

# MACEDONIA

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## INTRODUCTION

This analysis tries to provide answers to the key research questions related to the media system in Macedonia: (1) whether and in which way institutional corruption and political clientelism were manifested in the media system in Macedonia<sup>1</sup> and (2) whether these phenomena have prevented the media from performing their basic democratic role – to serve the public interest and citizens.

The analysis of the Macedonian media system shows that the convergence – or homogenisation – thesis of Hallin and Mancini (2004; 2012) could not be confirmed in the Macedonian context. The two scholars argued that the process of European integration, the decline of traditional mass political parties, the American model of professional journalism and the commercialisation of the media market might be pushing the young European democracies toward the liberal political and media model. While it is true that such processes took place during the first decade of the political development of Macedonian society and that the media system was fully built on the foundations of the western liberal model, the direction that the development of the political system in Macedonia took in the last decade confirms that this model could not easily take roots in the media system of a “transitional democracy” due to structural anomalies in the political system.

The first chapter focuses on the various stages of *media policy* development in Macedonia and describes the main risks and obstacles that prevented the creation of a coherent media system based on respect for media freedom, independence and pluralism. The main contradiction underlying its development is that throughout the process of harmonisation with the European media model, the media legislation was flawless but its practical implementation has steadily deteriorated over the years.

*Media ownership* is analysed in the second chapter, where several types of ownership patterns were identified based on two criteria: who the owner is and what the interplay between the media owner and political or business actors is. The analysis shows how specific patterns emerged and how they changed during different stages of the political and media system development: when the media sector was ruled by individual owners, when the Government took control and established hegemony over the traditional media, and during the rise of the online public sphere where the journalists established their own space.

The third chapter proves that the integrity of media is grounded in the structure of their *financing*. It shows how state advertising created even more robust political-clientelistic and corrupt links between the government, owners and the media. The concepts of institutional corruption and economy of dependence can be empirically traced by in-

investigating thoroughly the connections between the regular state advertising and political advertising during election campaigns.

In the fourth chapter, we analyze briefly the managerial structures and editorial policy of the *public service* as a consequence of the broader processes. We critically assess the legislative and the practical aspects of the work of managerial bodies with respect to the risks related to the fulfilment of the public interest mission of the Macedonian Radio and Television. We also examine the longstanding problem of unstable and insufficient funding of the public service.

The fifth chapter presents the developments within *journalism as a profession* resulting from the given relations between the media, business and politics. It answers how the clientelistic ties between political actors, business players and media owners are actually reflected within journalistic practices and ethics. It also describes how this web-like setting undermines the substance of the democratic function of journalism as a defender of the public interest.

Finally, in the chapter entitled General Conclusions, we try to explain these findings and put them in a theoretical perspective using the framework developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004; 2012). We categorize the current Macedonian media system as the Mediterranean model, but we make an adaptation to encompass the structural differences in the Macedonian political and media system and we name this subcategory Polarized Hegemonic Pluralism.

The research was conducted from August 2013 to the end of February 2014. Several qualitative methods for data collection and analysis were applied: in-depth interviews with media institutions representatives, academics, experts, journalists, media professionals and NGO representatives; focus groups with journalists working for broadcast, print and online media; the analysis of secondary data collected from various official sources; the qualitative analysis of many legal acts, by-laws, policy documents, as well as other research studies and publications.

## 1 MEDIA POLICY: GOOD LEGISLATION, POOR IMPLEMENTATION

The development of media policy in Macedonia is characterized by a paradox: media freedoms were broader under the restrictive media legislation and vice versa, once the legislation was fully harmonized with the fundamental European standards, media became much more dependable on various interests and journalism fully degraded and unprofessional. However, this thesis seems paradoxical only at first glance. The complex issue of the actual degree of media freedom in a democratic system cannot be reduced to

an unequivocal explanation of the relationship between the normative system and media practice. The analysis presented in this section shows how the webs of influences spun by both political and economic actors have expanded over the three stages of development and implementation of media policy in Macedonia.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1 FIRST STAGE: THE CONSTITUTION OF THE DEMOCRATIC MEDIA SYSTEM AND A CONSENSUS OVER THE PUBLIC INTEREST GOALS

At the outset of Macedonia's independence, the belief that there was no need for the adoption of any media legislation prevailed. This view was defended by certain policy makers on the grounds that freedoms were guaranteed by the 1991 Constitution. The development of media policy started in 1996/1997 when the first Broadcast Law was drafted. The Law was not preceded by any strategic policy document but it incorporated elements characteristic of pluralistic media systems: it encompassed the creation of an independent regulatory body; a Public Broadcasting Service with a clear mission and independent funding; a system of granting licences (concessions) to private broadcasters; the protection of media pluralism and program diversity etc.

Representatives of the civil society sector,<sup>3</sup> the academic community and the international organisations<sup>4</sup> took part in the shaping of legislation and future media policies. A general assessment of this period is that among all actors "... enthusiasm prevailed for the values of the pluralistic media system and the public sphere as a space for expression of diverse views and opinions."<sup>5</sup> The private sector was still developing and its main interests mainly coincided with the interests of the public at large. With the hindsight, the journalists assessed this period (1997 to 2005) as a time characterized by a greater degree of pluralism and open and critical debate in the public sphere. "The freedom at that time cannot be compared with the non-freedom of today ... as an editor in chief ... I did have contacts with politicians ... but, no guidance at all ... not a word on that."<sup>6</sup> Similarly, "... political debate was present in the media at that time, the editors and journalists had freedom to decide independently on the content of the news ... we cannot imagine this today ..."<sup>7</sup>

During this period, there were some forms of pressure on the regulator which were intensified when the ruling party began to lose power.<sup>8</sup> Also, over the years, the media owners became increasingly aware of the power of media pressure in swaying the government and promoting their business and political interests. Hence they started influencing both the institutions and the editorial policy of their media outlets. The case of *A1 TV* was widely debated. Its owner, Velija Ramkovski, initially supported its neutral-critical position but later his political appetites, combined with his business interests, brought the television and its newsroom into direct conflict with the VMRO-DPMNE Government, which in turn launched the "Pajazina" scandal related to the tax evasion by companies owned by Ramkovski. A

journalist who took part in a focus group described this period as follows: "... There had always been pressure...but, as time passed, the mechanisms of control over the media have become refined... We were lucky in the '90s, *A1 TV* appeared which was somehow an opposition to the Government but not siding with the opposition [parties], and it created an atmosphere of critical journalism ... which continued later when *SDSM* fell from power ... and when *A1 TV* collapsed everything went three to four steps backward."<sup>9</sup>

## 1.2 SECOND STAGE: THE GAP BETWEEN THE NORMATIVE AND ACTUAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE REGULATOR

The initiative for the new Broadcasting Law was started and coordinated by the civil society sector already in 2003 and the process of drafting lasted almost a year and a half before the legal text reached the Parliament.<sup>10</sup> The main intention was to overcome the weaknesses of the previous legislation and to incorporate mechanisms to prevent the influence of the government, political parties and media owners on the media and the regulatory body. For example, the procedure for the nomination and election of the Broadcasting Council members was carefully designed to ensure transparency and to minimize political influence. However, the expectations that the regulator would thus become more independent have not been fulfilled. It turned out that the political parties, through their channels of influence, could still affect the decisions of the authorized bodies. Professional competence of the candidates, their qualifications and experience in the field, although explicitly required in the law, were not taken as criteria in the nomination procedure. Also, the process of appointment was not sufficiently transparent and did not allow for public scrutiny as defined in the law.<sup>11</sup> The consequence was that "...we received such an incompetent structure, ... we all knew that they were proposed by a political party...those people then began to do a 'private trade' [to negotiate with the Government] ... so the reasons were not only party-political but also private interests ... the former president [of the Broadcasting Council ...] is a typical example of that."<sup>12</sup>

The *VMRO-DPMNE* party, which won the Parliamentary elections in June/July 2006, considered the members of the newly appointed regulator to be close to their political opponent *SDSM*. In March 2007, a new legislation was drafted with the aim to merge the two regulators. The argument was of "technological and regulatory nature," but the real intention was to achieve political dominance over the work of the regulators.<sup>13</sup> The Government withdrew the proposed laws following public pressure and suggestions from the European Commission. Tensions between the Broadcasting Council and the Government continued in 2007, resulting in the refusal of the first Strategy drafted by the Broadcasting Council.

The pressure abated in 2008 with the allocation of 600.000 euro from the state budget to the Broadcasting Council for monitoring the media coverage of the elections. In

the same year, the Government was the second biggest advertiser in the television sector. Media experts<sup>14</sup> and journalists warned that state advertising could stimulate unfair competition and could influence editorial policy "...punishing those who are disobedient by not publishing there its campaigns."<sup>15</sup> The EC also reacted, warning that "public expenditure on state advertising ... is not sufficiently transparent and therefore has the potential to undermine editorial independence."<sup>16</sup> Only the Broadcasting Council reacted ambiguously stating that "... there is no law that can prevent the Government from advertising in the media ..."<sup>17</sup> In the opinion of one interviewee, such reaction was a consequence of the "...new connections between the regulator and the officials from the Government... in order to keep personal positions and not to be dismissed ..."<sup>18</sup>

The first Strategy for the Development of Broadcasting<sup>19</sup> identified all major problems in the broadcast sector and laid down new directions for regulatory policy along with a scenario for digitalisation. However, ever since the beginning of 2008, the measures undertaken by the Broadcasting Council have been completely opposite to the strategic goals. For example, although the digitalisation process requires a new legislation, the Council has done nothing and has even held a position that such legislation is not necessary.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the sentence stating that "a moratorium on further allocation of analogue frequencies is to be introduced for terrestrial broadcasting" was literally deleted from the strategic document.<sup>21</sup> This enabled the Council, in 2008 and 2009, to allocate new analogue licences in order to fulfil the promises given to new media owners.<sup>22</sup> However, other influential owners (of *AI*, *Sitel* and *Kanal 5*) felt their positions jeopardized by the newcomers and put pressure on the regulator to issue additional national TV licences to all of them. Not being able to resist pressures, the Broadcasting Council in fact replicated the already existing ownership patterns and further increased the fragmentation of the media market.<sup>23</sup>

For this study, the most indicative was the way in which the Council allocated the new licences in 2008. There were several breaches of the law, tendering documents and the rules set out in the Code of Conduct of the regulator.<sup>24</sup> Some applications submitted after the specified deadline were nevertheless taken into consideration; some applications were lacking, failing to include the required documentation (technical specifications, a financial plan, a document to guarantee the funding of the business plan, etc.); professional services of the regulator were ordered to fill new application forms for those applicants that didn't provide correct and complete information etc.<sup>25</sup>

What were the reasons for such a proliferation of licences on the already fragmented TV and radio markets? First, the regulator was under strong pressure from business/political centres of power. Given the competences, political affiliations and personal/group interests of the Council members, it is no wonder that that Council succumbed to pressure.

One can probably find the most appropriate explanation for such behaviour in the local culture of political clientelism widely present in all forms of social life. According to the current President of the Broadcasting Council, “the reason ... was to intentionally make the media economically weak and therefore politically dependent on the political and economic centres of power.”<sup>26</sup> There is also a third explanation that the Council actually tended to increase the funds gathered from the licence fees (called broadcast fee in Macedonia) to secure its financial stability.<sup>27</sup>

### 1.3 THIRD STAGE: THE WAVE OF POLITICAL COLONISATION OF THE MEDIA SPHERE AND THE FALL OF THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC INTEREST IN MEDIA POLICY

After 2011, the confrontation between the two main opponents within the Macedonian political block gradually resulted in a complete political domination of the VMRO-DPMNE ruling party over the entire media sphere. The main lever used by the ruling party to accomplish its domination was its supremacy in the Parliament and the marginalisation of the political opposition which enabled it to adopt all legal solutions with ease. Therefore, “the period when VMRO-DPMNE came to power is characterized by a total abuse of the regulation ... due to their political ideology in which the media are key in achieving the political goals ... they are a means of mobilisation and not a means of information.”<sup>28</sup>

Another mechanism for achieving dominance over the media sphere was state advertising which intensified after VMRO-DPMNE came to power in 2006. In the years that followed, public campaigns of the Government and its ministries accounted for a huge volume of the total advertising expenditure. This produced the private media’s continual dependence on the state budget and turned the competition among media owners into an unscrupulous struggle for state money. The (financial) dependence from the ruling politics opened the most efficient (direct and indirect) channels of influence on newsrooms and journalists. The management-appointed editors of the most influential media directly participated in the deployment and assignment of journalists and even in the redeployment of entire newsrooms from one to another “pro-governmental” media.<sup>29</sup>

During the last ten years, civil society organisations and professional associations gained strength and today they represent an important corrector of public policies. This especially refers to the Association of Journalists (AJM) and the Independent Union of Journalists and Media Workers. But because of their critical role, they were systematically and continuously subject to various forms of pressure, ranging from the dismissals of trade union leaders through the publishing of a number of offensive and obscene texts in certain media to the encouragement of the creation of a parallel journalists association (Macedonian Association of Journalists – MAN) that is meant to take over the role of the

current AJM as a legitimate representative of the journalistic community.<sup>30</sup> In this connection, we should mention the events of 24 December 2012, when amidst political tensions in the Parliament the journalists were expelled from the gallery where they were following the debate about the budget and were prevented from witnessing the forcible removal of the opposition MPs from the conference hall.

Attempts at political influence over the work of the regulator were also evident when the number of the Council members was increased from 9 to 15.<sup>31</sup> The justification was that these changes would make the work of the regulator more efficient and more transparent. However, the real reason behind it was to gain political majority within the Council in order to outvote other members (who were perceived as being close to the opposition) when deciding on the revocation of the licence of the “opposition” TV station *A1* and its second channel *A2*.<sup>32</sup> The civil sector and media experts reacted by arguing that the Government’s intention was to impose control over the regulator so the move was perceived as its attempt to create a split within the regulatory body.<sup>33</sup> The representatives of the current Broadcasting Council commented that “...the reasons for the decision of the Parliament are much more complex... because certain remarks to the work of the PSB in 2011 were based on a report sent to Brussels, which was not adopted at all by the Broadcasting Council ...”<sup>34</sup>

At the end of 2011, the Ministry of Transport and Communications started drafting a new law on media which apart from audiovisual media services also contained a proposal to regulate some aspects of the work of press media and electronic publications. The media community was divided regarding this initiative, fearing further interference of the Government in media freedom. Professional organisations and NGO’s at the national level published critical analyses and statements on the draft law<sup>35</sup> and opposed severely the inclusion of the print and online media in the law. Several international organisations<sup>36</sup> also conducted the analyses and issued statements emphasizing that the new legislation should be carefully reviewed so as not to further jeopardize media freedom. Following the remarks given by the Council of Europe and OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the text of the law was split into two separate texts: the Law on Media and the Law on Audio and Audio-Visual Media Services. However, some of the crucial remarks submitted by the dominant part of the media community were not incorporated. The most important one was that the future Agency on Audio and Audio-Visual Media Services would have the authority to conduct the so-called administrative supervision over the work of the print media and online publications and to initiate misdemeanour procedures. This indeed raised a lot of concerns among independent media and journalists and among experts and academics that the future regulator will obtain “superpowers” and will impose control over the few critical voices that are now coming from the online news media.



As a result of this concern, the key media organisations (AJM, Trade Union and MIM) issued a public statement emphasizing that they would no longer take part in the public debate as the two laws did not actually result in qualitative improvements.

Despite this, the authorities announced that both laws would be submitted for parliamentary procedure in September 2013. The decision was, however, opposed by the political party of the ethnic Albanians called Democratic Union for Integration, a coalition partner in the Government. DUI blocked the adoption procedure arguing that they did not want to participate in the adoption of non-European laws. It should also be noted that these events coincided with the imprisonment of the journalist Kežarovski, who was in custody for several months for allegedly disclosing the identity of a protected witness. There had been no further information on whether the laws would be adopted until December 2013 when the President of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia at a joint press conference with the Minister of Information Society announced that they had reached an agreement that online media would not be subject to any regulation. The Minister also stated that the laws would be first adopted by the Parliament in the form in which they had been originally submitted (with online media included), and later amended through a very short procedure to exclude online media. The critical part of the journalistic community and experts saw this event as a disappointing solution and a kind of undeserved victory of the authorities that further weakened the position of independent media and critical journalism. Both laws were passed on 25 December 2013 and amended on 25 January 2014.

#### 1.4

#### CONCLUSIONS

The root of all adverse conditions detected in the development of media policy is associated with the sudden and unrestrained development of the public sphere during the early stages of the transition and with the optimistic vision that democratisation would be quick and easy. The first broadcast legislation, although not perfect, laid the foundation for the liberal model of media policy which had the public interest in its focus. However, the political and economic development of society took a direction that led to an absolute dominance of the private interest. The privatisation of the social property and the interests of the new political and economic actors caused changes that contributed to ambivalent attitudes towards journalism as a profession. The political ideology that built on the new social and economic structures treated the media and journalism as a tool for achieving political and corporate interests of the emerging elites, instead of seeing them as a means for effective citizen participation. Despite the normative model that declaratively guaranteed the public interest in the media system, much different processes occurred in practice dragging the institutions away from their normatively defined function. The journalists

described these processes as regressive and as gradual sophistication of the mechanisms for control over the media by the political elites. Today, almost no one speaks about the public interest, although there is a deep concern and nostalgia among journalists for the lost professional values.

The NGO sector, despite making a progress over the last decades, still has quite a limited influence on public policies and consequently on the wider processes of good governance. Several civil society organisations conducted reliable and critical analyses of public policies, but the governments invariably ignored them. The same goes for NGO's and professional organisations' severe criticism of the draft media law – despite many objections to the draft text and transparency of the entire process, the Government simply circumvented the critics by accepting only selected or irrelevant amendments to the legal text.

The role of foreign actors, especially the Council of Europe and the European Commission was quite positive in the development of the first two broadcast laws. In addition, the series of seminars on the audio-visual policy run in the region between 2003 and 2005, encouraged a dialogue between policy making institutions, regulators, media experts and professional associations. Although certain activities continued within the EU Enlargement process, a more active role of the European Commission is needed in monitoring policy development and in encouraging dialogue among all stakeholders.

Some positive changes could be certainly detected in all these developments, although the disappointment, apathy and conformism are widespread sentiments among journalists. What is certainly worthy of emphasizing is the authentic and courageous work of the present leadership of the Association of Journalists and of the Independent Trade Unions of Journalists and Media Professionals. Also, the activities undertaken jointly by the AJM, the ITUMP and the Macedonian Institute for Media (for introducing self-regulation, debates on the draft media laws etc.) fuelled a very critical public debate about the main issues of concern within media policy.

## **2 GOVERNMENTS AND MEDIA OWNERS: A GAME OF THRONES**

The analysis has identified several types of ownership patterns in the media sector in Macedonia. These were determined using two questions as criteria; 1) Who is the owner? 2) What is the interplay (covert or overt) between the media owner and political or business actors? These patterns transformed in the course of media system development, leaving us with the three more or less clean-cut stages of development: 1) stage one, during which the media (primarily the television sector) were ruled by individual owners who misused their outlets to exert pressure on the Government; 2) stage two, which began

when the Government gained control over the owners and established hegemony over the traditional media, and 3) stage three, which began when the online public sphere became established providing an opportunity for journalists to set up their own media and practice journalism with greater freedom.

