C: Sure, I know Andra, who leads the project. I can send you her email address!

P: Thank you very much!

C: You should know, there are a lot of women which do cool stuff in journalism. Although they are not in leading positions but they are a lot and do cool stuff.

P: Do you by chance know – is there a press law in Romania? Or were there some law changes regarding the press in the past five years?

C: I would say NO – but you should verify! Check out what the people from CJI wrote. I don't know how active they are anymore... or the ones from FREEEX. I was either way against these kind of procedures – I don't think that journalism should be regulated. Not even in terms of protecting.

P: [Telling him about the self-governing of ERT Open in Greece between June 2013 and May 2015].

C: Wow, very interesting!!! If you would know how the Romanian National TV Broadcaster is... you would start to cry! Haha!

P: Yes, I know...

C: There are completely divorced to everything what happens. Theoretically the TVR should be the first place, where you should find out what happens in your own country... nothing of the sort unfortunately... Whatever... I

have friends in TVR and the main reasons are not the malignancy but a totally degrading and a lack of organization and of everything. It's horrible!

C: The problem in Romania is not that there are no good people or good content, which comes out, but there are so few places, which you could define – this place is a trustworthy one. There is quality, there are people capable of it, but there is not a place in the Romanian traditional journalism, where you can go with faith and know that the delivered product is a trustworthy one. Perhaps we could get out of this thing. Perhaps no... who knows!

P: Well slowly I see the change through these type of journalistic initiatives.

C: Well, I don't know how optimistic I should be. Well, I care a lot for what we do, I care a lot for what my other colleagues are doing, but let's not lie ourselves... we talk to far less people compared to how big this country is. And as optimists we try to be, because there are people who help out with donations or in our case some make subscriptions or sustain us, the quantity of sustaining which you need in order to make the best quality continuously, exceeds in an unmeasurable way the need. Sorry, the other way around! We need so to say every support we get!!! And you feel that you are relevant and that it counts what you do and you feel that the depth in a subject is higher than the people get from somewhere else. And you have a good feedback and it is ok. If you look at the few awards and grants for journalism in Romania, Casa Jurnalistului and DoR and Rise and two-three other initiatives dominate the press in Romania because we win everything! But this is in a way a false way of view, because we are the kings of a scorched territory. The whole system is down and the whole journalism is in a grave. Of course, that the small ones which still have energy are the best. But the chances for our future and our long-term financial sustainability, without even talking about to scale to some extent or to become a force, are pretty small. Related to how big this country is, we are some small publications, actually publications mainly for Bucharest or in the best case for urban spaces. People from Bucharest and Cluj are reading our magazine, which either way believe the same things which we also believe. For instance, the aunt from Lugoj, which didn't understand how corrupt is actually the local administration, doesn't read the magazine. If you are a journalist, this is what you have to do, to reach as many people as possible to tell them about realities, which happen in their life. And we play by now still for small stakes. I don't say that this is grave, but this is a reality.

P: Cristi, you were briefly saying before about your audience. Can you tell me in more details who is reading you? Do you also have a close relationship to your audience in the sense, do you have events, where you meet your audience, or you are present also on other channels than in the magazine?

C: Yes, since when we started to go outside in the world, this was one of the essential values. We launched each number of the magazine with an event. At the beginning we've organized concerts, then we made some events where we read some articles from the magazine, there were each time a few hundreds of people at these sorts of events. We also did a series of seminars for about two years in which we brought people from different areas to talk about how they tell stories in their professions: artists, musicians, lawyers and business people. We were present at several festivals and events, we had a stand. We try to remain really close especially to... we have about 1000 subscribers. With them we try to remain in contact, we try to cultivate that community, to send them stuff, because they are the main reason for which we can survive. We also do some courses with students or people from NGO or other journalists, we also have a pretty big conference, which will be at the fifth edition this autumn, where we bring journalists especially from the U.S. but also from Western Europe to talk about storytelling in different media. So – we tried from the beginning to not be just a magazine because otherwise you do not have any chance, because in these times a magazine which appears every three months necessary has to have a relationship with the audience.

