

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM IN CORPORATE MEDIA: REPORTERS'
PERCEPTIONS OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM IN TURKEY

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Thesis Abstract

Ezgi Kaya, “Investigative Journalism in Corporate Media: Reporters’ Perceptions of Investigative Journalism in Turkey”

This study aims at analysing the practice of investigative journalism as a political instrument during the recent political developments in Turkey with a focus on the perceptions of the main agents of the newsmaking process, the reporters. The main point of focus was how the organizational restrictions necessitated by the political-economic affiliations of news organizations influence the reporters’ practice of investigative journalism. A group of reporters were interviewed about their evaluations of the current practice of investigative journalism and the problems they perceive in its conduct in Turkey.

The results indicate that the reporters are critical of the current conduct of investigative journalism in Turkey. They associate the problems they perceive with the corporate structure of the media in Turkey and the organizational procedures of newsmaking it requires. The reporters are critical of the influence of the political-economic interests of media owners on news policy, which in turn leads to an instrumentalization of investigative journalism, reinforced by the uncritical use of leaked information. They complain of the editorial control in the selection of news and the auto-control in the process of making news. They argue that the routinization in the content of assigned stories and the restrictions of time spent on making news provide obstacles to making investigative news. They also believe that their professional skills are undermined because of low job security, the lack of work satisfaction and the undervaluing of reporters.

Tez Özeti

Ezgi Kaya, “Sermaye Medyasında Araştırmacı Gazetecilik: Türkiye’de Muhabirlerin

Araştırmacı Gazeteciliğe Yönelik Algıları”

Bu çalışma, Türkiye’deki son siyasi gelişmeler sırasında araştırmacı gazeteciliğin siyasi bir araç olarak kullanılması olgusunu, haber yapma sürecinin ana özneleri muhabirler üzerine odaklanarak incelemektedir. Bu çalışmanın temel meselesi, medya kuruluşlarının siyasi-iktisadi bağlılıkları ışığında şekillenen kurumsal kısıtlamaların, muhabirlerin araştırmacı gazetecilik uğraşını nasıl etkilediğini anlamaktır. Bu bağlamda, bir grup gazeteci ile Türkiye’de mevcut araştırmacı gazetecilik pratiğine dair değerlendirmeleri ve gözlemledikleri sorunlar hakkında mülakatlar yapılmıştır.

Sonuçlar, muhabirlerin Türkiye’deki araştırmacı gazeteciliğin hâlihazırdaki yapılışından şikâyetçi olduklarını göstermektedir. Muhabirler, gözlemledikleri sorunları, gazeteciler üzerindeki artan siyasi baskıyla, medyanın sermaye yapısıyla ve bunların getirdiği kurumsal haber yapma prosedürleriyle ilişkilendirmektedirler. Medya sahiplerinin siyasi-iktisadi çıkarlarının yayın politikasına etkisini eleştirmekte, bu etkinin sızdırma bilgilerin doğrulanmadan kullanılmasıyla beraber araştırmacı gazeteciliğin araçsallaşmasına neden olduğunu savunmaktadırlar. Haber seçme sürecindeki editoryal kontrolden ve haber yapma sürecinde uyguladıkları oto-kontrolden yakınmaktadırlar. Haber konularındaki rutinleşmenin ve haber yapmaya ayrılan zamanın kısıtlanmasının araştırmacı haberler yapmaya engel teşkil ettiğini düşünmektedirler. Ayrıca, iş güvenceleri olmadığı, mesleki tatmin alamadıkları ve muhabirlere değer verilmediği için profesyonel becerilerinin köreldiğini belirtmektedirler.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2008, a young intern in one of the major newspapers in the country sat in the office and watched the live broadcast. It was of the prime minister of the country, who was verbally jousting with the owner of that newspaper (along with other newspapers and TV channels). A crisis had occurred between the government and the owner of the media firm, resulting in reciprocal threats about disclosing certain information – the hidden dirty laundry. The next morning, the chief editor of the office called everyone in for a news meeting (which was not routinely held in the office). The editor briefly mentioned the crisis and then told the reporters to dig the dirt, that is, to write news stories on the corruption or misconduct by government members or the people close to them. Only in a couple of days, reports of corruption about the people associated with the government started to appear in the paper.

The intern watched the whole process with bewilderment – and disappointment as well. A lot of questions came to mind: Why were the reporters particularly put on alert? Was not exposing corruption what journalists should do without any assignation? How did the reporters come up with corruption stories so quickly? If they knew about the incidents beforehand, why did not they write about it earlier? Something was wrong, either with journalism, or with what we knew about journalism.