The developments in the television sector in the 1990s had impact on all other media sectors. The local media moguls primarily fought for supremacy over the television sector because for many years television was the only influential media. They used their ownership both as a tool for political influence and to gain the economic power. The print sector came to the fore in the second part of the 1990s and it went through three stages of development: (1) in the first instance, individual journalists became the owners of print outlets; (2) the second stage began with the arrival of WAZ on the Macedonian media market – the corporation had bought the three biggest daily newspapers; and (3) the third stage was marked by WAZ's withdrawal, with the local companies close to the ruling party taking over its operations. The online media sector has begun to flourish only recently – however, the first problems are already visible. While it is indeed the only sector that nurtures critical journalism, the proliferation of pro-Governmental online outlets suggests that the Government has found a way to penetrate this sector too in an attempt to colonize this latest sanctuary of critical journalism. Our analysis is structured to cover the developments in all three media sectors as the ownership issues had a huge impact on freedom of expression and media integrity in the country. In the conclusion, we summarize the common characteristics of these ideal-types that can be used as analytical tools to understand how the media were progressively deprived of their capacity to serve the public interest.

## 2.1 OWNERSHIP TRANSPARENCY

For the purpose of understanding the media ownership context, we begin with a short overview of the ownership transparency in different media sectors.

Ever since 2005, ownership transparency has been a legal obligation only for the broadcast media (television and radio). All TV and radio stations are obliged to publish data on their ownership and sources of finance, and to provide additional data upon request of the Broadcasting Council. Also, they are obliged to announce every change in their ownership structure both in their broadcast programs and in the daily press. These obligations are monitored by the Broadcasting Council and, in general, most of the broadcasters comply with the legal provisions. All data are also published on the website of the regulator.<sup>37</sup> The same obligations for broadcasters are incorporated in the new Media Law adopted on 23 December 2013.<sup>38</sup> The fulfilment of this obligation will be monitored and sanctioned by the Agency on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services.

Some of the print media used to publish information related to ownership even before the adoption of the new Media Law. It was a common practice for the newspapers to publish data on the legal entity that owns the newspaper, as well as on the company that provides printing and distribution. However, with the new Media Law, the audiovisual regulator is authorized to pursue administrative supervision over the print media as well and to undertake measures against the print media outlets that do not comply with the provisions on media transparency.

There are only three news agencies, but information on ownership structure is not explicitly mentioned on their websites. The online media sector is the least transparent in terms of the ownership structure. Almost no online news outlet has its ownership structure publicly displayed. The electronic communication companies are not obliged to publish data on their ownership structure. However, the ownership data on all legal entities that are not legally obliged to be transparent in terms of their owners can be found in the Central Registry.

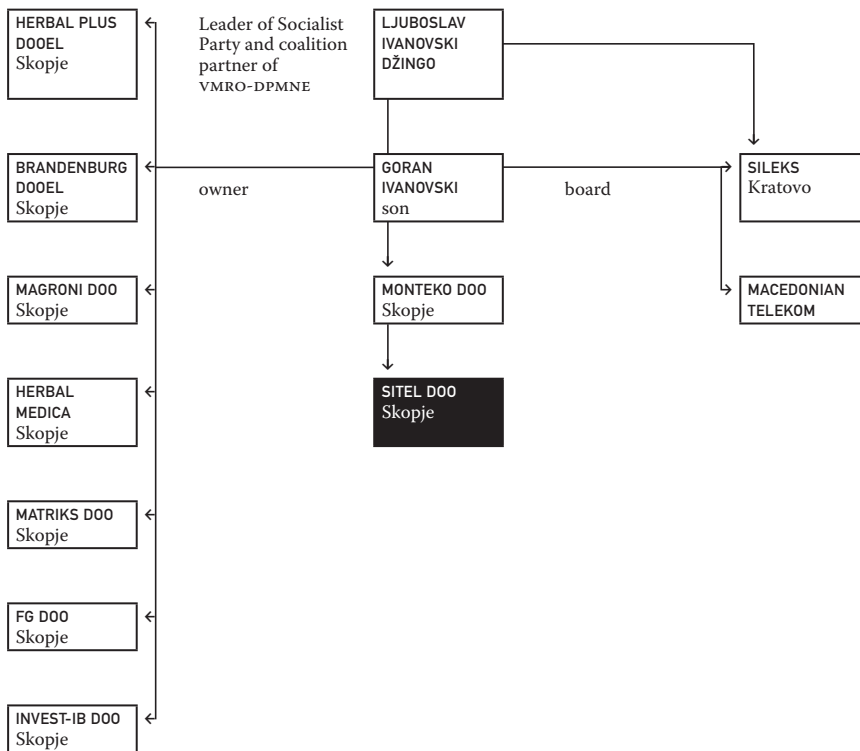
## 2.2 TV MOGULS AND THEIR QUEST FOR POWER

The media sector in Macedonia has been dominated by local media moguls (predominantly in the television sector) who perfected the methods of (mis)using their media in order to achieve their political and business interests. In so doing, during the past decade and a half media owners were continuously switching their political allegiances depending on who was in power and on whether their public policies served to the benefit of owners' specific businesses. During the first decade of independence, some of the influential media owners played a positive role in supporting the independent critical journalism and contributed towards creating a democratic public sphere. Their private interests happened to be in accord with the values of professional journalism – consequently, the media of the time played a role of detached watchdogs or even agents of critical social changes. However, the very moment the owners of the most influential media manifested greater political ambitions or their business appetites swelled or were jeopardized, they abandoned the role of “protector” of their newsrooms and demanded from journalists to defend the particular owner's interests which were often in collision with the public interest.

Until 2010, the highly fragmented television market had been a real “battlefield” as media owners were attempting to grab as much profit as possible from the scarce advertising resources. For example, in 2009 the three most influential private TV stations were *A1 TV* (19.2 percent average audience share), *Sitel TV* (14.3 percent) and *Kanal 5* (5.1 percent). *A1 TV* was owned by Velija Ramkovski whose main income came from his trade in fast-moving consumer goods. Ramkovski was at that time an ally of the Government,<sup>39</sup> but he split with the ruling coalition at the end of 2009 due to an argument over the business share

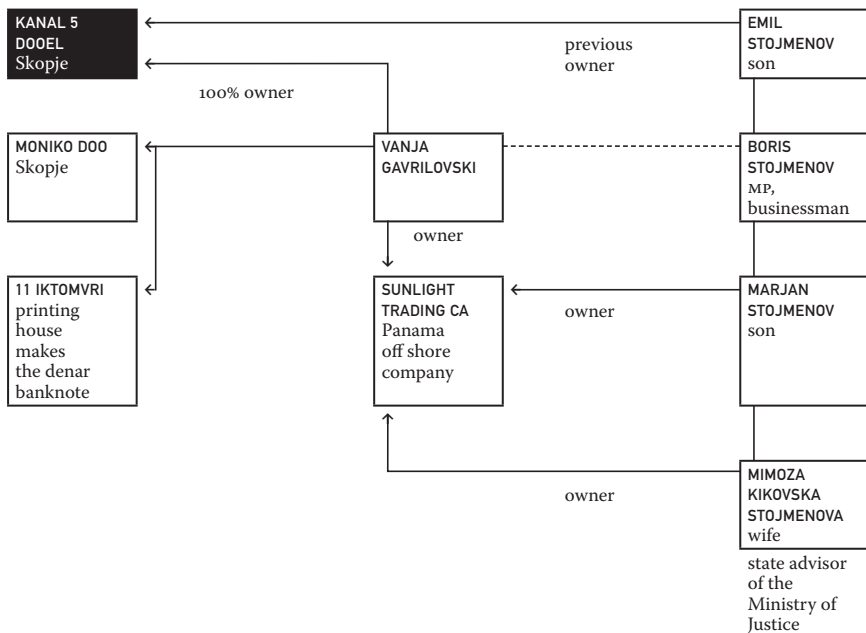
that he was to obtain from the Government's agricultural deals. Subsequently, he started to severely criticize the ruling party. Ramkovski at that time illegally owned three daily newspapers and was, therefore, accused by many competitors of distorting free market competition. Furthermore, *Sitel TV* was owned by Ljubisav Ivanov Džingo,<sup>40</sup> who ran diverse businesses (coal mines, mineral water factories, trading companies etc.) and who has been a leader of the Socialist Party ever since its establishment. This party has always been part of one or another ruling coalition. In 2009, the party was part of the VMRO-DPMNE coalition Government.

Chart 1 OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE OF SITEL – TERRESTRIAL COMMERCIAL TV STATION AT STATE LEVEL



*Kanal 5*, the third TV station, was owned by Boris Stojmenov, whose main business was in the field of financial consultancy and who was a former minister in the VMRO-DPMNE Government. A few years later, he created a new political party VMRO-VMRO.<sup>41</sup>

Chart 2 OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE OF KANAL 5 – TERRESTRIAL COMMERCIAL TV STATION AT STATE LEVEL



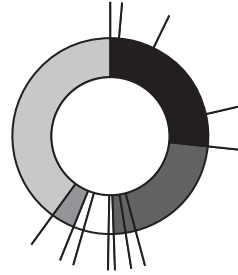
The clear ‘NO’ to the NATO accession at the Summit in Bucharest in 2008 brought many changes in how politics is exercised by the main ruling party VMRO-DPMNE. One such change was a tighter grip on media. The raise of state advertising prompted by that change transformed the market into a survival struggle which in turn increased media dependency on the Government. Those owners that continued to support Government’s policies grabbed the biggest slices by airing public campaigns on their TV stations, while those who were supporting journalism critical of the government were simply excluded from getting public money. Other patterns include a successful coercion of some media owners to comply with Government’s policies or abandon the business altogether, and a very small but unrelenting group of owners who successfully resist this pressure, such as the owners of *Telma TV*, *Alsati M TV* and *24 Vesti TV*.

The audience share figures for 2009 and 2012 demonstrate the structural changes on the TV market since the closure of *A1* and *A2*. In the charts below, the TV stations that are close to the ruling party are presented in black and the ones affiliated with the opposite political camp in dark grey. White-coloured are the media with national coverage that

broadcast in Albanian, and the light grey slice is the audience share of all local and regional TV stations in different languages.

Chart 3 AUDIENCE SHARE IN THE TELEVISION SECTOR IN 2009

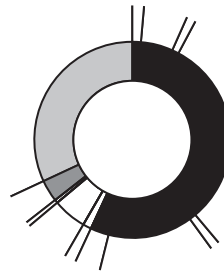
TV STATION	AUDIENCE SHARE
■ PARLIAMENTARY	1.4%
■ MTV 1	5.9%
■ SITEL	14.3%
■ KANAL 5	5.1%
■ A1	19.2%
■ A2	1.7%
■ ALFA	1.9%
□ MTV 2	0.9%
□ ALSAT M	4.3%
□ ERA	1.6%
■ TELMA	3.8%
■ OTHER	39.9%



Source: AGB Nielsen Media Research.

Chart 4 AUDIENCE SHARE IN THE TELEVISION SECTOR IN 2012

TV STATION	AUDIENCE SHARE
■ PARLIAMENTARY	1.4%
■ MTV 1	5.5%
■ SITEL 3	1.1%
■ SITEL	30.9%
■ KANAL 5+	1.2%
■ KANAL 5	13.9%
■ ALFA	3.2%
□ MTV 2	1.2%
□ ALSAT M	5.6%
□ ERA	0.7%
■ TELMA	3.5%
■ OTHER	31.8%



Source: AGB Nielsen Media Research.

In 2012, the situation on the market completely changed. The licence of *A1* was withdrawn following a liquidation procedure. The owner was prosecuted for tax evasion and all his companies involved in this affair were closed (including *A1* and the satellite *A2* station which started to broadcast in 2008). The three top private TV stations on the market, according to audience share, were *Sitel TV* (30.9 percent), *Kanal 5* (13.9 percent) and *Alsats*

$M$  (5.6 percent)<sup>42</sup>. In late 2012, the only critical TV station was *Telma*, since  $A1$  and  $A2$  were closed and the *Alfa TV*, which started broadcasting in 2008 and was owned by a businessman close to the main opposition party SDSM, was sold to a Serbian company.<sup>43</sup>

Chart 5 OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE OF ALFA TV – TERRESTRIAL COMMERCIAL TV STATION AT STATE LEVEL

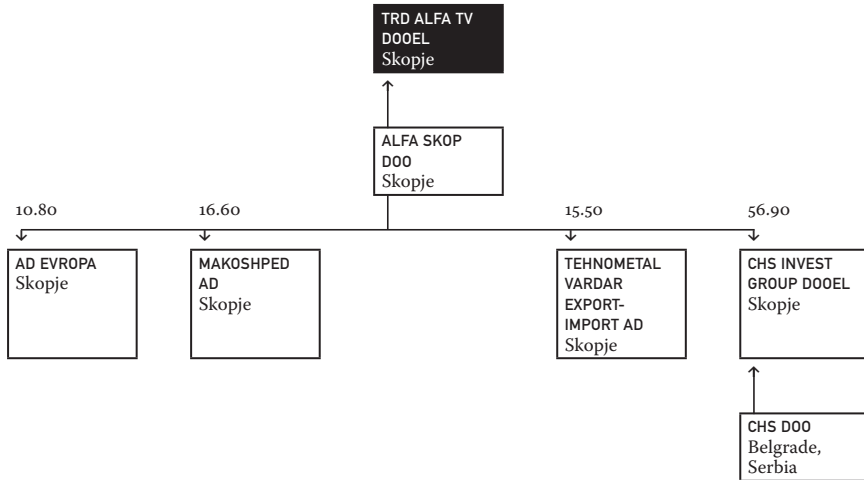


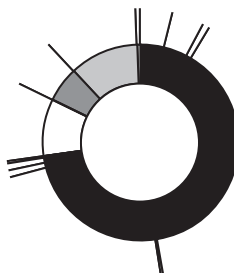
Chart 6 demonstrates that the struggle for political influence over the audiences was not the only motive of media owners. The figures for net advertising income show that profit was the real driving force behind the crude game on the television market. In 2011, when  $A1$  and  $A2$  were already closed, the biggest part of the advertising money was attracted by the TV stations affiliated with the ruling party.

The total amount of net advertising expenditure in 2011 was estimated at 1,480 million denars,<sup>44</sup> or 24.7 million euro. In the same year, political advertising accounted for 13 percent of the total income from advertising and state advertising for 2.56 percent. Among the top advertisers, the Government was ranked in fourth place.



Chart 6 NET ADVERTISING INCOME IN THE TELEVISION SECTOR IN 2012

TV STATION	NET ADVERTISING INCOME
■ NAŠA TV	58.97
■ ALFA	60.14
■ KANAL 5+	11.83
■ SITEL	572.01
■ SITEL 3	3.08
■ KANAL 5	343.31
■ AB KANAL	13.76
■ MTV	11.31
■ 24 NEWS	6.07
□ ALSAT M	139.39
■ TELMA	86.69
■ OTHER	165.41
■ PINK	8.11



Source: Broadcasting Council.

In December 2013, there were five commercial TV stations on the television market<sup>45</sup> broadcasting nationwide and three TV services of the public broadcaster.<sup>46</sup> Their services are distributed through the DTT operator which runs multiplexes across the country. In addition, there were five national TV stations licenced to reach the audience in Macedonia via a satellite platform.<sup>47</sup>

Table 1 AUDIENCE SHARE AND OWNERSHIP OF THE FIVE TERRESTRIAL TV CHANNELS

MEDIA OUTLET	AUDIENCE SHARE (2012)	OWNER(S) AND SHARES IN 2003	OWNER(S) AND SHARES IN 2013	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP	TREND IN OWNERSHIP IN COMPARISON WITH 2003
SITEL	28.98	AD RIK SILEKS 100%	DRUŠTVO ZA TRGOVIJA MONTEKO DOOEL EXPORT IMPORT SKOPJE 100%	LOCAL	IN 2001, THE COMPANY MONTEKO ACQUIRED 100% SHARE.
KANAL 5	16.71	PEČATNICA BS 100% (owned by Emil Stojmenov and Marjan Stojmenov, sons of the politician Boris Stojmenov)	VANJA GAVRILOVSKI 100%	LOCAL	IN 2004, THE COMPANY METALSIVAS EXPORT IMPORT ENTERED, AND IN 2007 EMIL STOJME NOV ACQUIRED 100% SHARE.
ALSAT M	5.97	Did not exist in 2003. Licence granted in 2004. First owner: VEBI VELIJA 100%	FERIK VELIJA (1%). MIRA MEKSI (FROM TIRANA, 8%). INTERNATIONAL ENERGY ENGINEERING PETROLEUM CONSULTING (46%). VEVE GROUP DOOEL (45%)	MIXED	NA
TELMA	3.19	MAKPETROL AD SKOPJE 100%	MAKPETROL AD SKOPJE 100%	LOCAL	NO CHANGE
ALFA	3.13	Did not broadcast nationwide	ALFA SKOP DOO EXPORT IMPORT SKOPJE	LOCAL	NA

Source: AGB Nielsen Media Research and Broadcasting Council.

The diachronic description of the print media development enables the extrapolation of ownership patterns characteristic of this sector. Until 1996, only the newspapers published by the state owned print media company (NIP) had been available on the market.<sup>48</sup> After the unsuccessful attempt to privatize this company, it was finally liquidated in October 2003. Because of NIP's monopoly over printing and print distribution during the early 1990s, privately owned print media appeared relatively late after the country gained independence.

The first private newspaper to appear on the market was *Dnevnik* – at that time it caused a revolution of a sort. It began to be published in March 1996 at a time when the liberalized market had a great need for new and alternative media content. There was a revolutionary novelty in this event. Firstly, *Dnevnik* was founded by a group of journalists<sup>49</sup> – the concept of professionals-owners had been unknown until that point. Secondly, it posed a serious competition and later even dominated the market not only because of the higher professional standards and its editorial independence, but also because its price was three times lower than the price of the state owned newspapers. Thirdly, *Dnevnik* had an unprecedented circulation of 80,000 sold copies. This business approach in which media were owned by professionals in journalism was later employed by other newspapers such as *Fakti*<sup>50</sup> (1998), *Makedonija Denes* and *Utrinski vesnik* (1999), *Vest* (2000), *Roma Times* (2001)<sup>51</sup>, *Vreme* (2004) etc.

What, however, followed in the 2000s was the emergence of new trends in the print media ownership: the newspapers that had been owned and developed by professional journalists were sold to international media corporations or to individual businessmen – *gazdas*.

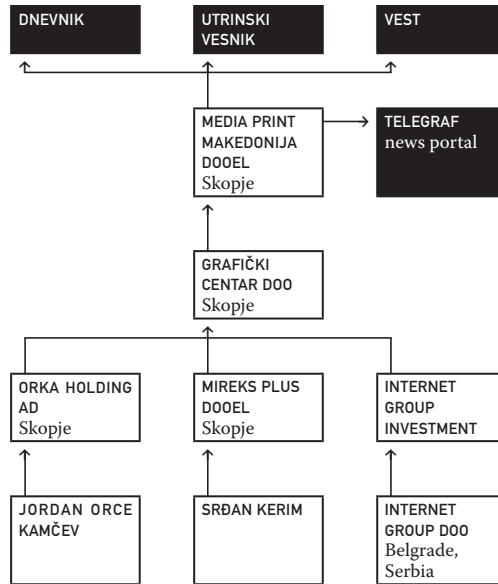
- (1) Firstly, in the autumn of 2003, the German media corporation WAZ bought the majority stakes in three leading newspapers in the country: *Dnevnik*, *Vest* and *Utrinski vesnik*. This was a major market change as the three newspapers accounted for 80-90 percent of the total print market income. This opened the issue of the WAZ monopoly (its company MPM Media Print Macedonia) and the possible negative consequences for the quality of these papers and their editorial independence. The Competition Protection Commission analysed this case and in 2004 finally decided to approve the merger of these three companies. In the meantime, new strong newspapers emerged on the market.<sup>52</sup>
- (2) Secondly, the brands *Nova Makedonija* and *Večer* that were part of the state owned NIP were privatized in 2000 and 2004 respectively and were eventually sold to individual owners. In 2006, the *Večer* daily was bought by the Macedonian businessman Bojo Andrevski<sup>53</sup> who also owns a private university, a private health organisation, a chain of automobile repair services, and several smaller companies. In 2011, the ownership of this newspaper was transferred to one of Bojo Andrevski's relatives. *Nova Makedonija*

is today owned by Repro Print DOEL which is owned by Repro One Limited which is fully owned by the Macedonian businessman Minčo Jordanov. Jordanov is a leading businessman in the steel industry and construction.