P: Wow, very interesting! You were saying that you have around 1000 subscribers. Do you also have a circulation number of the magazine, which are bought without subscriptions?

C: We know that more than 2500 buy this magazine. From these 2500, 1000 are subscribers and 1500-1700 buy it from the distribution. These are actually very small numbers related to the population, but related to how down is the Romanian journalism market, it's ok. We can do better, we think that there are more people, which share

our believes, but probably we still didn't manage to reach them.

P: With the kind of activities which you have, I am sure that you will find more.

P: It is a fact that the Romanian readers lost their trust in the press. In your opinion, which is the best way to regain the trust of the Romanian readers and how do you believe that Romanias press can overcome the crisis of democratic values?

C: Pff... you know what is difficult on this topic, and here my answer will be a little more philosophical. I think there is a limit for covering a reality of the world we live in... Regardless how good you make your job as a journalist, the informational battle for the souls and minds of the audience is huge and it may be that you are not believed, regardless of how good you do your job and you've managed to understand and cover the reality of a topic. Because – I don't know... people in general like to consume stuff which reinforce their convictions. And this ideological battle of what happens in the people's mind is huge and I think that this trust is not a battle which was once lost, that can be easily recovered. In general, the stereotype about journalism, everywhere and not only in Romania, is that they are not really the type of useful entities for the society and it may be that in some cases this thing is true, but I think that this stereotype is so strong that the most good journalists will be considered as well useless and everything what we can do is to make our job good hoping that we can enter in the category for exceptions for the readers. I mean, the conception is that journalism is a bad thing, it covers just disasters and bad stuff... but look, these guys are not the same! ☹

C: We had at DoR many discussions about this and we talked a lot about the reason why we do what we do – do we do this because we play a role in the change of the perception about journalism, or do we play a role in the transformation of the journalism and we gave ourselves the following answer: If we have GOOD, but this is not a programmatic thing, because our main purpose is to give the people something good to read. If this inspires other journalists to do the same, if this determines others to try similar things with us, it's wonderful. But, I believe I think we wanted to get out of this space "let's see..." because journalists unfortunately exist very often just for their journalists friends. And we wanted to exist for the people who read us. And if this improves the opinion on the press... I have no idea. If it would be better to happen this – of course, but I don't think that these are some approaches that the people can change this stereotype against this profession.

P: Do you have the feeling that you educate to some extent your audience?

C: Tangential, because there exists among all these projects, which I mentioned. If you read them, and you read us also – you would notice a difference of the tone, because we try to retain from giving lessons and draw conclusions. I think through reading DoR, one can sense which are our values, but you would never find in DoR something which tries to convince you, that this is the way how it has to be. If you read DoR you will see that we wrote a lot about discrimination, about minorities but not in the sense let's laugh about those who are intolerant and ignorant. We did it in the way – come and see what happens in the life of a young gay man, which tries to live in Romania and had to leave the country for being with the person he loves. Or come and see what happens in the life of somebody which was a musical idol for everybody although he was a gipsy and what happened to him when he got sick and didn't have any money and wasn't interesting for anyone and so on... If there is education in these kind of stories it is very subversive, it's created through tolerance and democratic values, through a inversion of the life of somebody which are not like you. But we do not have at all an activist tone. And it has also to do with the answer from before, because I think you have more chances to be read and you are less dangerous if the way to tell things is not so aggressive. And I think we lose sometimes in these space of the people who want to do good in Romania, because they want to make well with force. And you cannot make well with force, because people are afraid of any change. And however intolerant I would be, probably I came to my wrong conceptions about life because stuff happened to me – so you cannot come to me as young and full of verve as you are and tell me, that I didn't understand nothing about the mining issue, that I didn't understand anything about what means homosexuality in Romania or about the power of the church in Romania – all these things won't change my conceptions about the world and life, because I am afraid from a certain age to do this. And I think we try a more empathetic and human approach. I don't hide to you – there were moments when the people

from these initiatives which we were talking before said that, “Hey, you are too gentle, you are not militant enough” ... and for me, this is a compliment.