So started the process of disillusionment and questioning that brought about the writing of this thesis. This thesis initially aimed at giving meaning to those questions, at least understanding why they had to be asked to understand the media, if not finding answers. With a focus on the political economy of media, it aimed at

providing an insight into the practice of investigative journalism within the corporate media, what the corporate structure in media brought to journalism – and what it took away.

However, things did not go as planned. During the course of two years in which this study was conducted, the practice of journalism in Turkey changed drastically. In a country that was claimed to become an “advanced democracy”, journalism took almost a totalitarian turn. Journalists got arrested with a claim to their alleged relations to illegal organizations. The media we thought was independent either chose to be silent or exactly recite the perspective of political power. Hence, the perspective of this thesis had to be altered accordingly. A perspective that incorporated merely the corporate restrictions on the practice of journalism was not sufficient to explain what the media environment in Turkey was going through. The problem did not merely consist of the evils of corporate organization, but the relation of political power to this corporate organization was also problematic. Therefore, a shift in the theoretical framework of the thesis had to take place in order to explain the current problems of journalism in Turkey: the approach of political economy of media and the organizational mechanisms had to be supplemented with an evaluation of how political environment influences the corporate structure and organizational policies in media.

Thus, this thesis became an attempt to understand how the reporters and their newsmaking activity are affected by the policies and mechanisms the news organizations implement due to their interplay with the political power, with a focus on investigative journalism. I interviewed 28 reporters from a total of 10 news organizations, with diverse levels of experience and political views; and tried to

understand their perceptions and criticisms regarding the practice of investigative journalism in Turkey.

In Chapter 2, I try to spell out how different perspectives to media interpret the role of reporters in newsmaking and the role of news in society. In Chapter 3, I try to sketch a description of the structure of the media in Turkey along with the factors and mechanisms that function in it. Chapter 4 is about how the reporters define investigative journalism and describe the course of practicing it. Chapter 5 focuses on the effects of the news policy of their organizations on the work of reporters, with a focus on the criteria according to which these news policies are made, and their effects on the nature of investigative journalism. Chapter 6 is concerned with the journalistic autonomy the reporter can exercise, and its limits through the mechanisms of editorial control and auto-control in the newsroom. Chapter 7 is about the restrictions routine mechanisms of newsmaking bring to the practice of investigative journalism. Finally, the last chapter focuses on the decline of skilled work in journalism.

CHAPTER 2

THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Investigative journalism is a kind of journalistic practice that focuses on exposing corruption and misconduct in institutions and organizations on issues that concern public good. Investigative reporting is carried out by the individual work of a journalist or a team of journalists who take up the initiative to investigate the facts and write the story. Such news are at the same time the ones that are published under the names of the journalists, hence, what gets them their reputation. Investigative reporting is a form of journalism that is quite attractive within the occupation: most people want to be a journalist in order to make their way into investigative journalism. Although there is still controversy on how to define the term exactly, according to the definition accepted by *Investigative Reporters and Editors*, a non-profit organization which brings together reporters and editors to improve the quality of investigative reporting, investigative journalism is original work of reporting by the journalist which reveals concealed facts on an issue important to the public¹. Though much can be added (or occasionally subtracted) from this definition, it can serve as a basis for bringing together what an investigative report should include:

- Original reporting by the journalist which includes the long-term process of sourcing, information-gathering and writing the story;
- Bringing forth concealed or disregarded information which had escaped public attention before;
- Serving public interest by focusing on issues on which the public should be informed;

¹ Definition assembled from information in the website of Investigative Reporters and Editors, www.ire.org.

- Independence from private interests to guarantee credibility.²

However, this list of characteristics neither exhausts nor covers what investigative journalism means to those in practice of it. It is most likely that there are journalists who would believe this list is highly inadequate; and also those who would disagree with certain points listed here. Rather than a genre of journalism with a fixed definition, investigative journalism is a process that may be experienced in a different manner by the journalists who perform it due to their professional status and use of methods.

The role investigative journalism plays in the media and society can be interpreted differently according to how we conceive of the media structure. I want to discuss the role of investigative journalism according to liberal and critical approaches to media and journalism. Neither of these approaches consists of a unified body of studies that has reached the same conclusions about media and journalism. However, there are certain assumptions that provide the basis of the theories.

News and Journalism from a Liberal Perspective

The tenants of liberal-pluralist theories of media claim that the general media structure at a given place consists of the active media enterprises that operate in that place in at a specific point of time. According to liberal-pluralist theorists, each of these media enterprises is separate and independent from each other, and they have different news policies that represent the interests of various groups in society.