- (3) The same pattern of ownership transfer from professional journalists to individual gazdas can also be seen in the *Vreme* newspaper. *Vreme*, founded by two journalists, established a “strategic” cooperation with the national *A1 TV*. The paper shared the commercial packages with the TV station which helped it to reach a higher circulation. Apart from spelling the beginning of media concentration, it also sparked a new competition on the market between two major competitors, MPM and Velija Ramkovski (the owner of *A1 TV*). After WAZ entered the print market, Ramkovski, apart from secretly entering *Vreme*, also bought the Albanian language newspaper *Koha* and founded the *Špic* newspaper in 2006. By 2011, the competition on the market became brutal – the two media groups started to use their newspapers to attack each other.

In the early 2010s, a new type of ownership emerged – collaboration between domestic individual *gazdas* and regional media corporations. In January 2012, the German-owned WAZ conglomerate<sup>54</sup> sold the three daily newspapers (*Dnevnik*, *Utrinski vesnik* and *Vest*). The buyer of the package was Orka Holding, a company owned by the Macedonian businessman Jordan Orce Kamčev who is believed to be close to the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party. In August of the same year, Orka Holding issued a statement announcing its decision to sell 50 percent of its shares in the papers to Internet Group Investment – a Serbian company that owns the biggest internet portal in that country (*Telegraf.rs*).<sup>55</sup> Orka Holding has additionally started a new online news platform *Telegraf.mk*.<sup>56</sup> Internet Group Investment is owned by the Serbian businessman Veselin Jevrosimović whose main operations include trade in computer equipment. Jevrosimović’s Comtrade company has in the past several years established business relations with the largest mobile operator in Macedonia and with the Macedonian Information Ministry.<sup>57</sup> In October 2012, it was announced that Jevrosimović had become the new owner of *Alfa TV*.<sup>58</sup> In January 2013, the ownership structure of Media Print Macedonia changed again – in addition to Orka Holding and Internet Group Investment, a third company bought part of the shares: Mireks Plus which is owned by Srđan Kerim.<sup>59</sup> The three companies hold 33.3 percent of the shares each.<sup>60</sup>

Chart 7 OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE OF THE THREE DAILIES UTRINSKI VESNIK, DNEVNIK, VEST AND ONLINE NEWS PORTAL TELEGRAF



Recently, a donor-driven type of domestic media ownership emerged. In October 2013, with the financial aid from the Open Society Institute, a new company was founded and a new newspaper emerged on the market – *Sloboden pečat*. It was founded by Branko Geroski, one of the founders of *Dnevnik*, and a former editor in chief for *Vreme* and *Špic*.

Businessmen from the Albanian community in Macedonia were not interested in investing in the media over the past two decades. The print media in Albanian have therefore always been owned by professional journalists whose primary business is media. *Koha* daily is owned by the journalists Lirim Dulovi and Arben Ratkoceri; *Lajm* daily is owned by Fejzi Ajdari. *Lajm* is considered to be closer to the DPA opposition party, and *Koha* is supportive of the governmental Albanian party DUI.

In conclusion, the following patterns of ownership can be identified within the print media sector: (1) the first pattern was characteristic of the early stages of pluralisation when the state had stakes in the media and still held monopoly on the market; (2) the second pattern can be described as “ownership by professional journalists;” it emerged when journalists became media entrepreneurs and this period can be described as the golden age of print media

journalism in Macedonia; (3) the third pattern is “foreign corporate ownership”, which coincides with the period when WAZ was present on the print media market; (4) the fourth, “domestic/foreign co-ownership” involves the co-ownership of big domestic owner(s) and a foreign company; (5) finally, the donor generated ownership is the latest pattern that could be described as a type of “ownership by professional journalists.”

Table 2 OWNERSHIP OF THE DAILY NEWSPAPERS IN MACEDONIA

DAILY NEWSPAPER	OWNER(S) AND SHARES IN 2003	OWNER(S) AND SHARES IN 2013	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP	TREND IN OWNERSHIP IN COMPARISON WITH 2003
UTRINSKI VESNIK	OST HOLDING 51.16% GOFI DOOEL 24.33% FIVE INDIVIDUALS 24.51%	ORKA HOLDING 33.3% INTERNET GROUP INVESTMENT 33.3% MIREKS PLUS 33.3%	MIXED	OST HOLDING (WAZ) WITHDREW FROM THE PRINT SECTOR IN THE BEGINNING OF 2010. THE THREE DAILIES ARE NOW OWNED BY TWO LOCAL AND ONE FOREIGN COMPANY (SERBIA).
DNEVNIK	OST HOLDING 93.8% FIVE INDIVIDUALS 6.2%			
VEST	OST HOLDING 51.06% GOFI DOOEL 24.05% AD FERSPED 14.83% TWO INDIVIDUALS 10.06%			
NOVA MAKEDONIJA	ZONIK ZORAN DOOEL 100%	REPRO PRINT DOEL 100%	LOCAL	NA
VEČER	DID NOT EXIST	SAŠO BOGDANOVSKI <sup>61</sup> 100%	LOCAL	NA
SLOBODEN PEČAT	DID NOT EXIST	BRANKO GEROSKI	LOCAL	NA
KOHA (ALBANIAN)	DID NOT EXIST	LIRIM DULOVI 50% ARBEN RATKOCERI 50%	LOCAL	NA
LAJM (ALBANIAN)	DID NOT EXIST	FEJZI AJDARI 100%	LOCAL	NA

Source: Central Registry of RM.

## 2.4 ONLINE MEDIA: THE LAST SANCTUARY FOR CRITICAL JOURNALISM?

The first online media in Macedonia appeared after 2000. Their most visible progress however occurred in 2005 when the prices for internet access and the broadband connection dropped considerably. This crucially contributed to the increase in online media audience. Even though access to the Internet increased, the development of online journalism did not progress at the same pace – especially not in terms of the quality of content. The rare analyses of this sphere have revealed that in Macedonia the level of professional standards in online media is quite low.<sup>62</sup>

In December 2013, there were around 18 news and information online media – 15 in Macedonian and 3 in Albanian. There are measurements of the readership of online media in Macedonia,<sup>63</sup> but the service is adapted to the needs of the marketing agencies that are mostly interested in measuring the websites offering entertainment. On the other side, the data for average number of visitors provided by some web traffic measurement services cannot be considered reliable. Therefore, these data are not presented in the analysis to

avoid giving a biased picture of the ranking of online news media. Instead, they are listed in the table by alphabetical order.

Most of the online media are owned by individual professional journalists. An exception is *Telegraf.mk* which is a separate digital publication, published by the Media Print Macedonia – MPM, the same publishing company that publishes the three Macedonian newspapers (*Dnevnik*, *Utrinski vesnik* and *Vest*).<sup>64</sup>

The findings of the research on online media content show that most of the critical journalism in Macedonia – especially concerning the Government – is practiced on the Internet. These online outlets were founded by individual journalists who were in the past associated with the traditional critical media. Once the Government put a grip on those sectors, they migrated online. However, recent years have seen the proliferation of pro-governmental online outlets. The content published in some of these online media shows extreme bias towards the biggest ruling party. The online outlets *Kurir.mk*, *Netpress.mk*, *Republika.mk* produce content aimed to construct a negative campaign against the opposition.

Table 3 OWNERSHIP OF SEVERAL ONLINE NEWS AND INFORMATION PORTALS IN MACEDONIA

ONLINE INFORMATIVE MEDIA <sup>65</sup>	OWNER(S) 2013	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP
A1 ON – DRUŠTVO ZA DIGITALNI MEDIUM ONLAJN MEDIA DOOEL SKOPJE	PREDRAG PETROVIĆ	LOCAL
BRIEF – DRUŠTVO ZA DIGITALNI MEDIUM BABINSKI DOOEL SKOPJE	ILIN NIKOLOVSKI	LOCAL
KURIR – EM MEDIA DOOEL SKOPJE	ACO MISAJLOVSKI	LOCAL
MKD.MK – DRUŠTVO ZA IZDAVANJE NA ELEKTRONSKI PUBLIKACII PORTAL NJUZ DOO SKOPJE	PETAR PEJOVIĆ, NIKOLA BOGOJEVSKI, IGOR KRSTEVSKI, ROBERT ATANASOVSKI, ALEKSANDAR RISTOV, ZLATKO KRSTEVSKI, EMIL ZAFIROVSKI	LOCAL
NOVA TV – VIDEO VEB PRODUKCIJA DOO	BILJANA SEKULOVSKA, BORJAN JOVANOVSKI	LOCAL
NETPRES – DRUŠTVO ZA TRGOVIJA I USLUGI FINZI DOOEL SKOPJE <sup>66</sup>	FINZI DOO (REGISTERED IN USA)	FOREIGN
PLUS INFO – ZDRUŽENIE NA GRAGJANI ZA ODBRANA NA SLOBODATA NA GOVOROT I NA JAVNOTO IZRAŽUVANJE ČLEN 16 SKOPJE <sup>67</sup>	BRANISLAV GEROSKI	LOCAL
TELEGRAF – IZDAVAŠTVO TELEGRAF DOOEL SKOPJE <sup>68</sup>	DRUŠTVO ZA USLUGI MEDIA PRINT MAKEDONIJA DOOEL SKOPJE	MIXED
REPUBLIKA - PRVA REPUBLIKA DOOEL	THE OWNER IS NOT KNOWN <sup>69</sup>	NOT KNOWN

Source: Central Registry of RM.

Another new trend in the ownership structure is clandestine ownership (Republika.mk) or semi-clandestine ownership of multiple interconnected online outlets. This has a direct impact on the coverage as the “networked” outlets frequently quote each other – therefore if a negative campaign is to be launched, one of the media outlets will publish an unsubstantiated claim which is then quoted as a fact by other outlets. A journalistic research on the ownership background of online outlets has recently revealed that *Kurir.mk* is founded by EM Media DOOEL – a company formally owned by an individual who is close to the ruling party.<sup>70</sup> This company is associated with several other online outlets through the same individual who either performs marketing or administrative tasks for these online portals.<sup>71</sup> From the content on *Kurir.mk* but also on other online and traditional media, it is quite evident that recently the ruling party has very well synchronized the dissemination of information with similar party-political messages whose author or editor can be very easily recognized. There is also one critical online portal whose owners are close to politicians that belong to opposition parties.<sup>72</sup>

The online outlets in Albanian are still in a rudimentary phase. The most relevant online outlets are still the ones that have a print outlet such as *Koha* and *Lajm*.

The ownership patterns that could be identified in the online sector are indicative of two processes – (1) the process of real pluralisation which strives to create strong critical journalism that in time would develop high professional standards, and (2) the mushrooming of clandestine outlets that are creating a “hyper-real” effect – a strategy by which the truth is supposed to be blurred in plenty. These processes seem to be mutually exclusive and at this point it is impossible to predict which one would prevail.

## 2.5

## CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions can be drawn from the analytical description of ownership patterns identified in the specific media sectors.

The first type of ownership pattern is “*Professional Journalist – Owner*.” It appears when one journalist, or a small group of journalists with experience in print or broadcast media establishes a print (newspaper) or an online media outlet. A specific feature of this type of ownership is that the owners, possessing the knowledge of professional journalism, knowing the process of production and having democratizing attitude, are not motivated solely by profits. In this setting, the quest for profit is balanced with the need for a social impact and freedom of expression, meaning that it serves the public interest. This pattern was characteristic of the print media in the mid 1990s and it re-emerged with the advent of online media, especially after 2005 when some critical traditional media were shut down and several groups of journalists migrated to “safer” zones. Within the print

media sector, this pattern dissolved when the market was “conquered” by big media corporations and when the journalists-owners decided to opt for capitalisation. Knowing the goals of political actors, it could be said that at many points in time media owned by journalists pursued quite independent editorial policies.

The second ownership pattern is “*Individual businessman – Small Owner*.” It is typical of the local broadcast sector. It emerged during the first decade of liberalisation in the 1990s, and it is still present today. It emerged when many individuals with no idea of the social impact of media or the public interest grabbed the opportunity to earn a good income by owning a local broadcaster. The main source of profit was local advertisers – the new class of small media owners did not invest much in the technical development of their media and the quality of programming was low. Their primary interest being profit, they are largely susceptible to influences coming from local political and business actors. In cases when these individual owners have other small local businesses, they use their media outlets to advertise them. In addition, they quickly switch their allegiances, going along with whoever is in power in their municipality.

The third type of ownership structure is “*Individual businessman – Big Owner*.” This type had emerged in the national television sector and had significantly proliferated by the late 1990s. It continues to be the dominant type to the present day. Similar to the “*Individual businessman – Small Owner*,” the only motive for engaging in the media business is profit. However, this type of ownership is also characterized by the idea that the media that broadcast nationally can be utilized to advance their business and other interests. Until 2006, this had been achieved by either pressuring the Government or by playing along with or within the Government. With the inauguration of the VMRO-DPMNE led Government, the process took a different turn and these media succumbed to the Government pressure.

The fourth type is “*Corporate Media Ownership*.” It has been especially characteristic of the print sector since 2003, i.e. since the entrance of the German media corporation WAZ. It is still dominant in this sector at present. This type of ownership is moderately present in the TV sector since a domestic corporation owns only one national TV station, and few smaller companies own local and regional TV stations. However, corporate ownership has recently begun to enter the online sector. Apart from WAZ whose primary business is media, all other corporations pursued other lines of business. WAZ entered the market for profit primarily. However, almost all other corporations had other motives as well when entering the market. The media were a means of a political influence – the Government played through them to advance its own policies.



### 3 PARTY-POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING WITH PUBLIC MONEY

The integrity of media in Macedonia is directly related to the structure of their financing. For years, the public service broadcaster (PSB) has suffered from the lack of institutional autonomy and has been directly financially dependent on the state budget. This is due to the fact that various structures of power did not allow its stable and consistent funding with taxpayers money. Although the broadcasting tax collection (in Macedonia, the broadcasting tax corresponds to licence fee) has been stabilized in the last few years, the PSB is still faced with the lack of editorial independence and integrity. The small capacity of the advertising market could never meet the needs of far too many media outlets. This has in turn created an unhealthy competition among media owners. Their marketing strategies have not been driven by the market logic, which has produced disastrous effects on the whole sector: unrealistically high advertising prices, huge discounts; the coaxing of large advertisers into advertising only with “our media outlet”; false book-keeping entries to show lower advertising prices and thus avoid higher taxes etc. State advertising in Macedonia was intensified after 2008. This has in turn prompted media owners to fight for a bigger slice of the public money which has created even more robust political-clientelistic and corrupt links between the government and the media. In January 2014, the Macedonian public had a chance to see how these links work in practice when the political opposition initiated two media scandals. The first revealed the relationship between political advertising during elections and Government’s public campaigns. The second involved two editors working for the private TV station *Sitel* which is explicitly close to the Government. Their alleged scams over the past several years included a contract for the purchase of medical equipment worth millions of euro which was signed between the Ministry of Health and the private company of a notorious pro-government journalist.

#### 3.1 TRANSPARENCY OF DATA ON FINANCIAL SOURCES OF MEDIA COMPANIES

The adoption of the 2005 Broadcasting Law brought significant improvements in terms of the reliability of data about the broadcasting media market and media’s sources of financing. The broadcast media were legally obliged to provide any financial or other data related to their operations upon request of the Broadcasting Council – the regulatory body. On the basis of these data, the regulator conducted comprehensive annual analysis on the broadcast market and published it on its website.<sup>73</sup> These analyses contain a range of relevant data on different sectors of the radio and television industries: number of licences, revenues, costs, number of employees, audience measurements data, advertising expenditure data etc. All data is gathered and verified by the regulator itself using reliable and comprehensive methodology. For the media that fail to provide the required data,

there are sanctions envisaged in the legislation. However, the number of these sanctions so far has been relatively insignificant.<sup>74</sup> The same obligations concerning transparency and provision of financial data remained in the newly adopted Law on Audio and Audio-visual Media Services (December 2013). The print and online media, like all the other private entities, are obliged to provide data on their finances upon request of the Commission for Protection of Competition.

In December 2013, in addition to the Law on Audio and Audiovisual media Services, the Parliament also adopted a general Media Law. It was in fact the first time that the print media became subject to any kind of regulation in the country. According to this Law, the print media are obliged to provide data on their finances to the new regulator - The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services. The online media were also included in the first draft of the Media Law and would have had the same obligations but for the amendments to the Media Law a month later by which the online media were excluded from the legislation.<sup>75</sup>

There is no reliable data on the circulation of print media, and there is no data available on the number of sold copies. All of the print outlets declare their circulation but these figures are not trustworthy. One research agency regularly gathers data on radio audience and readership of the print and online media<sup>76</sup> while another agency conducts TV audience measurements.<sup>77</sup> Data on advertising expenditure exist only for televisions and print media. There are only estimates for the other sectors. There is no self-organised body that would control or verify advertising expenditure or any other data on the media market.

### 3.2

### ADVERTISING MARKET

There are no reliable data on the overall advertising expenditure across media sectors. There are two research agencies<sup>78</sup> that conduct monitoring of the television sector and then make estimates of the television advertising expenditures. However, these figures show only the gross TV advertising expenditure which is estimated by multiplying the aired time with the prices declared in official pricelists of the media. In developed countries, gross expenditure is 2-3 times higher than net expenditure as a result of regular discounts given to advertisers. In contrast, in Macedonia the gross advertising expenditure is 10-12 times higher than the net figure (the real amount of money paid to broadcasters by the advertisers). The reasons are various, but what is most important - it implies institutional corruption given that a huge part of the advertising share is in fact Government's advertising. Even though it is very difficult to determine the exact reasons for this phenomenon, certain conclusions present themselves: the prices are unrealistically high, so discounts offered go as high as 90 percent; TV stations air programs made by independent producers who themselves sell the advertising slots within their shows;

multiple ownership – the media owners are also owners of other businesses and they use their media to advertise the products of their other companies at a low price which in turn enables media owners to pay lower taxes.

A rough idea about the advertising stakes can be obtained by looking at the general data for the television and radio sector. The data is gathered and verified by the Broadcasting Council, since the broadcasters are obliged to give their annual balance sheets to the regulator. If they do not comply with this provision, they face sanctions, so most of them regularly provide all the requested data on financing.

Table 4 TV MARKET IN 2012

	AUDIENCE SHARE (%)	TOTAL REVENUES (MILLION DENARS)	ADVERTISING REVENUES (MILLION DENARS)	SHARE IN ADVERTISING REVENUES (%)
MTV1, MTV2, PARLIAMENTARY	8.37	1069.08	54.29	3.67
SITEL	28.98	587.16	586.61	39.69
KANAL 5	16.71	361.42	276.78	18.73
TELMA	3.19	113.17	77.1	5.22
ALSAT M	5.97	148.40	144.87	9.80
SATELLITE TV STATIONS	14.3	184.99	181.2	12.26
REGIONAL TV STATIONS		57.54	31.88	2.16
LOCAL TV STATIONS		145.70	125.29	8.48
TOTAL	77.52	2,667.46	1,478.02	100

Source: AGB Nielsen Media Research and Market Analyses of the Broadcasting Council.