P: Do you have any political topics?

C: Yeah! Sure! Last year for elections, we did for three months a project, where we had a reporter, which covered each of the four main candidates. But, our stake was more anthropological, not to demonstrate that Iohannis was better than Ponta, or Macovei has more integrity than Iohannis and so on... and it was a sort of a project, which was showing a political show, where everybody is participating. Sure, if some were saying untrue stuff, I can translate this into journalism without concluding that one of them is a “bastard”. And in the winter number, after the elections, we had a huge portrait of Elena Udrea and Traian Basescu, which are not people, that many from our team would follow their battle, but they were two important protagonists for Romania in the past 10 years. And I think it’s our duty to understand also those who we do not like. So yes, we covered political topics and we will continue covering these kind of topics, trying to report as in-depth as possible.

P: With whom are you competing for your audience?

C: This is my favourite answer because we compete with anyone, who wants to rob 5-10 minutes from your life! I try to tell everyone, especially the students from journalism, to not fool themselves with this question, because the competition of anyone who does similar things are your FB friends which do not stop posting around, are I don’t know, series, music, anything is a competition which tries to rob your time. If there is a competition, I think there is a competition with almost everyone on a limited amount of money. I do not believe in competition anymore... I think that the more people try to make quality journalism, the merrier. I always thought that these initiatives which are sustained in an alternative way have to find some ways to support each other, but I think that by now we are the ones, which promote the others compared to the other way around... but this was always our philosophy. We try to give to the audience also things which are not our, at least on Facebook, we try to make reference to things which appear also in other places, because yes, the space is so small and if the people did something good, it’s nice to know about it.

P: Cristi, thank you very much for the interview!!!

C: You are very welcome! I hope the things helped you somehow!!!

P: Of course! Thank you! All the best!

C: Good luck, Patricia!!! You too and please send me your paper when you are ready!!!

Curriculum Vitae

PATRICIA STEFANIA SMOLEAN (Bakk.phil.)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

Academic Graduation	10/2012 – 10/2015
Field of Study	Master - University of Vienna Major - Communication Science – Master Thesis Title “The Rise of Independent and Investigative Journalism in Times of Crisis in East and South Europe” Minor – Theater, Film and Media Science – Cultural Marketing, Austrian Photography in the 20 th century.
Academic Graduation	10/2009 – 12/2012
Field of Study	Bachelor of Arts - University of Vienna Major - Communication Science – Focus on Television, Research, PR Minor - Economics and Theatre, Film and Media Science – Visual Aesthetics, Production and Logistics, Marketing, Organization and Personal, Management of Innovation.
Academic Graduation	01/10/2008 - 01/10/2009
Field of Study	Bachelor of Arts – University of Vienna Transcultural Communication – German, English, Romanian Intercultural Communication, Professional Communication, Business English, Cultural Sensitivity, Translation between German-English-Romanian
Academic Graduation	2004-2008
Field of Study	“Nikolaus Lenau” German Highschool with focus on Mathematics and Informatics Romania, Timisoara

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Co-Editor in the in the collective work "Environmental Journalism and Communication" with the chapter “The governance of the journalistic speech about the environmental movement in an age of crisis” to be published by the Panteion University in Athens. (07.2015)

Panel Speaker at the International Conference “ISIS - Response and Responsibility of the Sciences of Information” at Vienna University of Technology about “Critical Media in times of crisis: a case study of news media in Greece, Romania and Spain” (June 5, 2015)

Research Group Member at University of Vienna, Institute of Communication on Media Governance, Organisation and Media Industries - Prof. Dr. Katharina Sarikakis (06/2014 -)