Assuming that representation and participation in media activity helps groups to

² Derek Forbes, *A Watchdog's Guide to Investigative Reporting*, (Johannesburg: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2005), p.5

achieve their goals, any group in society with a specific set of interests can constitute a media enterprise in order to advocate their viewpoint or goals. All enterprises independently pursue these interests.³ The groups that do not have the financial means of establishing their own media enterprises may find room for representation through enterprises with similar interests to their own. The news policies of media enterprises are determined according to the interests they represent. They produce media content such as news, commercials, entertainment which aims to influence public opinion through their products. The people, in turn, are supposed to pressure the government for the realization of these interests via democratic means. The change in government policies that comes as a result of these pressures is considered as the accomplishment of goals for a group via media activity.

The three main assumptions of this theoretical schema are: media enterprises are established and run separately and independently; media enterprises represent interests of different groups; people are able to influence government policies via the use of their democratic rights of participation. Hence, the problems that may arise in this structure of media are in the form of impediments to these assumptions: there may be concentration of ownership or monopolization of media enterprises by a few big firms; media enterprises may fail to represent the interests of certain groups; and there may be obstacles presented by the political system that prevent people from using their democratic rights and influencing policies. Therefore, liberal-pluralist theorists believe that in order to keep a democracy-enhancing media structure functioning, it is necessary and sufficient to prevent concentration of ownership,

³ “Interest”, according to these theories, does not merely point to financial gain, but also includes the realization of the goals of a group. For example, an environmentalist group can publish a newspaper or magazine which aims at influencing the environment protection policies of the government via influencing public opinion on these matters.

ensure that different groups have balanced chances of representing themselves in the media, and maintain a working democratic political system.

Liberal theories interpret the process of newsmaking in a number of ways. One of their basic interpretations is mirror theory: news directly represents what happens in reality, just like a mirror reflecting the image of society back to it. According to this theory, news is a way of relating to the audience what they were unable to observe themselves. The audience gets informed about the occurrences in the world via the newsmaking activity of the journalists. In this case, the main responsibility of the journalist during the newsmaking process is to access the body of information most important for the public and to relate it to the public in the most complete form possible. Hence, the foremost requirements from a reporter in this interpretation of newsmaking are to be accurate and objective. A reporter has to give the audience a truthful and sufficient account of the events s/he is relating; and s/he has to represent the opinions of the related parties to incident impartially, without presenting one or the other in a better light purposefully. The reporter should avoid distorting the information s/he receives and also has to refrain from interjecting in her/his own opinions in to the news story s/he writes. The reporter protects her/his objectivity by maintaining her/his detachment from the persons and institutions that constitute the subject of her/his news.⁴

The mirror-theory has also inspired studies that focus on the behavior and choice of individual journalists during the newsmaking process. These studies claim that the individual journalist is a very important actor in making news decisions and selecting the events that are to be presented to the public as news. Hence, they focused on the process of how journalists make these decisions and analyzed the

⁴ Çiler Dursun, “Haber ve Habercilik: Gazetecilik Üzerine Düşünmek (News and newsmaking: Thinking on Journalism)” in *Gazetecilik ve Habercilik (Journalism and Newsmaking)*, ed. Seveda Alankuş, (İstanbul: IPS İletişim Vakfı Yayınları, 2005), p. 69.

actions of reporters in the newsmaking process in an individual manner. This approach argued that the individual journalist acts as a “gate-keeper” and decides what goes into the newspaper and what stays out as well as how news are presented to the public.⁵

There are a number of problems with the mirror theory of newsmaking, which has been substantially criticized over years. One of the foremost objections is the relationship the mirror theory builds between reality and the news. This is in fact quite a problematic relationship: there can be no such thing as the direct representation of reality by the news, as what happens in reality goes through the filters of the reporters’ perspective if nothing else. Hence, it can be said that the reporter constructs the reality for the audience rather than merely relating it to the audience. This leads to a number of problems concerning the process of newsmaking.

First, the reporters are not able to cover all the events that take place in a day; but make an initial selection of the incidents to follow and cover as news. This selection has to be done according to a certain criteria. The mirror theory does not question this criteria; either the content of this criteria and what kind of selection it leads to, or whether it is the reporters themselves who decide what this criteria should be.