Table 5 RADIO MARKET IN 2012

	TOTAL REVENUES (MILLION DENARS)	ADVERTISING REVENUES (MILLION DENARS)	SHARE IN ADVERTISING REVENUES (%)
MACEDONIAN RADIO	339.16	1.04	0.81
ANTENA 5	29.93	29.23	22.67
KANAL 77	24.09	15.63	12.12
METROPOLIS	2.00	2.01	1.56
REGIONAL RADIO STATIONS	55.83	49.15	38.13
LOCAL RADIO STATIONS	34.95	31.85	24.71
TOTAL	485.96	128.91	100

Source: Market Analyses of the Broadcasting Council.

The data show that the total net advertising expenditure in the television sector in 2012 was 1,478.02 million denars (24.3 million euro) compared to 128.91 million denars (2.1 million euro) in the radio sector. Television is certainly still the most interesting media for advertisers, while radio and print media are much weaker and less attractive. Unfortunately, there are no reliable figures for online media advertising.

Advertising is the main source of income for the television sector. Most of the advertising agencies that make regular media advertising plans use audience measurement data as a reliable basis for planning advertising campaigns. However, the money coming from the state for advertising is not allocated on the basis of audience measurement figures – rather the political eligibility criteria are used. There are examples of TV shows with a very low number of viewers that get significant amount of TV ads. Also, there are many newly launched online news portals with plenty banners on the Government's achievements while the critical ones (with high number of page views) do not have such ads at all.<sup>79</sup>

The biggest advertising agencies are not commissioned to design public campaigns for state institutions. Although formally covered by public procurement procedures, most of the tenders of state institutions for public campaigns or for other communication activities have been won by marketing agencies that are close to one of the political parties in the Government.<sup>80</sup> Some of the journalists that investigated these cases wrote that since 2008, 7 million euro have flown to the account of the Republica agency intended solely for advertisements for state institutions. They have also clearly identified the interconnection of state advertising and the critical stance of the media: "As, for example, when the now defunct *A1* television intensified its critical tone towards Gruevski, the advertisements were suspended. When *Alfa TV* reduced its criticism, the Government's ads began to flow."<sup>81</sup> The following is a statement given by a representative of the advertising agency Republica for the weekly magazine *Focus*: "The distribution of ads is very clean. When it comes to electronic media, we go by ratings. Once they closed *A1*, *Sitel* came on top, followed by *Kanal 5*. As far as Internet portals are concerned, we expect the emergence of a regulatory body for the internet sphere to investigate the level of website visitors ... As for newspapers, now, in cases where there are no figures to judge by, we act according to our individual judgments. In a year time, everything will be much clearer. The Government will install its own people-meters ... because the existing people-meters are not credible."<sup>82</sup> Certain advertising professionals who insisted on anonymity stated in interviews that the practice of using media planning agency has been abandoned since recently and the Government began to make direct contracts with the media outlets when airing public campaigns.<sup>83</sup> Also, the Government has itself publicly stated that in the last year and a half it has allocated money for public campaigns to all national, regional and local media,<sup>84</sup> although the specific amounts have nev-

er been published. In the end, it has to be noted that there are public campaigns that are broadcast by commercial television stations free of charge.

Professionals from some commercial media<sup>85</sup> state that these campaigns are usually accompanied with a request for a free of charge airing, although there is no legal basis for that. In addition, most of the public campaigns that are broadcast by commercial media are aired free of charge on the public television. Since advertising time on public service television is much more limited compared to that provided by commercial TV stations, these campaigns are labelled as "campaigns of public interest," because the Broadcast Law contains a provision that the public service can broadcast campaigns of public interest.

### 3.3 STATE ADVERTISING

State advertising in Macedonia became an issue when VMRO-DPMNE came to power in 2006. The ruling coalition intensified the so called public campaigns in the media in 2008. Political advertising funded by public money has also been going on outside election campaigns. From the table on the share of state advertising in the gross advertising expenditure in the TV sector it follows that from 2008 the Government allocated significant amounts of money from the state budget to advertising. In 2008, the Government was the second largest advertiser in the country. In the years that followed, with the exception of 2010, the Government was invariably among the five largest advertisers.

Table 6 THE SHARE OF STATE ADVERTISING IN THE GROSS ADVERTISING EXPENDITURE IN THE TV SECTOR

YEAR	POSITION ON THE LIST OF TOP 20 ADVERTISERS	TOTAL ADVERTISING ON TV	% OF TOTAL ADVERTISING ON TV	TOTAL AMOUNT OF GROSS TV ADVERTISING EXPENDITURE (MILLION EURO)
2008	2		4.45 %	389.0
2009	5		2.57 %	472.0
2010 <sup>86</sup>	18		1.23 %	579.0
2011	4		2.56 %	535.0
2012	1		4.03 %	392.4

Source: AGB Nielsen Media Research and Market Analyses of the Broadcasting Council.

One of the biggest problems with all the analyses of media finances conducted so far is that the data on the net income of media from individual advertisers is not gathered at all. The (net) amount spent from the state budget for public campaigns in 2013 is estimated at 20 million euro,<sup>87</sup> although no institution published or confirmed this figure. On the

other side, the analyses conducted by international organisations mention larger annual amounts – between 0.4 percent and 1.5 percent of the state budget, which is around 39 million euro.<sup>88</sup> Until very recently, the Government and public enterprises had never published the amounts of money allocated from the state budget to different media outlets and it is very difficult to collect these data. This was a topic treated in several journalistic investigative stories published by the few critical media in the country,<sup>89</sup> while the bigger media outlets that receive money from the state budget do not raise this issue at all. These stories prove that even when relying on legal provisions on free access to public information, journalists cannot always obtain the information requested: “Like all other citizens having the right to know where our money is spent, we asked the Government to answer where its advertisements have been aired. When the question was first asked, we received no response. When asked again, the answer was, ‘business secret!’”<sup>90</sup> Journalists have to wait for several months to receive a reply from an institution, although the law prescribes a deadline of 30 days, with an extension of 10 days if the request involves a huge amount of documents. The concept of proactive or routine publication of information by state institutions is completely unknown in the country, while the culture of secrecy surrounds “sensitive” data, like the amounts spent in the media. So, not only there are no transparency mechanisms applied by public institutions, but they even label this information “classified.”<sup>91</sup>

For the objectives of the Media Observatory research, in October 2013, formal requests for data on the amounts of state money spent for public campaigns in the media (from 2008 to 2013) were sent to the Government and other state institutions.<sup>92</sup> However, only half of these institutions replied to the request and those that did stated mainly the titles of the print media to which they are subscribed or the media outlets where they prefer to publicize.<sup>93</sup> The criteria for the allocation of this money to various media in the past years were not known and this was considered as one of the biggest problems that interfered with editorial freedom and endangered integrity of the media. However, having in mind the fact that in 2012 the Government was the biggest advertiser on television, it is not difficult to deduce where the money from the budget ended. Public campaigns are aired only by national television stations and although there is no such data it is publicly known that the biggest portions of money are allocated to *Sitel TV* and *Kanal 5*, whose owners are very closely affiliated with the ruling party. The two television stations had the largest share of total advertising revenue in 2012 (*Sitel TV* – 39.69 percent and *Kanal 5* – 18.73 percent).

### 3.4 POLITICAL ADVERTISING DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

There is a clear connection between state advertising in the media and political advertising during election campaigns. Concerns about this controversy have been recently

raised by the opposition SDSM party which accused the ruling party that 23 days before the local elections in 2013 it transferred 460.000 euro to *Sitel TV*.<sup>94</sup> Several other transfers were made later that year with the payments eventually amounting to one million in total in 2013. This affair raised many public debates about the corrupt processes that link the media and state institutions.<sup>95</sup> For the first time since the emergence of state advertising, the Government published an extensive press release explaining the purpose of the public campaigns in the media and describing these as "... activities to inform citizens about certain implemented projects so that the citizens would know the opportunities that are opening up for them through these projects."

Data from the financial reports of the political parties submitted to the State Electoral Commission, the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption and the State Audit Office for the elections in 2013 show that the broadcast media are the largest donors<sup>96</sup> to certain political parties. For instance, the Financial Report of the VMRO-DPMNE coalition contains a list of donors which includes 33 TV stations, 3 radio stations and the print media published by Media Print Macedonia. Of these, the three biggest donors are *Sitel TV* (9,870,000.00 denars or 160,489.00 euro), *Kanal 5* (8,900,000.00 denars or 144,715.00 euro) and *Alfa TV* (4,700,000.00 denars or 76,423.00 euro).<sup>97</sup> Also, it is to be emphasized that the only donor from the print media field appears to be Media Print Macedonia with the highest amount of 15,465,368 denars.<sup>98</sup> The lists of donors of other bigger parties (from the coalition led by SDSM, DUI and DPA) do not contain media outlets.

Although the data presented here indicate that there is connection between political advertising during the elections and state advertising, it is very difficult to explain and to document how this process actually works. According to some media representatives who took part in the interviews, during the election period some media give huge discounts (sometimes up to 90 percent off the regular prices), so they practically broadcast the party's political advertisements free of charge. Later, these discounts or unpaid debts are presented as donations on the electoral account of the political party. However, after the elections, these media would be on the list of the most favoured outlets for state advertising. Nevertheless, this was very difficult to prove within this project, because no data was provided by the state institutions on the amounts allocated in 2013 for public campaigns. Some conclusions can be indirectly made from the data on gross advertising expenditure, the lists of donors during the 2013 elections and the financial reports of the media for the local elections in 2013.<sup>99</sup>

Table 7 TV STATIONS AND PRINT MEDIA – DONORS TO VMRO-DPMNE DURING LOCAL ELECTIONS 2013

TV STATIONS	VALUE OF THE DONATION (DENARS)
SITEL TV – NATIONAL TERRESTRIAL	9.870.000
KANAL 5 – NATIONAL TERRESTRIAL	8.900.000
ALFA TV – NATIONAL TERRESTRIAL	4.700.000
TV TERA – BITOLA	600.000
TV AMAZON – SKOPJE	85.000
NAŠA TV – SATELLITE	369.350
ŠUTEL TV – SKOPJE	138.000
EDO TV – SKOPJE	137.000
BTR – SKOPJE	319.000
VIZIJA - PRILEP	200.000
SVET - SVETI NIKOLE	100.000
KTV 41 - KAVADARCI	220.000
TV NOVA - KUMANOVO	250.000
KOBRA RADOVIŠ	100.000
TV NOVA - GEVGELIJA	61.500
KRT - KUMANOVO	141.216
BOEM - KIČEVO	88.310
TV KOČANI	100.000
ZDRAVKIN - VELES	206.500
TV STAR - ŠTIP	260.000
TV TIKVEŠIJA	140.000
IRIS - ŠTIP	270.000
INTEL - STRUMICA	180.000
TV MORIS - OHRID	80.000
NTV - OHRID	150.000
ZLATENKANAL	150.000
KANAL 21	100.000
VTV VALANDOVO	70.000
SPEKTRA LABUNISTA	85.000
PROTEL	100.000
MENADA	150.000
TV SONCE	120.000
D1 DELČEVO	100.000
PRINT MEDIA	
MPM (DNEVNIK)	15.465.358

Source: Financial Report of VMRO-DPMNE on the campaign during the local elections in 2013.<sup>100</sup>

For instance, the unpaid debt of the VMRO-DPMNE coalition to *Sitel TV* arising from the local elections in 2013 was 6,554,769.00 denars (106,582 euro), to *Kanal 5* television



5,490,631.00 denars (89,278 euro), to *Večer Press* 1,230,000.00 denars (20,000 euro), and so on.<sup>101</sup> The Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) also had unpaid debts: to *Alsat M* it owed 3,901,841 denars (63,445 euro), to *TV Koha* from Tetovo 644,931.00 denars (10,487 euro) and so on. In January 2014, after many public debates and criticism, the Electoral Code was amended so that the amount that the media can donate to a political party is limited to 50,000 euro although the media and journalists organisations argued that the media could not appear at all as donors to political parties. Another affair recently revealed by the political opposition<sup>102</sup> raised numerous concerns about the corrupt links between the pro-governmental journalists and state institutions. The affair involved a million euro contract for the purchase of medical equipment signed between the Ministry of Health and Vizaris, a private trading company owned by the mother of a famous journalist working for the pro-governmental *Sitel TV*.<sup>103</sup> It should also be noted that the private company Vizaris, as well as several other advertising, marketing and consulting companies whose founders are the two famous journalists of *Sitel TV*, are all registered at the same address as *Sitel TV*.<sup>104</sup> The Minister of Health stated publicly that there was no conflict of interest because he signed a contract with a private company which after six months changed its ownership structure and "... if there is no violation of the procedure, but if there is a slightest reason to terminate the contract, [he] will do that."<sup>105</sup> A week later, the Minister of Health stated in the Parliament that he terminated the contract due to ethical reasons, although the legal procedure was not violated.<sup>106</sup>

### 3.5 CONCLUSIONS

The advertising patterns used by the Government demonstrate most vividly how media lose their independence and subsequently their professional integrity. Media owners play the key role in this system of financial dependency. The media and the complete media landscape thus fall prey to the business interests of the owners and their clientelistic ties with politicians. This clientelism is corrupt and it largely defines the media and political culture in the country.

Political parties that hold power demonstrate an insufficient democratic capacity by willingly sacrificing the independence of the media in order to accumulate profit which is then used for elections or ends up as a private property of parts of the ruling political structures. It is ironic that when these same parties end up as the political opposition, they claim that they are disadvantaged because of this particular environment.

Successive governments in Macedonia perfected the methods of institutional corruption, reinforcing clientelistic dependencies and virtually coercing the media sector into compliance. This has in turn produced an atmosphere of low democratic capacity. The main mechanism used is the flow of money from the state budget. The system basically

adheres to the following pattern: the Government extracts money from the budget and channels it to advertising studios and media to produce and to broadcast their ads which often clearly resemble a full blown propaganda. The Government then justifies the spending as a public interest concern even though these ads are often negative campaigns against the opposition and campaigns to promote illiberal values. The media are in turn pumping the greater share of the money they get from the budget into the ruling political party for the purposes of the elections. In effect, this means the election campaigns of the ruling parties are financed by taxpayers' money.

#### 4 A PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTER NEGLECTING ITS PUBLIC INTEREST MISSION

The Public Service Broadcaster in Macedonia has undergone two major normative transformations since Macedonia gained independence and a third one is underway with the new controversial<sup>107</sup> Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services adopted in December 2013. The history of these changes reveals that the legislative aspect of institutional autonomy and editorial independence has evolved over the years: (a) The 1997 Broadcasting Law and the 1998 Law on the Founding of the Public Company – *Macedonian Radio Television*, defined *MRT* as a public service. However, not all aspects of the definition of what public service entails were fully and clearly aligned with the COE basic documents; (b) The Law on Broadcasting activity from 2005 completed the legislative process and explicitly defined *MRT* as a public service, with clear provisions concerning its programming functions, editorial independence and institutional autonomy of its governing bodies: the *MRT* Council, the Managerial Board and the Executive Director. This change has accorded a greater role to the Council as the highest supervisory body (Articles 126-133) – some of its functions prior to 2005 were in the hands of the National Assembly. The new Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services adopted in December 2013 simplified the structure of the governing bodies of *MRT*. However, since this law is still not in the implementation phase our analysis focuses on the implementation of provisions on the public service as defined in the 2005 Law on the Broadcasting Activity. This article particularly scrutinizes the *MRT* Council and critically assesses the legislative and the practical aspects of its operation. It also discusses the role of the Managerial Board and the Executive Director<sup>108</sup> with respect to the risks involved in organisational and programming aspects of their respective functions in the *MRT*.

## 4.1

### GOVERNING BODIES

Unfortunately, the neat legal arrangement has little to do with practice. And this was the case with all three governing bodies.

#### 4.1.1

##### MRT COUNCIL

Even though the legislation by which the Council was to be appointed and work independently was in place, the practice demonstrated that it was not working in accordance with its purpose. The political influence on some of its members, the strategic undermining of the mechanisms of transparency and disregard for ethical and professional standards led to a conclusion that the Council did not defend the public interest.

The Council of the *MRT* was appointed by the National Assembly and it had 23 members, 18 of whom were nominated by representatives of the civil society. This suggests that the procedure of nomination was quite democratic. However, the practice has proven that the political parties in power always find a way to “smuggle” candidates that could advance their political interests in this body. Since the beginning of the implementation of the 2005 Broadcast Law, there have been several examples of elected members of the Council who were explicitly politically engaged. The most obvious attempt at political pressure over the *MRT* bodies was made in 2008 when the Law on Broadcasting Activity was amended in a completely non-transparent manner. The amendments, adopted by the Parliament in an ad hoc procedure on 19 August 2008, provided the option for the Public Service to go into bankruptcy and liquidation. At the meeting of the Committee for Stabilisation and Association in September 2008, the European Commission made a negative remark on these amendments. The EC stated that the amendments “are jeopardizing the independence of the *MRT* and they are a threat for the public broadcaster and the freedom of the media in the country”. The EC asked for these changes to be removed from the Law because “a bankruptcy and liquidation is not envisaged for the public broadcaster in any of the member states.”<sup>109</sup>

One of the key roles of the Council was to ensure respect for the public interest in the programming of the public service. An interview conducted with a member of the Council suggests that the role of the Council was rather ceremonial: “And who takes care of the quality of the programs in this situation? The politics! The exponents of a particular political group in this unfortunate proto-democratic society have the opportunity to influence the public broadcaster. There is no guard against this – the Council cannot ensure this guard.”<sup>110</sup> On the other side, the wording of the provisions in the Rules on Procedure of the Council was such that it threatened to undermine the transparency of its work. Article 3 of the Rules on Procedure stated that the “sessions of the Council are public, unless the Council decides otherwise.” This provision was in contradiction with the Law on

Broadcasting Activity which prescribes that all sessions of the Council are public.<sup>111</sup> Also, Rules on Procedure of the Council, its decisions, as well as the Operational Plan, Financial Plan and annual reports of *MRT* had to be published on its website. However, none of these documents have been published on the *MRT* website.<sup>112</sup>

The *de facto* political influence on the Council's composition and the lack of transparency in the process of decision making raised serious questions related to its key role regarding the *MRT* programming. The reason is that the Council was supposed to ensure respect for the public interest in programming and it was entitled to adopt the acts that define the "ethical and the professional standards in the creation of the programming." These standards were breached on many occasions but the Council either reacted inappropriately or did not react at all. Two paradigmatic cases can be mentioned in this connection. In 2012, the TV sector of *MRT* reported that a member of the Macedonian ethnic minority in Greece had been murdered and that the Greek authorities were covering up the case. The "Aleksandar Samardžiev case" was based on a statement by a Macedonian nationalist who had previously seen the information on *Facebook*. The information was originally published on the social network by an alleged cousin of the murdered person. The editorial board of the *MRT* did not double check the information but instantly made and interview with the secondary information source. The source stated that it was "in fact an act of war of Greece against Macedonia." The Council did not react immediately but it was called to respond by many CSOs and individuals. After its session, the Council ruled that there was no breach of ethical and professional standards in this case because, as it was put, the burden is carried by the source not by the media outlet that published it. Another case involved the coverage of a series of protests held in 2012 by young ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians respectively. At one point in the coverage, the *MRT* editorial staff took footage of violence that occurred at one of the protests and placed it in the context of another protest. As the protests had ethnic background this was a potentially inflammatory decision. The Council did not react at all.