Grant Receiver

KWA, University of Vienna for research trips in Spain and Greece as part of my master thesis (2014-2015)

European Forum Alpbach, Grant for participating at the EFA conference - „Justice - Responsibility for the Future“: (18/08/2011 - 03/09/2011)

WORK EXPERIENCE

LET'S CEE Film Festival	15/08/2015 – 15/10/2015 Team leader for organization of the Masterclasses
Pat a Mat East-European Café-Restaurant 1090 Vienna	15/05/2014 – 10/08/2015 Cultural and Event Management, Marketing and Service
ANZENBERGER Gallery 1100 Vienna	27/05/2013 – 31/06/2013 Intern for the ViennaPhotoBookFestival 2013
OKTO TV 1140 Vienna	12/01/2012 – 06/2014 Production Team - Discover TV (on voluntary basis)
AIESEC VIENNA UV 1020 Vienna	01/03/2012 - 30/06/2012 Project Manager – “Colors of the World: Tolerance & Diversity”
TEDx Vienna 1090 Vienna	22/10/2011 Organizational Team at the Event TEDx Vienna 2011 (on voluntary basis)

EXTRA-CURRICULAR

Speaker - The Central European Student Convention in Vienna: „Ein Dorf setzt auf Widerstand. Gespräch mit Patricia Smolean, Publizistin, über den Kampf des rumänischen Dorfes Rosia Montana, gegen die Umwandlung in eine Goldmine.“ (08.03.2010)

Co-Organizer of “Vienna saves Rosia Montana” – co-establishing a Romanian activism movement in Vienna against gold mining: organizing demonstrations, cultural events, informational campaigns (09/2013 – 02/2014)

Volunteer within UESF – United for Education and Sustainable Futures – NGO, responsible for several educational projects and external relations for the organization (10/2013 – 04/2014)

Participant – Journalism Interview Workshop organized by Progress OEH Magazine (02/02/2013)

Panel Discussion Participant - Youth Universal Peace Federation - “Exploring Global Citizenship” (12/04/2012)
<http://youthupf.wordpress.com/2012/04/15/exploring-global-citizenship-12th-of-april-2012/>

Participant – Buddy Project, Univ. of Vienna – Journalistic Collaboration between Brno and Vienna (2011, 2012)

Speaker - The XII. Central European Student Convention: „Freedom, Tolerance and Justice“: “Death of Media and diversity of opinion“ (12-14/03/2010)

PERSONAL SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS

Native language	Romanian German (C2), English (C1), Spanish (A1)
IKT-Knowledge and other know-how	MS Office, Adobe Photoshop, CRM, Final Cut Pro, SPSS Business English

ABSTRACT (English)

Introduction. This thesis is about the rise of the new independent and critical journalism in times of crisis in East and South Europe. The purpose of the paper is to map and analyze these new forms of independent and critical journalistic initiatives in countries like Spain, Greece and Romania, which arose out of the distrust in the local traditional media and support the freedom of speech, the main key of democracy, and the value of journalism as a public good. The topic of this thesis is therefore of big relevance and actuality because these new forms of journalism developed as a consequence of the European crisis in the media sector. **Methods.** For a comprehensive understanding and profound analysis, the design of this research is based on three different pillars: desk review (theories about media governance, press freedom, journalism and neoliberalism, the crisis of the mainstream media, crisis as a chance and about several non-mainstream journalistic genres), background and historical research (the media context from Spain, Greece and Romania) and field work (interviews with the owners/editors/journalists). **Results.** The media crisis generated the dismissal of thousands of journalists among whole Europe, but mostly in the crisis countries, such as Greece, Spain and Romania. Hundreds of media outlets were closed down and the circulation of newspapers declined a lot. The social cohesion is broken and therefore, there is more pressing need to address social issues. These new independent critical journalistic initiatives basically support the democratic public sphere, they close the gap between the ones in power and the civil society and come with critical reporting on those in power. All initiatives are independent of any private interests and are uncontrolled, are critical and investigative and have a sharp focus on social change. They are close to the society - journalists cultivate and implement a dialogical culture engaging with citizens, but always concerned about the truth and an accurate, non-distorted approach to reality. They are constituted in form of cooperatives and are self-managed. They have horizontal hierarchies, innovative funding and at the moment rather small teams. They do investigations on economic and political issues, they discuss the crisis in all different facets, unveil corruption cases, address social problems and issues of freedom of the speech. Therefore, their orientation is towards civil societies, of which the mainstream press does not write about and they consider themselves watchdogs of those in power. In this sense they have managed to retrieve their democratic identity and to revitalize the field of journalism, which was sentenced to fall apart. The philosophy of these initiatives is similar to the one of the slow journalism movement.

