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Tolerance and pluralism as eternal issues in media politics

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Plenary session in conference "Intercultural communication
in the modern world: the role of the mass media"

Federal University of Ekaterinburg, 16 April 2014

Role of media: an overview of history

- First *many* newspapers in a town, each representing particular interests – media were *advocates* of political, economic and social forces – extensions of institutional power pursuing *partisan journalism*
- Later concentration led to *few* papers detached from particular interests – media claiming to be *trustees* of their publics – non-partisan, universal platform pursuing *objective journalism*
- These media were largely supported by advertising – integrated to *market forces*
- Countertrends by social media and *civic journalism*

Tolerance & pluralism in media history

- In the first stage of many parallel advocate media pluralism was built into the media system, while tolerance depended on underlining social forces
- In the second stage of concentrated monopoly media pluralism was conditioned by the universal platform and market forces, with tolerance following the suite
- Later countertrends with social media and civic journalism increase pluralism but no longer in a common platform, while tolerance is reduced rather than increased by separatist groupings

Democracy and public sphere

- Conventional concept of democracy is based on the idea of an *informed and active citizenry* supported by a public sphere through the media
- The public sphere is supposed to provide for citizens both *supply of information* and means for them to *exchange opinions*
- This requires *abundant, manifold information* and *open debate* facilitating rational-critical deliberation
- Ideally this is known as *deliberate democracy*

Example of contemporary position

The Representative on Freedom of the Media of the Organization for Security of Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) organized media conference in South Caucasus in Tblisi, Georgia, in October 2011, declaring that

“...media pluralism is a key value and one of the most important conditions for the existence of a democratic society in which Internet plays a crucial role.”

Pluralism revisited

- Pluralism means that there are many and different voices – preference for multiplicity over unity and diversity over uniformity
- Yet in truth seeking abundance may disturb rather than help – equal attention to all opinions supports prejudices and prevents scientific world view
- Too much pluralism may turn healthy diversity into unhealthy dissonance eliminating any consensus
- Naïve pluralism counts on neo-liberal free choice – resisting any central planning, social policy and political economy of institutional structures

Contemporary realities

- Media supply in most countries is far from ideal diversity – despite abundance it remains ideologically quite uniform
- On the other hand there has been a shift from ideological control to cultural chaos with more dissent and openness rather than homogeneity
- However, fragmentation prevents public sphere from providing rational deliberation & consensus
- Tolerance is loosing ground
- Need for rethinking pluralism, choice and regulation



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COMET

Media Systems in Flux: The Challenge of the BRICS Countries - Project 2012-2016

Introduction

Plan

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Introduction

This project is concerned with comparing media systems and journalism doctrines in the new coalition in global politics known as "BRICS" – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. This provides a challenge to conventional ways of approaching media systems and the role of journalism in society.

The project examines, firstly, the *theoretical concepts* of

- a) media system
 - b) role of media and journalists in democracies
 - c) freedom and independence of media
- by placing the BRICS countries within a global context.

Secondly, the project examines the *empirical situation* of

- a) citizen participation in and through media
- b) professional orientation of journalists
- c) education of journalists

in the BRICS countries in a comparative context.

Background with references is provided in the Research plan submitted to the Academy of Finland in September 2011. The Academy decided in May 2012 to accept the project for four years of funding, beginning in September 2012.