#### 4.1.2

#### MRT MANAGERIAL BOARD

It can be concluded that in practice the Managerial Board was not always working in compliance with the law. The political allegiances of some of its members and the Government's *de facto* influence on its work disabled any possibility of independent decision making. Furthermore, disregard for decision making procedures made this body's operation non-transparent. Finally, since the Managerial Board was entitled to elect the executive body, the appointment of the latter could not be an unbiased decision.

The Managerial Board consisted of seven members who were elected by the *MRT* Council on the basis of a previously implemented public announcement procedure

(Article 134). It was also envisaged to be a non-political body. However, even though the Board was independent from the Government by law and was accountable to the Council that elected it, often the contrary was the case. In 2011, a decision was made to terminate the mandate of the 7 members of the Board, which demonstrated the extent to which this body was under political pressure. Even though the Law on Broadcasting Activity prescribes that the mandate of a member of the Managerial Board is 5 years and that a member can be dismissed only in the event of conflict of interest (Article 137), in July 2011 all the members of the Board were collectively dismissed by the Council. Some of the Board members issued a statement for the media claiming that their dismissal was illegal.<sup>113</sup>

An assessment of the work of the Board in 2013 described a situation in which the Board explicitly implemented Government's resolutions.<sup>114</sup> The analysis of the minutes from a session of the Board revealed that the Board requested from the Executive Body to implement the conclusions of the Government and change the method of calculating advertising prices. This breach of Article 134 of the Law on Broadcasting Activity in fact demonstrates the subordinated position of the Board and the level of influence that the Government had on MRT's finances. The Board's transparency and accountability was also an issue. There were also reports of the situations in which the Board made an important financial decision but decided not to take minutes of the session and only verbally notified the executive body. This instance of malpractice demonstrated the lack of accountability and non-awareness of the importance of prescribed procedures, which opened a possibility for manipulation.

#### 4.1.3

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Almost all executive directors of *MRT* after 2005 were people close to one or another political power and they all failed to make any significant progress in transforming *MRT* as a public service.<sup>115</sup>

The executive body was in fact a team of four people elected by the Managerial Board, two of them executive directors and two deputies. Neither the Law on Broadcasting Activity nor the *MRT* Statute prescribed the decision making procedure for this body. This in essence means that both directors had equal say in decision making which created room for organisational parallelism. Every successive Government in Macedonia's two decades of independence installed its own people in the PSB. The work of the governing bodies of the *MRT* was influenced by the Government rather than by other institutions independent from it such as the CSOs, the academia or the Parliament.

One of the main reasons for the unsuccessful transformation of the Macedonian Radio and Television during the period following the adoption of the new Broadcasting Law in 2005 was "the appointment of inadequate staff to the management bodies. People without

any experience and knowledge in broadcasting were appointed to the managerial positions in *MRT*, even though they lacked reputation and public trust and were not dedicated to serving the public interest.<sup>116</sup> Although the *Macedonian Radio and Television*, in accordance with the law, was accountable only to the legislative power (annual reports, financial plans, etc.), the practice of direct communication and informal “accountability” of the *MRT* management to the representatives of the executive branch of power, remained completely unchanged. This seriously undermined its institutional autonomy and editorial independence.

#### 4.2

#### FINANCIAL (IN)DEPENDENCE

The Macedonian public broadcaster has been facing financial and organisational problems for many years now which generated a profound production-technological crisis resulting in the decline of the audience and erosion of its media identity. The financial instability of the *Macedonian Radio and Television* due to the inefficient broadcasting tax collection system (note that in Macedonia, the broadcasting tax corresponds to a licence fee) caused also its political dependence from the political parties in power. This is a problem with a long history and it is not related to one ruling party only. It started during the early 1990s, even before the adoption of the first Broadcasting Law in 1997, when the managerial team of *MRT* failed to develop a comprehensive and well-designed concept of transformation and neglected the importance of securing stable funding for the public broadcaster. The biggest problem was that the broadcasting tax collection model was brought into question due to the privatisation of the Electricity Distribution Company in 2001 – until then the broadcasting tax had been paid along with the electricity bill. The rate of broadcasting tax collection continuously declined and by the time the new Broadcasting Law was adopted in 2005 it declined to as little as 10 percent. The new funding model incorporated in the 2005 Broadcasting Law was indeed aligned with the European recommendations,<sup>117</sup> but it came very late and needed almost five years to start functioning.

Since October 2009, the *MRT* management has made certain efforts to increase the percentage of collection, but the system collapsed due to several reasons: the register was not completely updated, many citizens refused to pay, the delivery of bills was not executed accurately, etc. In addition, when VMRO-DPMNE came to power it reduced the broadcasting tax to 130 denars (2.11 euro) monthly, because this was one of the promises given to citizens during the election campaign. These developments placed *MRT* in an extremely bad financial situation and made it completely dependent on the state budget funds. This issue raised a lot of concerns about the financial and editorial dependence of the public service and was many times stressed in the progress reports of the European Commission.

Table 8 MTV REVENUES FROM THE BROADCASTING TAX (LICENCE FEE) 2008-2012

YEAR	REVENUES FROM THE BROADCASTING TAX/ LICENCE FEE (IN MILLION DENARS)
2008	8,120
2009	39,730
2010	145,850
2011	232,090
2012	265,930

The financial consolidation of the PSB started in 2010 when the Parliament adopted amendments to the Broadcasting Law in order to establish a more efficient system of tax collection. The data presented in the market analysis of the Broadcasting Council for 2012 show that revenues of the *Macedonian Television* increased in the last three years, amounting to 265,930.000 denars in 2012. But despite this tendency, the regulator established that "...these funds are far from sufficient to ensure adequate funding of the public broadcasting service that would allow it to meet all its functions of public interest."<sup>118</sup>

Financial control over the work of the public service is executed by external and independent auditor and by the Parliament. If the Parliament, when reviewing the annual financial plan, identifies certain irregularities, it can request from *MRT* to submit a new annual financial plan within 60 days. The rules on state aid are implemented in the law, obliging *MRT* to keep separate accounting records for income from the broadcasting tax and from advertising and other commercial activities. The *MRT's* financial plans and annual reports are published only on the website of the Parliament and not on *MRT's* own website, as it is stated in the law.

Transparency of the *MRT* finances is indeed an issue of concern, especially with regard to its obligation to allocate at least 10 percent of its annual budget intended for new productions to programs made by independent producers. Indeed, in recent years, *MRT* commissioned and produced numerous new domestic programs, but the entire procedure of allocating the funds is not sufficiently transparent.

#### 4.3 EDITORIAL ISSUES

The editorial independence of *MRT* is guaranteed by law. This, however, is not sufficient to ensure actual independence given the absence of independent funding over the years and insufficient independence of *MRT* management bodies.

The many decades long crisis at *MRT* induced by political influences, clientelistic ties, financial shortages and technological deficiency has left the PSB neglecting its obligation

to cultivate informational, political and cultural pluralism in its programs. A series of quantitative and qualitative research studies conducted by the School of Journalism and Public Relations between 2011 and 2013<sup>119</sup> reveal that the programming completely disregards the public interest – serious breaches of ethical and professional journalistic standards were registered. It was established that the programming pertains solely to the interests of the Government or to the parties that occupy it; the research studies have shown that the journalists and editors are either under an immense pressure from the political and business elites or they themselves willingly serve their patrons. Only one example of the consequences of this situation for the programming will be mentioned on this occasion. In March/April 2013 Macedonia held local elections. In this democratic cycle, new municipal borders were put in place with the municipalities of Struga and Kichevo changing their ethno-demographic structure in favour of the ethnic Albanians. The will and the agenda of the political actors heavily influenced the coverage. The opposition was openly demonized – this was done in such a way that it resembled a fully formulated propaganda strategy. The ethnic divisions and the positioning of the Albanian and the Macedonian political parties were also reflected – hate speech was transmitted on air, *Channel One, MTV1* (in Macedonian) and *Channel Two, MTV2* (in Albanian) reported with no editorial consistency. Occasionally, the reports were spreading ethnic intolerance. However, the most specific trait of the election coverage was the enormous number of news items in which the ministers promoted the results of the Government's work and announced the construction of infrastructure and investments in industrial zones and a range of other projects. In the last ten days of the campaign, the information-providing function of the public broadcaster was almost entirely subordinated to the goals of the ruling party.

The television section of the PSB has three channels: *Channel One (MTV1)* broadcasts in the Macedonian language, *Channel Two (MTV2)* mostly in Albanian but also in the languages of *non-majority* ethnic groups, and *Channel Three (MTV3)* is a Parliamentary channel. This gives a false impression that the programming is pluralistic which, however, is dispelled when one analyses the coverage: there is an obvious neglect of the programs for smaller ethnic communities, other than Macedonian and Albanian. The number of employees in the Turkish, Roma, Serbian, Vlach and Bosniak sections of *Channel Two (MTV2)* has drastically reduced in the last years, whereas the time and the resources allocated to them do not enable them to successfully fulfil their informative and cultural function. The lack of unified and clearly defined principles of programming results in a coverage that promotes disintegration rather than interaction and inclusiveness. The lack of programming and production coordination and communication, both among newsrooms of ethnic communities and between the *Channel One* and *Two* program services, is of particular concern.



The issues that have been analyzed in this section reveal that *MRT* in essence has no organisational memory of independence. The political system prior to the 1990s accorded to the single party Government a direct stake in the *PSB*. Once the country gained independence, the situation changed formally but the Government's covert influence, which is both politically and ethnically determined, has been interwoven in the fabric of this media organisation. It is dominated by the "culture of dependence" sustained by both the governing bodies and production teams. This culture has nourished the widespread susceptibility to the political will of the contemporary power holders, the absence of financial and decision making transparency, unaccountability, disrespect for legislative procedures, a widespread disrespect for the ethical and professional principles of journalism, and auto-censorship.

Of course, the intensity and the overtness of this grip on the Public Service Broadcaster vary. In recent years, as research suggests and as several EC progress reports imply, the grip on the *PSB* has been tightening. The present management of *MRT* has improved the aesthetics of the programming; it introduced young staff, but this has not changed the political bias in the programming. In the past seven years, political bias and propaganda-like coverage has even become more energetic. The long-standing pressure on *MRT* resulted from its financial instability brought about by the dysfunctional broadcasting tax collection system. Budget funds were allocated annually to maintain its minimal operation, but it made the public broadcaster totally dependent on the state budget.

In the last two years (2011 and 2012), the collection of the tax began to improve due to the measures undertaken by the Public Tax Office. So, in the last two years, *MRT* began to strengthen and stabilize its financial and technological position. Nevertheless, the program still does not satisfy the functions of a public service and it has not gained the confidence of the public, in particular in terms of its key role – informing. The news and current affairs programs have been under the influence of the political structures for many years, so the public almost entirely lost confidence in their independence and impartiality. The audience research commissioned by the Broadcasting Council in 2013 confirms that the level of trust in the news program of the public broadcaster is quite low comparing to some commercial broadcasters: only 8.3 percent of the interviewed population (age 18+) stated that they trust mostly the *MTV* news program.

The first part of this chapter presents the current situation of the journalism profession in Macedonia: education and competences, labour rights, professional organisations, solidarity and the current state of investigative journalism. The second part is focused on the journalistic practices and ethics that are a reflection of the established clientelistic ties between political actors, business players and media owners. This web-like setting undermines the very core of the democratic function of journalism as a defender of the public interest. The analysis has pinpointed the dominant actors in these processes and has offered an interpretation of the ways each of these actors influence the process of the gathering, selection and framing of news.

### 5.1 JOURNALISTS AND THEIR ORGANISATIONS

Research on competencies, education and skills of journalists has not been conducted in Macedonia so far, but the general assessment is that the level of professional competences in journalism has quite declined over the last decade. Low salaries, insecurity and fear of losing the job contributed to journalism becoming one of the least desirable and least respected professions. In a situation where the media dominantly serve the party-political and private interests, professional journalism has almost disappeared. Numerous training courses for journalists have been organized in the past years and journalism can be studied at both public and private faculties. Unfortunately, even when journalists possess skills and competencies, these become irrelevant when confronted with real interests in the newsrooms. Very few journalists have the courage to stand up to the pressures coming from editors, owners or directly from representatives of political parties.

A positive trend in the past few years has been the strengthening of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) and Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers (ITUJ). What is also worthy of mentioning is the initiative taken by the Macedonian Institute for Media and AJM in 2011, when the Mavrovo Action Plan<sup>120</sup> was adopted by editors in chief, journalists, media professionals, experts and other relevant actors. The Action Plan determined the biggest problems and priority topics to be debated with the Government over the next years. The three organisations (AJM, ITUJ and MIM) have also started other initiatives regarding journalist's working rights and the improvement of professional standards but most notably, they have been the key actors in the public debates on the draft media law. The success of the initiatives is still not assessed, but when it comes to the Media Law they have succeeded in persuading the government to decrease the level of regulation of the print media and not to engage in the regulation of online media.

The independent Union of Journalists was not established until 2010, but today it has over 700 members. Although very active, it is still a weak organisation that lacks stable resources. Joining the Trade Union is seen as unacceptable at many media outlets, forcing some journalists into secret membership. Owners of many private media actually see the existence of the Union as a direct threat to their direct control over the editorial policy of their media. More than 20 union members and activists, including its president, were fired,<sup>121</sup> or are at risk of losing their jobs or being downgraded. In certain media there is a direct and in others an indirect ban on organizing workers unions.

Although the unemployment rate in the country is high, the number of journalists on the labour market is much higher than need to be. The media owners are exploiting the economic situation to decrease the journalist's labour price, to misuse them and set unfair employment/working conditions. There are no collective agreements signed between employers and employees in the private media sector. The minimal wage is not regulated. There are not any internal rules or statutes defining the rights and obligations of owners, editors and journalists. Associations of media employers do not exist. Therefore, the basic employment and social protection rights of journalists are not recognized or are significantly reduced. Most of the journalists are not paid well, have no employment contracts and are eventually dependent on media owners and managers. For example, the average wage of a journalist is about 250 euro and the average wage in the country 350 euro. Many journalists have no paid vacation, are not paid for overtime hours or when on sick leave, and have no insurance. There are even media that ask journalists to sign a resignation letter along with the work contract, and the former can be activated whenever the media owner finds it appropriate.

Real investigative journalism concerned with corruption and crime in politics and business is almost nonexistent in the country. In 2012, several political current-affairs shows were withdrawn from the programming of several TV stations ("Win-Win" and "ZborpoZbor" on *Alfa TV*, "Nie" on *Sitel TV*, "X/o" on *Kanal 5*, "Politiko" on *TV Naša* etc.). The explanation has never been openly stated in public, but the media community is aware that the reason is that editors and anchors of these programs were critical towards the institutions or public officials.<sup>122</sup>

Two organisations that have been supporting investigative journalism for several years now are BIRN<sup>123</sup> and SKOOP.<sup>124</sup> Financial support for local journalists who produce investigative stories has also been provided by USAID. A weekly that has independently investigated various forms of crime and corruption in all spheres of society is *Focus*, but its editors and journalists have several times faced lawsuits for libel or slander.<sup>125</sup> The owner of *Focus* – Nikola Mladenov, was tragically killed in a car accident in March 2013, which

raised many controversial issues in public. The newspaper *Nova Makedonija* published several investigative stories on this topic, criticizing the authorities for slowness and the lack of transparency of the investigation process. A journalist who was the author of investigative stories was charged for allegedly disclosing the name of a protected witness in a trial that took place in 2008. The journalist was detained for several months, causing chain reactions across the journalistic community in the country and international organisations.

## 5.2 “PODOBNOST” AS A PERVASIVE PRACTICE

A dominant view among journalists is that the first level of the clientelistic nexus is the party-political “colonial pressure” on the media and journalists. It has been overwhelmingly argued that, while all governments since the inauguration of pluralism used a hegemonic strategy, the present coalition does that in such a way that it hinders dramatically freedom of expression. Nowadays “... there is a whole [top down] political engineering in the way the newsrooms are being cleaned up from real journalists, in the way in which media are being murdered, in the way parallel journalistic associations are being formed and in the way the journalists are being made irrelevant.”<sup>126</sup> Some of the journalists even claim that freedom of expression was greater during the 2001 conflict, and even during the last years of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>127</sup> This paradox can be explained by four modes of pressure used by the political actors:

(1) The culture of *podobnost* (eligibility) is still persistent in the relations between political actors and journalists. *Podobnost* was a term used in the socialist system when editors and journalists were directly selected by the ruling party on the counts of their eligibility i.e. compliance with the will of the party.<sup>128</sup> However, there is a difference between *podobnost* in a mono-party system and in a pluralist system. In political pluralism, *podobnost* is secured in two ways: (a) *Rotation of the entire groups of staff from one newsroom to another* as a type of the ruling party’s strategic organisational manoeuvre,<sup>129</sup> whereby a complex mechanism named a command structure becomes mobilized.<sup>130</sup> The political pressure for these manoeuvres is executed through both direct<sup>131</sup> and indirect<sup>132</sup> communication channels. (b) *Marginalisation of “ineligible reporters”* which is common in the public broadcaster: the ruling governments regularly replace the cluster of critical journalists with a new cluster that is politically “eligible.” The old cluster is not laid off but rather “passivized” and not given the opportunity to cover topics that could enable them to be critical of the government.<sup>133</sup>

(2) The Government also makes use of the judicial system to maintain its grip on journalists: (a) the numerous lawsuits against journalists create a constant chilling effect regardless of their outcome; (b) the judicial system does not provide guarantees for the

protection of freedom of expression – journalists are being prosecuted and sentenced in contravention of Article 10 of the ECHR.<sup>134</sup>

(3) Another mode of pressure is the one in which the political actors contact the editors. This includes direct “telephone calls of party communication officers to the editorial staff,”<sup>135</sup> with the editors serving as “brokers” in the clientelistic chain.

(4) There is a mode of direct pressure where political actors directly call journalists. In this instance, the journalist is in direct correspondence with the political actor taking instructions on what and how to cover.