ABSTRACT (Deutsch)

Einführung. Diese Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Aufstieg des neuen, unabhängigen und kritischen Journalismus in Zeiten der Krise in Ost- und Südeuropa. Das Ziel der Arbeit ist, alle neue unabhängige und kritische journalistische Initiativen aus Spanien, Griechenland und Rumänien analysieren, die die Pressefreiheit unterstützen, entscheidend für die Demokratie sind und den Journalismus als öffentliches Gut betrachten. Diese Initiativen sind hauptsächlich aus dem Misstrauen gegenüber den traditionellen Medien entstanden. Das Thema dieser Arbeit ist dementsprechend von großer Relevanz und Aktualität, weil diese neue Formen des Journalismus als eine positive Folge der europäischen Krise gelten. **Methoden.** Um eine tiefgreifende Analyse diesen Initiativen und ihren Kontext zu machen, basiert die Arbeit auf drei methodologischen Schritte: Literaturrecherche (Theorien der Media Governance, Pressefreiheit, Journalismus und Neoliberalismus, Medienkrise, Krise als Chance und Beschreibungen einiger non-mainstream Journalismusarten), Hintergründe, Kontext und historische Forschung (Medienkontext aus Spanien, Griechenland und Rumänien) und Feldarbeit (Interviews mit den Eigentümern/Redakteuren/Journalisten). **Ergebnisse.** Die Medienkrise hat die Entlassung von Tausenden von Journalisten in ganz Europa, aber vor allem in den Krisenländern wie Griechenland, Spanien und Rumänien bewirkt. Hunderte von Medien sind geschlossen und die Verbreitung von Zeitungsauflagen sinken stetig. Die soziale Kohäsion ist zerrütet und es besteht hoher Bedarf nach einer Lösung, um die sozialen Probleme anzugehen. Die neue unabhängige kritische journalistische Initiativen verstärken die Öffentlichkeit und schließen die Kluft zwischen der Zivilgesellschaft und den Mächtigen. Alle Initiativen sind unabhängig von privaten Interessen, sind kritisch und investigativ und haben einen scharfen Fokus auf sozialen Wandel. Sie sind bürgernah und pflegen eine Dialogkultur mit der Gesellschaft, während sie sich ständig damit befassen, dass sie die Wirklichkeit richtig und unverzerrt rüberbringen. Sie funktionieren als Genossenschaften und sind selbstverwaltet. Sie haben flache Hierarchien, innovative Finanzierung und derzeit eher kleine Teams. Ihre eingehende Untersuchungen betreffen wirtschaftliche und politische Fragen, die Krise in allen Facetten, sie decken zahlreiche Korruptionsfällen auf und befassen sich mit sozialen Probleme der Gesellschaft. Diese Initiativen richten sich auf die Zivilgesellschaften, worüber die traditionellen Medien zu wenig berichten und sie sehen sich als watchdogs der Eliten. In diesem Sinne, haben sie es geschafft ihre demokratische Identität zurückzuholen und das Feld des Journalismus etwas zu revitalisieren. Die Philosophie dieser Initiativen ist ähnlich zu der von der Slow Journalism Bewegung.