### 5.3 THE “GAZDA” AND THE BUSINESS PRESSURES

*Gazda* is the term used by journalists and other media professionals to denote media owners. In the colloquial usage, the term denotes a person who owns a lot and whose possessions are at his absolute disposal. There is a common interpretation among journalists that the ideological-political inclination of the media in the past depended solely on the opportunistic speculations of *gazdas*.<sup>136</sup> Other views suggest that the sophistication of the methods of pressure have been mastered in recent years.<sup>137</sup> In other words, the opportunistic judgment of the owners to a great deal determines the fashion in which a topic is covered by the newsroom.<sup>138</sup>

A distinctive stance expressed by journalists is that there is also a “tradition of cooperation” between the *gazdas* and the political actors, which explains why even the opposition parties never attack or criticize the media owners – “only the journalists are targeted.”<sup>139</sup> The choice of words: “tradition of cooperation”<sup>140</sup> is a key for the analysis of the role of owners in the clientelistic food-chain. Two patterns have been identified. In the first, the *gazda* plays the role of a broker – a mediator between the political actors as patrons and the editors/journalists as clients. This role is crucial for maintaining the clientelistic ties. The news production is to a great extent dependent on the owner and this mechanism makes the journalists expendable and the *gazdas* irreplaceable for any political establishment. It is this role of the owners that prevents politicians (opposition or government) from criticizing the *gazdas* and places the focus on journalists.<sup>141</sup> The *gazda* can be both a protector of and a threat for journalism. Even the good examples imply that the behaviour of the newsroom depends on the *gazda* who may provide independence or hinder it.<sup>142</sup> In the second pattern, the owner is a patron. This happens when the owner develops a political ambition in which case he attempts to utilize the media outlet for his political advancement.<sup>143</sup>

The owner in both cases influences the production of news and the setting in which news are produced. There is an economic pressure on journalists which makes them insecure and expendable because their work is devalued and insecure.<sup>144</sup> The journalists argue that the media are transformed into a mere political billboard of the ruling party: “The

ideology is not a problem, the 'cashology' is. Kamčev, Kerim, or the Serbian partners, or Džingo, or Stojmenov – none of them has ever said to the staff that we are going to defend the ideological right or the left. It is purely lucrative personal interests of theirs that transformed their media into a billboard of the ruling party – there is no ideology here. However, I cannot rule out that some of the owners do that not because of a lucrative interest but because of some threat from the political party.<sup>145</sup>

#### 5.4 THE EDITORS AND THE 'BLACK MAMBA EFFECT'

There is a practice of subtle and direct pressures of political and business actors on journalists executed through the editors. Editors have a peculiar role in the clientelistic chain – they may participate willingly believing in the correctness of the interests of the owners or the political actors, or unwillingly – fearing that they would lose their job. This insecurity – despite the fact that editors in Macedonia are well paid – makes both the editors and the journalists susceptible to various forms of pressure. Editors in some newsrooms are said to be permanently in contact with political actors or the owner of the media outlet.<sup>146</sup>

This has a direct impact on the process of news production. (1) The censoring of journalistic reports is a widespread practice known by the name "The Black Mamba Effect." Some of the editors even do not give any explanation as to why the report is not being broadcast. Another manner in which this is done is by banning the report from the prime-time news program. Often the editors would allow such a report to be broadcast when most of the audience do not watch TV. All of this creates a culture of mistrust between the journalists and the editors.<sup>147</sup> (2) Editors disregard the research done by journalists or the information they obtain and directly determine the choice of topics, content or the angle of the stories being covered – in coordination with the *gazda* or the political patron. The work of journalists in this kind of setting is redundant because regardless of the content of their reports, it all comes down to the political speculations made by the editors.<sup>148</sup> With this practice being all-pervasive, the journalists came to be seen as nothing more than microphone holders. For example, there is an interpretation that texts on workers' rights are more censored today than they were in 1997, indicating the presence of a strategy for inhibiting social mobilisation for workers' rights.<sup>149</sup> (3) The editors manipulate the process of advanced professional training for journalists. There is a perception that the culture of bad journalism is being reproduced and passed on to new generations of journalists.<sup>150</sup> (4) The editors are an instrument for the distribution and re-distribution of human resources across newsrooms. They ultimately decide which journalists will be engaged in the coverage of politically sensitive stories, which will be marginalized or transferred to another outlet, which will be punished and so on.<sup>151</sup>

In journalists' opinion, the "colonized" are to be blamed as much as the "colonizers." "If one hired [for an editorial position] a person who has strong values, who is certain in his abilities, who is not concerned whether he is going to be sacked and who knows that he always has other job opportunities, the situation would be different. The ones who are incapable are the ones who are holding on to their editorial position by any means possible – and that means disrespect for the professional standards, disrespect for the social function of the media, and the undermining of interpersonal relations in the newsroom."<sup>152</sup> This testimony by one of the participants is in fact a simplification of the issue as the incapability of some of the editors is not the only reason for their behaviour. However the effect that such behaviour produces is pinpointed correctly. This in turn creates an atmosphere of conformism in the newsrooms.<sup>153</sup>

## 5.5 JOURNALISTS, INTERESTS AND SOLIDARITY

Journalists are the last link in the clientelistic chain, and ever more often they serve as clients. A few structural aspects make possible this situation. Firstly, there is a perception that solidarity between journalists in general is limited.<sup>154</sup> There is a parallel association of journalists, MAN (Macedonian Association of Journalists) which is making competing claims on the AJM. This organisation has been formed recently and the perception is that it has a political background. This kind of divisions can be seen in the newsrooms as well – political affiliations, economic security fears, personal ties are among the reasons for the lack of solidarity. One of the participants in the focus groups said that the leader of the Union is being seen as someone who is at journalists' disposal, as an employee and not as a leader of a solidarity organisation in which every member should actively participate.<sup>155</sup>

Furthermore, journalists become entangled because of the lack of professionalism resulting from insufficient education<sup>156</sup> and low awareness of professional standards. A journalist in a focus group said that "... the Ethics Council of the AJM received complaints from political actors about published articles and broadcasts that are unbelievable. When we saw the content of those texts it was not clear how they came to be published at all. Sometimes we really have a brutal disregard for the Code of Journalists."<sup>157</sup>

The distrust between editors and journalists is another problem and it is illustrated by the following example. "An editor testified that when a young man was murdered by a police officer at the main city square in Skopje three years ago, he asked journalists to cover the story as they saw fit, and in the event of pressure from the politicians or the media owner they would defend the story together. The editor said that the journalists refused as they could not be certain that he would protect them when the time comes. They all refused to cover the story." A widespread practice of auto-censorship goes hand in hand with censorship. The method of political colonisation is sometimes brutal – the text is written

somewhere else by the political elite and it is for the journalist just to sign it. Sometimes they resist sometimes they don't. It seems that there is an agreement that every reporter precisely knows what is going to pass and what is not going to pass.

## 5.6

## CONCLUSIONS

Political polarisation of journalists in Macedonia is no longer as evident as it was during the past decades. The reason for this is the fact that professionals who are critical of the Government are systematically marginalized through a complex political-cum-business mechanism. The apologetic media professionals, on the other hand, are caught in the web either by the workings of their own beliefs and conformity or by various forms of economic pressure. This system of a disciplining grip on journalistic practices and the media in general is enabled by the workings of the strong clientelistic food-chain: the political actors, the judiciary, the media owners, the editors, and the journalists – they all play a specific role and the consequence is the deterioration of the main function of the media as defenders of public interests, and furthermore, the deterioration of democracy in the country. The clientelistic chain has a considerable impact on media and journalistic practices in several ways:

1. First, it creates a widespread culture of censorship and auto-censorship. In the Macedonian journalistic practice, censorship is widely applied by way of direct or indirect channels and it is easily recognizable. This paper has shown the mechanisms used to perform and normalize this practice. And the 'normalisation' of the practice is a source of an even greater concern. Normalisation of censorship has created an even more pervasive culture – the culture of auto-censorship. Journalists and editors internalize the will of the political and business censors without even being asked to do so, which makes the process of disciplining the profession undetectable and more worrying.
2. Second, it undermines a commitment of the journalistic community to the ethical standards of their profession. In a system in which the importance of the allegiance to the political or business patron is greater than the allegiance to the public interest, there is little need for establishing and maintaining values of truthfulness, fairness, justice, freedom etc. The only yardstick of the morality of journalists' actions is the particular interest of those who hold the political or economic power. This affects the media coverage directly – it opens a door to a wide range of problematic practices from truth fabrication to hate speech.
3. Third, it deters any attempt at investigative journalism. In the Macedonian clientelistic system, there are economic, organisational and direct political pressures on journalists not to engage in investigation, because such practices would not be controllable by the power holders.



4. Fourth, it devalues the status and the societal function of journalism as a profession and journalists as individuals. This creates a stigma on journalism and, in turn, it strategically disqualifies any claim that journalistic products may have on the truth.
5. Fifth, it diminishes media's role in providing public space for rational political debate on common social issues. The concern for the public interests has been replaced by overall commercialisation,
6. Finally, the clientelist chain results in the deterioration of interpersonal relations within the newsrooms and deterioration of the quality of programming. Editors in some of the media do not care about quality as long as the patron is satisfied.

## 5.7 JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES: CASE STUDY 1

### MTV COVERAGE OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS RELATED TO THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW MINISTER OF DEFENCE

On 18 February 2013, the Macedonian Assembly appointed Talat Xhaferi to be the new Minister of Defence. Before the conflict of 2001, Xhaferi was an officer in the Macedonian army (ARM) but with the outbreak of the conflict he joined the rebels who were attacking the Macedonian security forces. Some ethnic-Macedonian political and interest groups considered the appointment of Xhaferi to be an act of humiliation for the Macedonian people. The following day (19 February), the political party Dostoinstvo consisting of the former members of the Macedonian security forces issued a statement demanding from the Government not to allow “commander Forina” (Xhaferi’s rebel nick name) to take office. Controversies continued to pile up in the following weeks starting with the reports in the Macedonian language media that the leader of Xhaferi’s party DUI had posted on his Facebook wall that “KLA is on the top of the ARM.” The series of events prompted an outrage within a part of the ethnic-Macedonian population – mostly football fans and young nationalists.<sup>158</sup> Hundreds of people showed up in front of the Government building in the centre of Skopje and clashed with the police as they attempted to head towards Bitpazar, an area of mostly ethnic-Albanian population. On 2 March, there was a counter-protest by a part of ethnic Albanians, mostly young nationalists. A bus was burned down and the protests were about to become very violent, by they were eventually contained.

The public broadcaster’s<sup>159</sup> coverage of these events revealed a pattern of serious disrespect for the professional and ethical standards. Firstly, the Macedonian language public TV (*MTVI*) decided not to report at all on the violent protest of the ethnic-Macedonian football fans in front of the Government building. This was an apparent breach of the professional standard of truthful and accurate reporting.<sup>160</sup> Secondly, a serious breach occurred in the coverage the following day: the editorial decision of the *MTVI* was to report

on the counter-protest held by hundreds of ethnic Albanians. The emphasis of the coverage was put on the number of the injured police officers with no report on the injured protesters. The most serious issue was the visual coverage of the event: as the journalist was reporting on the protest, footage was being broadcast of clashes between protesters and the police. The video showed young people throwing stones at the police officers and hitting their shields with sticks. However, this was not footage of the protest of ethnic Albanians that day, but of the protest of ethnic Macedonians held on the previous day. The video was a deliberate montage with the aim to re-contextualize the protest attaching to it a meaning that did not exist.

In contrast to this, the *MTV2* program in Albanian had a thorough coverage of the violence that erupted at the protest of a group of ethnic Macedonians on 28 February and March 1, and it emphasized the antagonism of Macedonians to the Albanians in the country. On the other hand, *MTV2* made a serious breach in the coverage of the subsequent protest of the group of ethnic Albanians by selecting only footage and information that incriminated the police and vindicated the protesters: for example, there was no mention of the bus burned by protesters nor was there a video depicting that event. It also said that the protests were peaceful until the police showed up implying that the police, not the protesters were responsible for “little” violence.

## 5.8 JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES: CASE STUDY 2

### SMILKOVCI MURDER CASE – A COPY-PASTE MANUAL FOR CONFLICT INSTIGATION

Late at night on 12 April 2012, the Macedonian police found the bodies of four young people and one middle-aged man at the shore of a lake near the village of Smilkovci. The murder case provoked an outrage nationwide – the victims were ethnic Macedonians, which immediately sparked suspicion that the murders had been motivated by ethnic incentives. A few local communities of the ethnic Macedonian background started protesting against the ethnic group of alleged perpetrators, small riots started and homes of citizens were attacked. Local communities of ethnic Albanians staged a protest in response. On April 16, a bigger protest was held in Skopje and part of protesters became violent. A few people thought to have been of Albanian ethnicity were attacked, which provoked an outrage in the ethnic Albanian community. On 1 May, the security forces arrested 20 people in connection with the murders. The Minister of Internal Affairs held a press conference saying that (1) “the murderers were arrested in the operation Monster” and (2) that they belong to “a radical Islamist group.” This sparked an outrage in part of the population – the protests held on 4 May ended in mild violence and damages to the Municipality Building. The protesters claimed the arrests were made in a brutal way (women were arrested and that was put on camera) and denounced the use of the term “radical Islam”

which, according to some of the protesters, attached radical meaning to all Islam and all the Muslims.

A systematic analysis of the media discourses on these events reveals how easy it is for the professional community to simply convey whatever discourse the political agencies choose to employ, regardless of the effects that these discourses produce in society. The first claim of the Minister that “the murderers were arrested in the operation Monster” is in fact a breach of the rule of presumption of innocence – it disregards the fact that the group of people being held was at that point only a group of suspects in the case. Most of the media did not question this statement despite the fact that it demonstrated that the institution behaved unlawfully. The fact that this was said by a high official from the ruling party was enough to reproduce this statement without any question. This instance of reporting corroborates the thesis that sprang from the focus group discussions with journalists – that part of the journalistic community abides by the will of the political actors not by the ethical imperatives.

The second statement that the group was “radical Islamist” potentially stigmatizes a whole religious group in the country. The media did not put it under scrutiny. The term was simply reproduced without raising the issue of its appropriateness. This example shows how the culture of tranquilisation of the community can produce an ethnic or religious strife because of the lack of critical thinking in the community.

## 6

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the media policy development and implementation in Macedonia evidently shows that the last two and a half decades have seen retrograde processes in terms of freedom of expression and media independence. Although during the first decade and a half the concept of public interest was widely articulated in the regulation and the media sphere was far more plural and liberal, this initial period was nevertheless marked by the influence of the strong media moguls protecting journalists and the media merely when their interests were at stake. The salient feature of the second period of the media system development is a gradual conquest of the entire media space by the ruling party. Using the powerful mechanisms of the state apparatus, the party in power put under its own umbrella all business moguls, especially the ones in possession of influential media outlets. Ever since its establishment, the regulatory authority had been the target of attempts at political influence, but after 2006 resistance to such influence completely broke. Finally, all of this had a disastrous effect on the media independence and the journalism profession.

What is the political context of the Macedonian media system? Why have such processes been in progress, especially in the last decade? We are going to use the conceptual framework of Hallin and Mancini (2004; 2012) to explain the reasons why media policy has failed to create an operational media system based on respect for media freedom, independence and pluralism. The roots of the problem should be sought in the features of the political system that has been moving toward a stronger role of the government in almost all political processes and domains of society.

Macedonia's political system can be characterized as being closest to the Mediterranean or Polarized pluralistic model. Nevertheless, it has certain specifics.

Firstly, during the entire period under study, the *interventionist role of the state* has been quite visible, as well as its strong involvement in the economy, even though during the first decade and a half private business had a relatively high influence. The last decade can be described as a period of continuous movement towards authoritarianism.

Secondly, it can be said that the system in Macedonia is *de facto* becoming a majoritarian model as in Hallin and Mancini's classification, which implies the existence of two dominant parties, whereas the winning party monopolizes all political power or there is a clear distinction between the ruling party and the opposition. Due to the state's multi-ethnic character, this aspect of Macedonia's political system has been in practice modified into a *parallel majoritarian democracy*, because political parties are divided along ethnic lines into two blocks, with the ruling party (as the unwritten rule) entering into a coalition with the other ethnic block having won the majority of votes from the relevant electorate and concentrating all power in their hands. Another typical trait of a majoritarian democracy, which is very remarkable in the Macedonian political system, is the dominant influence of the government on the totality of political processes.

Thirdly, Macedonian political system, according to Hallin and Mancini's model, can be categorized as an *organized pluralism* because political parties have a dominant role in the social processes and place group interests before individual interests, which leads to the disappearance of the citizen as an individual. This process of *communitarisation* has been particularly characteristic in Macedonia in the last several years. "Organized pluralist systems are characterized by strongly institutionalized social groups representing different segments of the population, which often play a central role in mediating their members' relations with the wider society and may be formally integrated into the process of making public policy." (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 53).

Furthermore, the political history of Macedonia is characterized by late democratisation of the institutions, a rather low level of consensus and deep clashes among political actors, as well as by the contestation of the political organisations' legitimacy and of the political system as a whole (*polarized pluralism*). This trait of the political system has

been particularly obvious in the last several years, with the 24 December 2012 parliament incidents being its most blatant example. At that time, there was no consensus about the adoption of the budget among MPs of the ruling and opposition parties. Instead of a debate and approximation of their positions, the opposition MPs were violently taken out of the parliament.

Lastly, the political system of Macedonia is governed by a widespread culture of *clientelism*, which is the opposite to the practice of rational-legal authority that relies upon the application of universal rules of action and an independent and autonomous administration. When the media and the institutions regulating them enter into such relations of *clientelism*, their commitment to the public interest becomes much weaker than the individual interest or private relations.

Such features of the political system have been clearly reflected in the setup of the media system in Macedonia, which is a modified type of the Mediterranean model referred to as the *Polarized Hegemonic Pluralism*. The Mediterranean model was named by Hallin and Mancini as *Polarized Pluralism* and defined as a model featured by late democratisation of the institutions, a high degree of schism and clashes between two political camps (polarized pluralism), a combination of consensual and majoritarian governance, a strong role for the political parties (organized pluralism), a large involvement of the state and the parties in all domains of social life, above all in the economy, and a high degree of *clientelism*.

The Macedonian model nearly fits this frame by demonstrating the presence of an emphasized majoritarian model (in the relation between the establishment and the opposition) and a long-term tendency to authoritarianism. This analysis has demonstrated that the specifics of the Macedonian media model result from the continuous process of political hegemonisation, which has been especially visible during the past years. Therefore, we are adding the attribute *Hegemonic* to the ideal typical model of *Polarized Pluralism*.

The media system has followed the ethnic-political polarisation of the political system. In the first (liberal) stage of the media system development, there was a multitude of media polarized both on an ethnic and party basis. However, during the second stage of the development, within the two dominant linguistic-ethnic groups of media (especially in the Macedonian language media), there occurred political hegemonisation. *Hegemonisation* is also visible through the high level of political bias in media contents, the establishment of direct organisational connections between the media and political parties (both ruling and opposition parties), the tendency of involving more and more journalists in the political life and them becoming direct *promoters* or *agents* of the governing parties.

Journalism and journalism practices have been fully transformed under the effect of the process of political hegemonisation. Journalists have become less and less neutrally

critical arbiters, and their reporting style has been less and less oriented towards the presentation of facts and information. Investigative journalism has ceased to exist; its place has been taken over by copy-paste journalism where there is hardly ever a second page or a source quoted, or the source is some phantom online media or a *Facebook* post.

In its flight away from political pressure, critical journalism has found its safe haven online. Many journalists who had previously worked for the critical media, but also those who had lost professional distance from the big bosses while they were working for them, have established their own online information media. This sphere has been also subjected to political colonisation – although the political opposition has some web portals “close to them,” the pro-governmental online media portals have mushroomed over the past year. The ruling party uses them to create a hyper-production of events and to create an atmosphere of hyper-reality where the sovereign border between truth and non-truth is eradicated (Baudrillard 1994).

Political hegemonisation also refers to the role of the state in the *shaping* of the media system structure. Forms of political pressure over the media and press have turned from concealed to direct and unidirectional. The state is not the owner of the media, but that is unnecessary since media owners are its direct clients. Continuous state advertising is the most efficient mechanism securing the servitude in the vertical hierarchy where the journalist is at the bottom of the “food chain.”

Hegemonisation also implies politicisation and paralysis of the institutions that should oversee the implementation of media policies. Broadcasting frequencies are a public resource which was often used by “patrons” in power to exchange it for political or other form of support from the “clients” standing behind the media to which frequency bands were allocated. The paralysation of the institutions also means that an editor using hate speech to address audiences will not be warned or sanctioned because in so doing, they encourage voters from “their” group to vote for “their” political party.

The deep schism in society resting on the political and ethnic basis is also clearly reflected in the organisation and programme contents of the public broadcaster. The public broadcaster is also governed by a culture of political clientelism, but political-media clientelism here also has an ethnic background and it is most obviously manifested through censorship and self-censorship. Ethno-political censorship means that each newsroom suffers influence from “its” political party.

Civil organisations in the media sphere have been an important factor in recent years. Coordinated actions of positive processes have resulted in continuous pressure on the government to resolve crucial problems in the media sphere, reduce pressure on journalism and the media, and make the drafting of media laws a transparent process. However, these actions have failed to produce positive shifts, among other things because the journalistic

community as a whole is polarized (and passivized) as a consequence of many attempts at its marginalisation.

In their thesis on convergence or homogenisation, Hallin and Mancini claimed that the processes of European integration, the fall of traditional mass political parties, the American model of journalism professionalisation and the commercialisation of the media markets would lead the European countries towards the liberal media model. It is true that such processes were present in the first decade of the political development of Macedonian society and the former media system clearly demonstrated certain traits of the liberal model. Nevertheless, the direction of the political system development in Macedonia in the past decade has confirmed that the liberal model cannot take root here due to structural anomalies in the political system. The question as to the effect of those structural anomalies on the media system requires a more comprehensive socio-political research.

Because of the anomalies in the political system, society has no perspective, European integration processes are hampered and media system is dysfunctional. Without structural transformations of the political system, substantial changes in the media system and in the implementation of media policy cannot be expected.

In such a political and media environment, it is very difficult to expect from the media newsrooms to organize themselves in order to improve internal routines and practices in the direction of a better compliance with existing ethical codes. Even incentives coming from the outside may be shunned by the editorial staff because of their political affiliations. Internal changes will not happen unless the overall political context is transformed.

Still, several recommendations for changes within the relevant fields could be drawn from the study:

#### MEDIA POLICY

- (1) Actual independence of the regulator is of crucial importance and an introduction of a general merit system by the Parliament for all public officials might raise the awareness of the public interest values.
- (2) The concept of political pluralism should be clearly defined in the legislation and an obligation for the regulator should be included to monitor and to assess the level of political pluralism in the media.
- (3) The capacity of the audiovisual regulator should be enhanced (through the EU assistance instruments) especially in terms of achieving greater independence from all centres of power.
- (4) Strong and independent monitoring (by academic and expert bodies, or NGOs) of the work of the regulators in order to make them “aware and more accountable” to the public.
- (5) Support to reliable and independent academic research and engagement of the academic community in the critical public debate on media policy issues.

#### JOURNALISTS AND THEIR PRACTICES

- (1) Recently established self-regulatory system at the level of the entire media sector (Press Council) should be further strengthened; the body should consist of experienced and nonpartisan journalists and of well-known experts and academics.
- (2) The Press Council (or other independent media organisation) should make attempts to convince the media outlets that support the self-regulation system to establish in-



ternal mechanism of self-regulation (ombudsmen, editors for dealing with citizens' complaints etc.).

- (3) Further strengthening of the civil society sector and professional media organisations is of great importance, since these organisations directly support journalists and their rights and freedoms.
- (4) Trade Union of Journalists should be supported in its efforts to introduce minimum labour rights for journalists as a precondition for their independence and freedom.
- (5) Quality journalism education should be further enhanced; there are developed curricula for Journalism Education, but the interest in journalism studies among youngsters is very small.
- (6) Independent advocacy and scientific research should be supported in the field of journalism.

#### MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND TRANSPARENCY

- (1) The audiovisual regulator should be legally obliged to investigate the hidden connections between the audiovisual media and politicians and to publish at least four times a year brief media ownership reports including official data and the information from the Central Registry Database System on all companies and individuals that are connected with the AV media outlets.
- (2) Independent controlling monitoring systems should be established by the NGO sector, in order to track and publish the media ownership data in all media sectors (audiovisual, print and online media).
- (3) The Press Council should expand provisions in the Code of Ethics in order to encompass the issue of media transparency in the online media sector; online news and information media should be part of the self-regulatory system and should therefore undertake voluntarily the obligation to regularly publish on their websites data on their ownership and sources of funding.

#### MEDIA FINANCES

- (1) Paid political advertising in the audiovisual media should be completely banned during and outside of election campaigns.
- (2) State advertising in the audiovisual and print media should be totally banned with the Law on Media and Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services.
- (3) The audiovisual media should be legally obliged to provide and publish detailed data on financial sources, stating details of the ten largest sources of finance in the previous year; the audiovisual regulator would be obliged to monitor this obligation and to publish brief reports on its website.

- (4) Independent controlling monitoring systems should be established by the NGO media sector, in order to track and publish data on media financing in all sectors (audiovisual, print and online media).

#### PUBLIC SERVICE

- (1) Independent research or monitoring systems are needed to critically assess how the legally prescribed institutional autonomy of the managerial bodies is implemented in practice; this assessment should also take into consideration whether the individuals in *MRT* bodies are elected transparently and on the basis of their experience, knowledge and reputation in public.
- (2) Transparency of the decision making process and of the financial work of the public service should be improved; all information and documents related to the work of managerial bodies should be published on the *MRT* website.
- (3) The Parliament should organise annual public hearings on the basis of the analyses of the fulfilment of *MRT* programming functions conducted by the audiovisual regulator and/or independent expert analysis.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 The description of these two key concepts is given in the introductory part of this study, which presents the research methodology and definitions of basic concepts.
- 2 Some of the identified dependencies are very indicative of corrupt practices. Although these practices were very well described in in-depth interviews, later in the research process it was very difficult to provide documented evidence as proof.
- 3 In this period, the civil society sector was still not sufficiently developed in Macedonia, and the Association of Journalists had insufficient influence on the creation of policies. The activities of the civil society sector were mainly articulated through the activities of the Open Society Institute, which in the first years provided a strong financial support in the development of private media and the civic initiative.
- 4 The Council of Europe had particularly important role in the development of the regulation and its experts attended the public debates and developed the expertise of the first media regulation.
- 5 Anonymous interview with a member of the Broadcasting Council during the first mandate of this regulatory body, Skopje, 10 October 2013.
- 6 Anonymous interview with a former journalist and editor in chief for the public broadcaster, Skopje, 15 August 2013.
- 7 Excerpt from a focus group discussion involving journalists from TV newsrooms that broadcast in the Macedonian language, Skopje, 7 August 2013.
- 8 The author of this report was employed as Head of the Programming Department at the Broadcasting Council during the Presidential elections of 2004 when she witnessed direct pressures from the ruling SDSM party on the work of the Broadcasting Council.
- 9 Excerpt from a focus group discussion involving journalists working for TV newsrooms that broadcast in the Macedonian language, Skopje, 7 August 2013.
- 10 The 2005 Broadcasting Law was drafted by several working groups established within the Media Development Center, and the entire process was led and coordinated by Roberto Beličanec, one of the most distinguished media freedom and human rights activists in the country.
- 11 For example, the selection of the first members of the Broadcasting Council, in the first half of 2006, was accompanied with some controversies especially related to the fact that two of the candidates nominated by the Elections and Nominations Commission of the Parliament were “suggested” directly by the leading structures of the ruling parties at that time: one was the advisor to the Prime Minister and the other the press officer with the Cabinet of the Mayor of Skopje. Since both candidates were quite known public figures, a huge debate was raised by the daily newspapers, so that the Assembly had to withdraw the nomination. See: “New Broadcasting Council: The advisor to Bučkovski and to Penov comfortably settled for the next four years”, *Dnevnik*, 15 April 2006. Available at: <http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/?itemID=7AB80BDO6303CF45A98FB440BC3B1A6C&arc=1>. Accessed 15 September 2013.
- 12 Anonymous interview with an owner of a national broadcaster, Skopje, 26 July 2013.
- 13 Anonymous interview with a former member of the Broadcasting Council, Skopje, 31 July 2013.
- 14 *Transparency Macedonia*: <http://www.transparentnost-mk.org.mk/?p=1305>. See also: “State money for private advertising”, *Dnevnik*, 2 February 2008. Available at: <http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/?itemID=F953A63D860BF64A9D45D2FBC85A099C&arc=1>. Accessed 16 September 2013.
- 15 “The Government’s campaigns – pressure on the media”, *Utrinski vesnik*, 9 January 2008. Available at: <http://www.utrinski.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=40D51152CD71BA4DBEEFF5EC5D8A7133>. Accessed 15 September 2013.
- 16 European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2009 Progress Report, Brussels, 14 October 2009 [SEC (2009) 1335]. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2009/mk\\_rapport\\_2009\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2009/mk_rapport_2009_en.pdf). Accessed 17 September 2013.
- 17 “The Government prepares new advertising”, *Utrinski vesnik*, 17 December 2008. Available at:

- <http://www.utrinski.com.mk/?ItemID=6AE6F58FD5F2D4488670A445F016EC3D>. Accessed 15 September 2013.
- 18 Anonymous interview with an owner of a national broadcaster, Skopje, 26 July 2013.
  - 19 It was adopted in December 2007 by the Broadcasting Council and submitted to the Parliament, but the Ministry of Transport and Communication has never supported the document.
  - 20 At that time, the members of the regulatory body were under severe pressure and feared that any initiative for a legislative amendment would jeopardize their positions within the Broadcasting Council, because the VMRO-DPMNE Government had previously made such an attempt in March 2007.
  - 21 In the first draft of the Strategy, the experts that were engaged by the regulator proposed a moratorium on the allocation of new analogue frequencies. However, the member of the Broadcasting Council in charge of the Strategy development simply deleted that sentence from the document. The author of this report was at that time coordinating the Strategy drafting process as a Head of Research and Strategic Development Department.
  - 22 The main reason for allocating so many new national TV licences, as it was explained several times in the interviews and focus group discussions, was to satisfy the requirement of a powerful businessman who was close to the SDSM political party and was the real owner of *Alfa TV* station.
  - 23 Consequently, in 2010, the broadcasting market in Macedonia became fragmented more than ever before, because there were 147 broadcasters in total, of which 76 were commercial TV stations (19 national, 10 regional and 47 local), 68 were commercial radio stations (3 national, 16 regional, 49 local) and 3 were non-profit radio stations.
  - 24 The author of this report was at that time an employee in the professional services of the regulatory body and made several attempts (some of them in written form) to draw attention to the irregularities in the procedure.
  - 25 Some of the interviewed media professionals stated that the members of the Council negotiated with some of the applicants for new licences in order to obtain either political protection or support, while some even asked for a certain amount of money.
  - 26 Interview with Zoran Trajčevski, President of the Broadcasting Council, Skopje, 4 November 2013.
  - 27 One of the ways the Government employed to put pressure on the regulator was to shake as much possible its financial stability. The main source of funding for the regulator (as well as for the public service) was licence fees, and the respective state institutions (with the PSB managing bodies) did nothing to make the fee collection system functional.
  - 28 Anonymous interview with a former journalist and editor in chief for the public broadcaster, Skopje, 15 August 2013.
  - 29 "Six journalists from *Večer* and *Sitel* are moving to *Alfa TV*." *MKInfo*, 5 January 2013. Available at: <http://mkinfo.mk/makedonija/item/1915-shest-novinari-od-vecher-i-sitel-zaminuvaat-vo-alfa>. Accessed 18 September 2013.
  - 30 The pressures on AJM are made by continuously recruiting new members from the pro-governmental media to the parallel association of journalists (MAN) in order to boost its membership and therefore proclaim MAN a legitimate representative of journalists.
  - 31 Amendments to the Law on Broadcasting Activity adopted on 18 July 2011.
  - 32 "Vlasta go osvojuva Sovetot za radiodifuzija" (The Government has conquered the Broadcasting Council), *Utrinski vesnik*, 14 July 2011. Available at: <http://www.utrinski.mk/default.asp?ItemID=B9AAB1734420554697D12C318ED2C402>. Accessed 18 September 2013.
  - 33 See Nikodinoska and Šopar 2012, 23.
  - 34 Interview with Zoran Trajčevski, President of the Broadcasting Council, Skopje, 4 November 2013.
  - 35 Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM), Macedonian Institute for Media, Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers, Media Development Center, Metamorphosis, Macedonian Association of Journalists (MAN).
  - 36 Council of Europe, OSCE, Article 19, Franc La Rue, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and

- protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, SEEMO etc.
- 37 The database is available at: [http://www.srd.org.mk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=702&Itemid=342&lang=mk](http://www.srd.org.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=702&Itemid=342&lang=mk). Accessed 11 December 2013.
- 38 In December 2013, the Parliament adopted a new Media Law (amended in January 2014) that introduces the same obligation for broadcasters and for the print media. The new Media Law is available at: [http://www.avmu.mk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=710&Itemid=89&lang=en](http://www.avmu.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=710&Itemid=89&lang=en). Accessed 20 February 2014.
- 39 In late 2005, Ramkovski founded his own political party (Party for Economic Transformation) which he led informally because the 2005 Broadcasting Law contained a strict provision that banned the leaders of political parties from owning a broadcasting company. Ramkovski's party was part of the VMRO-DPMNE coalition from 2007 to the end of 2009.
- 40 See chart 1 on p. 269. Formally, Ljubisav Ivanov has never appeared as an owner of *Sitel TV*, but it is widely known that he is the real owner, because his son Goran Ivanov is its manager and was also the Editor in Chief for that TV station for many years. Goran Ivanov is also a member of the Board of the Macedonian Telecom, appointed in 2006 by the Government (the Government still owns 49 percent of the shares).
- 41 See chart 2 on p. 270. Ownership of *Kanal 5* changed several times over the years. Today, the formal owner is Vanja Gavrilovski, who owns an off-shore company Sunlight Trading CA, Panama, together with Marjan Stojmenov, son of Boris Stojmenov and brother of Emil Stojmenov, previous owner of *Kanal 5*. The TV station is considered to be very close to the ruling party VMRO-DPMNE.
- 42 *Alsats M* is the only private national TV station that broadcasts in Albanian and Macedonian.
- 43 See chart 5 on p. 272. Formally, the TV station is owned by the company Alfa Skopje, which is dominantly owned (56,9 percent) by CHS Invest Group DOOEL Skopje, a Skopje based company owned by the Serbian company CHS DOO Belgrade. The previous owner of *Alfa TV*, the Macedonian businessman who is close to the opposition party SDSM today still owns 16,6 percent of the shares in Alfa Skopje DOO Skopje, legal entity which is formally the owner of *Alfa TV*.
- 44 The figures are gathered by the Broadcasting Council and are estimated according to the annual balance sheets that all broadcasters are obliged to submit to the regulator. However, in 2011, *A1* and *A2* were closed and their financial documentation seized, so the real figure of the total net income is quite bigger (Broadcasting Council 2011).
- 45 *Sitel TV*, *Kanal 5*, *Telma TV*, *Alfa TV* (Macedonian language) and *Alsats M TV* (Albanian/Macedonian language).
- 46 *Channel One (MTV1)* broadcasts in the Macedonian language, *Channel Two (MTV2)* in the languages of five ethnic communities and the third is the *Parliamentary Channel* which transmits the sessions of the Parliament, its bodies and occasionally of the Government's sessions.
- 47 These stations are: *24 News*, *Kanal 5 Plus*, *Sitel 3*, *Nasha TV* and *TV Sonce*. They uplink the signal to a satellite platform and then downlink to cable operators all around the country.
- 48 At that time, the following newspapers were published by the state publishing company: *Nova Makedonija* and *Večer* (in Macedonian), *Flaka e Vlazerimit* (in Albanian), and *Birlik* (in Turkish).
- 49 The founders and owners of *Dnevnik* were Branko Geroski, Mile Jovanovski and Aleksandar Damovski who previously worked for the state publishing company NIP. Soon afterwards, *Dnevnik* established its own distribution network and bought its own printing press (together with the printing company Evropa 92 from Kočani).
- 50 *Fakti* is the first private newspaper that started publishing in the Albanian language in Macedonia.
- 51 *Roma Times*, published from 2001 to 2008, was the only newspaper in the Romani language.
- 52 *Vreme* and *Večer* appeared on the market in the beginning of 2004.
- 53 *Andreski* is considered to be very close to the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party, and the editorial policy of the newspaper is almost identical to the one of *Sitel TV*, because editors in chief of the newspaper were Dragan Pavlović Latas (one of the most

- prominent editors in *Sitel*) and, since September 2012, Ivona Taleska (also prominent news editor in *Sitel*).
- 54 OST Holding GMBH Vienna owned the company Media Print Macedonia which owned the three biggest newspapers on the market, but also the sport daily *Makedonski sport*, the weekly *Tea Moderna*, the printing press Grafički Centar and other properties.
- 55 The Orka Holding company owned 100 percent of the shares in Grafički Centar, which owned 100 percent shares of the Media Print Macedonia. MPM was the owner of the publishing companies Krug, Ogledalo, Planet Press and Makedonski sport, which published the newspapers.
- 56 *Telegraf.mk* started operating in June 2013.
- 57 For more details, see Ordanoski 2012, 181.
- 58 The newspaper *Dnevnik* (26 October 2013), published the information that Veselin Jevrosimović, through his group of IT companies Comtrade, i.e. its Macedonian company CHS Invest group, bought 56 percent of the shares (previously owned by the company Fershped) in *Alfa TV*, for 2,5 million euro. See: <http://dnevnik.mk/default.asp?IteMid=849485A80313B74CB6F3ED350B2C7177>. Accessed 10 December 2013.
- 59 Srđan Kerim was the former director of WAZ for South-East Europe and director of MPM.
- 60 See chart 7 on page 276.
- 61 Bogdanovski is a son-in-law of Bojo Andreovski who actually owns the newspaper.
- 62 See the online publication: *The state of the online media and online journalism in Macedonia*, Macedonian Institute for Media, December 2010. Available at: <http://www.mim.org.mk/images/online.pdf>. Accessed 13 December 2013.
- 63 The service is conducted by the research agency Ipsos Strategic Puls.
- 64 In January 2013, the ownership of MPM changed hands again. In addition to Orka Holding and Internet Group Investment, MPM now has a third shareholder – Mireks Plus which is owned by Srđan Kerim, a former executive in MPM (they have 33.3 percent each). *Internet Group Investment is a Serbian company that owns the biggest internet portal in Serbia (telegraf.rs)*.
- 65 According to the National Classification System, the online news media are mostly registered as Internet portals, under the code – 63.12, but some of these entities are registered under different categories (production, other IT services, publication of newspapers etc.).
- 66 This company is registered under the code 62.09 – other services related to information technologies and computers
- 67 Plus Info is registered under the code 10.9 – Other social organisations, foundations and citizens; associations.
- 68 Telegraf DOOEL is registered under the code 58.13 – Publication of newspapers.
- 69 The company Iresine Limited, registered in Belize (Central America), is the owner of the online portal. This information is published by the journalists who investigated the ownership of online media in Macedonia. Available at: [www.mediapedia.mk](http://www.mediapedia.mk). Accessed 15 February 2014.
- 70 Aco Misajlovski, the owner of the publishing company EM Media DOOEL, is a brother of Vlado Misajlovski who is a member of VMRO-DPMNE and currently holds the position of State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 71 These online portals are quite new (*Deneshen, Lider, Vistina*, Ekonomski). Dejan Donev appears either as a marketing or administrative contact for all these portals.
- 72 This is the case of the portal *Brief.mk*, whose owner is the son of Nikolovska, a member of the opposition political party PEI (Party for European Integration).
- 73 The market analyses are available in English version on the following link: [http://www.avmu.mk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=559&Itemid=355&lang=en](http://www.avmu.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=559&Itemid=355&lang=en). Accessed 23 January 2014.
- 74 The number of broadcast media that provide data is published in the market analyses and in the annual reports of the Broadcasting Council. See: <http://www.avmu.mk>. Accessed 22 January 2014.
- 75 The content of the Media Law was a subject of many controversial debates before its adoption. The Association of Journalists of Macedonia and several nongovernmental organisations were categorically against the Media Law, arguing that it

- would severely jeopardize freedom of expression in the country because the ruling party had already gained influence in almost all traditional media and intended to intrude into the online media sphere.
- 76 Ipsos Strategic Puls, which is affiliated to the International agency Ipsos, based in France. See: [http://www.ipsos.com/Country\\_Profile\\_Macedonia](http://www.ipsos.com/Country_Profile_Macedonia). Accessed 24 January 2014.
- 77 AGB Nielsen Media Research Skopje, <http://old-site.agbn Nielsen.com/whereweare/dynPage.asp?lang=english&id=517&country=Macedonia>. Accessed 24 January 2014.
- 78 The representatives of the media or advertising sector often emphasize that the figures for advertising expenditure, except for television, are not correct at all, because they are based on unreliable estimates.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 The most recent affair has been the one revealed by the daily *Dnevnik* about the public procurement procedure of the Government (Secretariat for implementation of the Framework agreement), granted to Tag Communications. See: "100,000 euro to a firm close to DUI for an analysis of the Framework Agreement," *Dnevnik*, 8 February 2014. Available at: <http://dnevnik.mk/default.asp?ItemID=B2335A0CE4D170448FF910213B98579C>. Accessed 10 February 2014.
- 81 "The Government does not bribe the media with advertisements, the agencies are doing that on its behalf!" *Fokus*, 12 March 2012.
- 82 "The money for advertising that the Government pays out from our pocket is a state secret?" *Fokus*, 15 June 2012.
- 83 Interview with a representative of an advertising agency conducted on 23 December 2013.
- 84 "SDSM accuses of media corruption, the Government denies." *Nova Makedonija*, 21 January 2014. Available at: <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/DetalNewsInstant.asp?vestInstant=29953>. Accessed 24 January 2014.
- 85 Their names could not be published because they wanted to remain anonymous.
- 86 One of the explanations given by some representatives of the advertising industry is that in 2010 the Government stopped advertising on television because their prices were unrealistically high and that state advertising aired by other TV stations was much smaller in scope and in price. It should be noted that this data are estimates made by using official price lists.
- 87 This is a statement given by the President of the Association of Journalists: "Selmani requires the Government to publicize in a transparent way." *A10n.mk*, 1 October 2013. Available at: <http://a10n.mk/wordpress/archives/213481>. Accessed 23 January 2014.
- 88 "The Government pays annually 39 million for advertising in certain media", *Kapital*, 17 May 2012. Available at: [http://www.kapital.mk/mk/dneven-vesnik.aspx/84178/vladata\\_godishno\\_plakja\\_39\\_milioni\\_evra\\_za\\_reklami\\_vo\\_odredeni\\_mediumi\\_!.aspx?ild=2743](http://www.kapital.mk/mk/dneven-vesnik.aspx/84178/vladata_godishno_plakja_39_milioni_evra_za_reklami_vo_odredeni_mediumi_!.aspx?ild=2743). Accessed 22 January 2014.
- 89 The topic was discussed in several articles published by the weeklies *Fokus* and *Kapital*, the online TVs *A10n*, *TV Nova* etc.
- 90 "The money for advertising that the Government pays out from our pocket is a state secret?", *Fokus*, 15 June 2012.
- 91 "Now, in the response from the Government to the request to give the media plan ... it is stated that the economic operator has labelled this as a 'business secret' and thus the General Secretariat of the Government has registered the document as classified information with the label 'for internal purposes.'" See: "The money for advertising that the Government pays out from our pocket is a state secret?", *Fokus*, 15 June 2012.
- 92 Thirty-four written requests were sent to the General Secretariat of the Government and ministries, municipalities and public enterprises.
- 93 There was no official reply at all from the Government's General Secretariat, while the Ministry of Finance (which also had public campaigns) replied that it had no data on marketing agencies and media that carried its advertisements.
- 94 In his public statement, the SDSM's spokesman mentioned the amount of 90,000 euro, but later in the Parliament the representative of the same party Spasovski, in his question to the prime minister, spoke about 450,000 euro.
- 95 "SDMS accuses of media corruption, the Government denies", *Nova Makedonija*, 21 January 2014.

- Available at: <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/DetalNewsInstant.asp?vestInstant=29953>. Accessed 24 January 2014.
- 96 According to Article 83(a) of the Electoral Code, donations are defined as services given free of charge, services paid by third parties and services provided at discounted prices. The provider of the services is obliged to inform the political party on the market price of the service and to provide an invoice for the same. Paragraph 5 stipulates that discounts given by the broadcast and print media for paid political advertising are considered donations expressed in monetary value.
- 97 Page 20 of the Financial Report of the VMRO-DPMNE coalition dated 21 May 2013. Available at: [http://www.dzr.gov.mk/Uploads/12\\_VMRO\\_DPMNE\\_LI\\_vkupen\\_izvestaj017.pdf](http://www.dzr.gov.mk/Uploads/12_VMRO_DPMNE_LI_vkupen_izvestaj017.pdf). Accessed 25 January 2014.
- 98 The owners of the company are considered to be very close to the ruling party: the businessman Orce Kamčev (Orka Holding), the former deputy minister in the VMRO-DPMNE Government Srđan Kerim (Mireks Plus) and the Serbian businessman Veselin Jevrosimović (Internet Group Investment), who in 2009 won the tender of the Government for providing computer equipment for primary education.
- 99 According to the Electoral Code, the media are also obliged to provide financial reports within 15 days of the end of the elections. The reports contain data on the advertising space used by political parties and the amount of funds used for political advertising.
- 100 Financial Report of VMRO-DPMNE on the campaign during the local elections in 2013 is available at: [http://www.dzr.gov.mk/Uploads/12\\_VMRO\\_DPMNE\\_LI\\_vkupen\\_izvestaj017.pdf](http://www.dzr.gov.mk/Uploads/12_VMRO_DPMNE_LI_vkupen_izvestaj017.pdf). Accessed 25 January 2014.
- 101 The financial reports of the media on the political advertising during the local elections in 2013 are published on the website of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption: [http://www.dksk.org.mk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=312&Itemid=136](http://www.dksk.org.mk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=312&Itemid=136). Accessed 25 January 2014.
- 102 Information about this affair was published mainly in the critical media. The public service and the pro-governmental media did not publish in the beginning any information about the press conference of the opposition party SDSM.
- 103 The name of the company is *Vizaris*; its owner is the mother of Ivona Talevska who works as a journalist and editor for *Sitel TV* and the print daily *Večer*. The company has a registered web domain where Talevska is stated as a contact person. See: <http://reg.marnet.net.mk/registar.php?dom=visaris.mk>. Accessed 2 February 2014.
- 104 Ivona Talevska and Dragan Pavlovik Latas.
- 105 Interview with the Minister Todorov aired on *Kanal 5* on 14 January 2014. The interview is not available in the online archives of the TV station, but it was published on several other web sites and in the print media.
- 106 "Minister Todorov has terminated the contract with Ivona's company", *Nova Makedonija*, 31 January 2014. Available at: <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=13114731445&id=9&setIzdanie=23089>. Accessed 2 February 2014.
- 107 The new law is deemed controversial as most of the major media organisations in the country have raised serious concerns about some of the provisions therein, especially those concerning the independence of the public service and the regulatory authority and its powers with regard to the print and online media; another controversial issue was the inclusion of the online media which was resolved at the end of the 2013 when the Government accepted a request of the Association of Journalists to exclude online media from the Law.
- 108 The director of the Public Broadcaster was contacted for an interview. He had initially accepted to answer questions via e-mail, but a month after the questions had been sent we still did not have any response.
- 109 According to the public explanation offered by the Government, the amendments were proposed because of the financial crisis of the Public Broadcaster – the aim was, according to the Government, to financially consolidate the organisation. However, some of the interviewed experts stated that it was an attempt at political pressure. (Anonymous interview with a former journalist and editor in chief for the public broadcaster, Skopje, 15 August 2013.)



- 110 This was stated in the interview with a member of the Council of *MRT*. The interview was conducted for the purposes of another research project and therefore the name of the interviewer is not stated here.
- 111 See NVO Infocentar and Media Development Centar 2013.
- 112 *MRTV* website is on the following link: <http://www.mtv.com.mk/>. Accessed 27 January, 2014.
- 113 “Silent coup at the MRT or a legal reshuffling of the Board?”, *Utrinski vesnik*, 8 July 2011. Available at: <http://www.utrinski.mk/?ItemID=BC0E667E6D393744A5789140605CAD44>. Accessed 30 January 2014.
- 114 See NVO Infocentar and Media Development Centar 2013.
- 115 See Trpevska et al 2010, 5.
- 116 Ibid.
- 117 *Analysis of the public broadcasting in the Republic of Macedonia in the context of the European media policy* (p. 5), Macedonian Institute for Media, Skopje, June 2010. Available at: <http://mim.org.mk/index.php/en/researches>. Accessed 30 January 2014.
- 118 See Broadcasting Council 2012.
- 119 Available at: [http://www.unescochair-vs.edu.mk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=101&Itemid=41&lang=en](http://www.unescochair-vs.edu.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=101&Itemid=41&lang=en). Accessed 30 January 2014.
- 120 The Mavrovo Action Plan sets out three main strategic actions with the aim to: 1) ensure the implementation of legislative provisions, including the abolishment of unfair trials for journalists, the indiscriminate implementation of the legislative provisions on journalists’ working rights, improve media legislation and provisions of the Electoral Code related to the media coverage of the election campaigns, define the rules on advertising etc.; 2) free the PSB from political pressure and 3) improve professional standards by strengthening the self-regulation mechanisms. The action plan is available at: [http://www.znm.org.mk/drupal-7.7/sites/default/files/Akciski%20plan\\_ZNM\\_MIM\\_22\\_March\\_mk.pdf](http://www.znm.org.mk/drupal-7.7/sites/default/files/Akciski%20plan_ZNM_MIM_22_March_mk.pdf). Accessed 30 October 2014.
- 121 “Otkaz za sindikalniot lider na novinarite” (Dismissal for the journalists Union leader), *Radio Free Europe*, Skopje 9 August 2011. Available at: <http://www.makdenes.org/archive/news/20110809/428/428.html?id=24291403>. Accessed 16 October 2014.
- 122 This conclusion was emphasized several times in the focus group discussions with journalists from various media, conducted during August 2013.
- 123 BIRN Macedonia is an independent NGO founded in 2004 as part of the regional Balkan Investigative Reporting Network. Available at: <http://birn.eu.com/en/network/birn-macedonia-home>. Accessed 15 October 2014.
- 124 SCOOP is a network for investigative journalists in Eastern Europe, Russia, Caucasus, Central Asia and West Africa. SCOOP was supporting and promoting investigative reporting in the Balkans from 2003 to 2012. Available at: <http://i-scoop.org/scoop/balkans/category/macedonia/>. Accessed 16 October 2014.
- 125 One of the most notorious defamation cases in Macedonia occurred in 2006 when the owner of Fokus was fined 30.000 euro for stating that the President of the State at that time, Branko Crvenkovski, owned secret accounts in Swiss banks. Another case is from October 2011, when the editor-in-chief of the weekly – Jadranka Kostova, was found guilty in a case filed against her by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and sentenced to a fine of 15.000 euro.
- 126 Anonymous journalist, participant in the second focus group, conducted on 9 August 2013.
- 127 “Let me make a comparison: at the moment, the situation with journalism is worse in terms of freedom of expression. From 1986 to 1991 – those five years allowed more freedom than these years of pluralism”. Anonymous journalist, a participant in the second focus group, conducted on 9 August 2013..
- 128 “The political *podobnost* or eligibility of journalists is such that if you are noticed or if they think that you are somehow connected to the other political structure, there are going to be consequences. It is enforced in this way, for example: in the past my editors had no complaints about my work. Then one day the deputy executive simply calls me and says: I have great respect for you but I have to replace you with someone else. And I replied: I have great respect for you otherwise I would have asked for an explanation as to why I

- am being replaced. Since the inauguration of democracy in the country, editors who are close to certain political groups have been in place. [They are *podobni*]” (A testimony from the first focus group, conducted on 7 August 2013.)
- 129 In all focus groups it was indicated that there were even rotations of the whole news rooms from one media outlet to another. Basically, *TV Telma*, the *Focus* weekly and *Vest* are among the few newsrooms that have been spared this type of rotations. The mechanism works best in the Public Service Broadcaster: once the political elite changes, the *PSB*’s leading figures are replaced. Within months, the whole team of journalists who covered the most important political stories are put aside and a new group of (politically eligible) journalists is brought in.
- 130 Participant in the first focus group, conducted on 7 August 2013.
- 131 Examples include a direct cooperation between the owner and the political interest, a political interest of the owner, or a direct pressure from the political actors on the owners etc.
- 132 A more subtle pressure is made through the owners.
- 133 “It is clear to me that any political party that gets to power will want to establish as great domination as possible over the media. This is especially true of *MTV1*” – a statement from the first focus group, conducted on 7 August 2013.
- 134 The case of Kežarovski is notorious for this practice.
- 135 “We all know the address. The ruling party communications officer calls and says: ‘This package is not going to be broadcast again.’ He calls the editor in chief directly. That is the link” (Third focus group, conducted on 13 August 2013.)
- 136 “It all depended on the decision of *gazda* to connect to a certain party- and which party would that be. That is dependent on the given moment – is that pluralism? The owner will estimate that in the next four years his business would develop better if he bids on the party he thinks has a better chance to win the elections. Is this pluralism?” (First focus group, conducted on 7 August 2013.)
- 137 “For example, there was a case in 1993-94 when some youth members of a party were planting some trees, and journalists from my newsroom published that information and because of that they were fined to 30 percent [off their salary]. This practice has always been present, the thing is that as the time passes the mechanisms and the principles of how control over the media is executed gain in sophistication. They are getting better all the time” (Third focus group, conducted on 13 August 2013.)
- 138 “You, as a journalist or an editor, know exactly your media affiliation – you may put an effort to cover a story differently, to publish variety of information – but you are still working for that outlet. I know exactly what the strategy of its *gazda* is. The one who does not like this may leave the newsroom if he has a better opportunity elsewhere. If not, you are stuck there – you sit in your place and you move on as before.” (First focus group, conducted on 7 August 2013.)
- 139 “Have you ever heard of an example for any politician (regardless of whether he is in power or not) mentioning the name of *gazda* in the Parliament in a bad context? They always talk about journalists being mercenaries, submissive, spineless etc. Not a word about the *gazdas*. It’s because of the long lasting tradition of cooperation and closeness between them.” (First focus group, conducted on 7 August 2013.)
- 140 The examples of this include for example the two TV stations owned by political figures or their families. These two politicians are in coalition with the governing party *VMRO-DPMNE*. The coverage by both stations is propagandistic in favour of the Government – as the 2012 and 2013 researches of the School of Journalism and Public Relations showed.
- 141 “I have talked to some politicians and they are all silent – none of them attacks the *gazdas*. The journalists are easy targets, because we have no agreements – you are needed today, you are expendable tomorrow” (Third focused group, conducted on 13 August 2013.)
- 142 “The whole point in the rare ‘free’ newsrooms is that their *gazda* still guarantees the journalist’s economic independence. In other words he says: ‘While I am here, don’t worry, do your business.’ (First focused group, conducted on 7 August 2013.)
- 143 The case of the closed *A1*: the TV station was closed because of the competing political interests

- of the Government and the owner. The newsroom was a victim within that setting.
- 144 “At my previous employer I went to ask for a raise because I thought that I deserved it – I received a message from the *gazda* that he could find two young journalists who would work for that amount of money.”
- 145 Anonymous journalist, participant in the First focus group, conducted on 7 August 2013.
- 146 “The editors are more frequently on the phone because whatever they publish they have to check with someone first. This is said in a comical sense but it is the reality- you can see the situation we got ourselves into.” (Second focus group, conducted on 9 August 2013.)
- 147 “... a colleague of mine said to me that she wrote a text, it was checked by all instances and approved- the next morning it was not in the newspaper.” (First focus group, conducted on 7 August 2013.)
- 148 “There is no point for a journalist to abide by the Code of Journalists – the editor will inevitably intervene in such a way as to undermine it. We have to get back to the Code but on the level of editors. The ethical relations between editors, *gazdas* and journalists must be put in order first. And this will be a problem because there are colleagues who earn serious amounts of money precisely because they are undermining the Code.” (First focus group, conducted on 7 August 2013.)
- 149 “I covered the hunger strike in front of the Parliament that lasted 40 days back in 1997. Every day for 40 days I produced articles and all of them were published by the newspaper. Nowadays you can see your article or a package not published or broadcasted for no reason.” (Fourth focus group, conducted on 29 August 2013.)
- 150 “Then the worst outcome of this is that the young journalists – the ones that are learning the craft right now – are educated in a wrong model. They are trained in auto-censorship.” (First focus group, conducted on 7 August 2013.)
- 151 “They are more direct and more brutal than in the past. I have witnessed in the past at *MTV*, a colleague was fined to 20 percent taken off his pay because he aired two audio clips featuring a politician who wanted to see himself three times in the package.” (First focus group, conducted on 7 August 2013.)
- 152 Anonymous journalist, participant in the first focus group, conducted on 7 August 2013.
- 153 “Absolutely because of this it is extremely important how you will position yourself. The way things are ordered at the public broadcaster, it is very hard to change anything – and then you give up.”
- 154 “There are colleagues who say that it is good that *A1* was closed down, that it had to be. As long as there are colleagues who think that an outlet should be closed down the things will not change for the better. That means that they do not know what democracy is.” (First focus group, conducted on 7 August 2013.)
- 155 Anonymous journalist, participant in the Second focus group, conducted on 9 August 2013.
- 156 “The journalists are responsible for the position they are in – every fool has become a journalist in this country and they immediately write crap editorials and analyses” (Third focus group, conducted on 13 August 2013.)
- 157 Anonymous journalist, participant in the Second focus group, conducted on 9 August 2013.
- 158 *Dostoinstvo*, however, did not organize these subsequent violent protests that took place on 28 February and 1 March. It organized parallel peaceful protests at the same time at another location.
- 159 *MTV1* – the Macedonian language channel and *MTV2* – the Albanian language channel.
- 160 This standard is stipulated in the basic principles of reporting in the Code of Journalists of Macedonia.

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- Anonymous interview with a former member of the Broadcasting Council, 31 July 2013.
- Anonymous interview with a former journalist and editor-in-chief for the public broadcaster, 15 August 2013.
- Anonymous interview with a member of the Broadcasting Council during the first mandate of this regulatory body, 10 October 2013.
- Anonymous interview with an editor-in-chief of a print media, 20 October 2013.
- Interview with Zoran Trajčevski, President of the Broadcasting Council, 4 November 2013.
- Anonymous interview with a representative of an advertising agency, 23 December 2013.

#### FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- First focus group discussion involving journalists from TV newsrooms that broadcast in the Macedonian language, 7 August 2013.
- Second focus group involving journalists from print media that publish in Macedonian language, 9 August 2013.
- Third focus group involving journalists from online media that publish in Macedonian language, 13 August 2013.
- Fourth focus group involving journalists from TV, print and online media that publish in Albanian language, 29 August 2013.