The requirements of accuracy and objectivity are also problematic. As the reporter will observe an event through the lens of his own outlook and experience, even though s/he relates exactly the things s/he observed without any deliberate distortion, the account will be laden with the reporters’ own perspective and values

⁵ David Manning White, “The Gate-Keeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News” and G.A. Donahue, C.N. Olien and P.J. Tichenor, “Structure and Constraints on Community Newspaper Gatekeepers” in *Social Meanings of News: A Text-Reader*, ed. Dan Berkowitz, (Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 63-71/ 95-104.

concerning the event. Even if the facts about the event are accurate, the context they are placed in will have an effect on what the audience understands from the news story.

The mirror theory seems to assume that it is possible for a reporter to deliberately act in an isolated manner from her/his environment: the editors, the executives and the fellow reporters as well as the society itself. However, this is a faulty assumption: the reporters can also be influenced by their interactions and the restrictions in their work environment. These interactions also have an effect on how the reporter presents the news.

News and Journalism from a Critical Perspective

Critical theories of media, on the other hand, have a different construction of media structure which challenges the assumptions of liberal-pluralist theories. They argue that the media structure consists of a network of companies which have organic ties to each other. It is these companies that shape media structure and define media activity. According to critical theorists, media enterprises are not independent but intertwined with other power sources in society both in their structure and activity. Though different theorists analyze and criticize these relations differently, what they generally problematized can be summarized as follows: From an economic perspective, the enterprises operating in the media structure are either themselves firms with financial aims in profit-making or parts of such firms. The actions of these firms create a network within which they both compete and cooperate. Though these firms are economic rivals in getting the attention of the audience, they are also partners as they have common interest in maintaining the economic system they

operate in. From a political perspective, these media enterprises also have stakes concerning the political power. These stakes are defined in a number of different ways in literature: direct financial or political relationships with the group in power defined as patron relations and partisan press; ideological proximity with the political power or vested interest in the preservation of the system as it is.

The main assumptions of critical media theories differ significantly from those of liberal theories. Critical theories envisage news organizations not as independent members of a pluralist media system, but profit-seeking organizations linked within a network through their shared, as well as competing, interests. As the news organizations are owned by firms or holdings, they represent their interests rather than the interests of the public. As the decisions concerning the news organization and its products are made by the executives employed by these firms, the representation of plural interests cannot be guaranteed in such a system. A critical approach to media does not take a functioning democratic system as given in which the public is able to influence policies through democratic political actions. Hence, critical theories imagine the role of journalism and the reporter in considerably different manner.

Critical approaches argue that the process of newsmaking is under the control of the owners of the news firms rather than the journalists themselves. News reflects not *the* reality; but a reality constructed in accordance with the interests of the politically and economically powerful classes in society. What news relates to the audience is a particular, *inverted* form of reality which represents the outlook of the powerful classes rather than the audiences' own interest. The audience gathers from the news neither an accurate nor an objective account of events; but a way of looking

at events laden with the perspective of the powerful. It can be said that the public gets indoctrinated rather than informed.

The critical theories also take issue with the quality in the content of the news. They argue that the news organizations controlled by corporate business are more likely to produce content that is sensational and entertaining, rather than critical and informing. The news organizations justify this production through their claim that “it is what the people want”. However, this opens up a whole new area of controversy: is the primary aim of the news to give people what they require to be entertained, or to provide them with the means to make informed decisions about their lives within their community?

The critical theories assume that the newsmaking activity of the reporters is confined by the interests of the powerful classes represented in the media. The powerful classes are able to influence what is presented in the news through their affiliations with the owners of news firms, even if they do not own it themselves. However, this influence is not in the form of direct control or intervention; but methods of exerting this influence are built into the mechanisms through which a news firm is organized and managed. Hence, the reporter is not the primary agent that makes the decisions in the newsmaking process; but such decisions are made with the collaboration of a number of different agents in different levels within the news organization.

As the reporter is not the sole-decision maker in the newsmaking process, merely the reporters’ respect for objectivity and accuracy is not sufficient for fair, credible and informing news. There are two problems on this point: first, both accuracy and objectivity has in-built boundaries as the agents in the newsmaking process have their own values which involuntarily and inevitably affect the way they

look at news. Second, even if the reporter protects these values as well as possible during the initial stage of the newsmaking process, as they do not make the crucial decisions concerning the news, their stories can be altered or ignored in the other stages by other agents, such as editors or news executives.

Although the critical theories of media present an alternative approach to some of the problematic points in the liberal theories of news making, they also have certain problems of their own. One of the most important issues is the problem of journalistic autonomy. Liberal theories argue that the reporter acts more or less autonomously during the newsmaking process, except certain cases the reporter is restricted by forces external to the newsmaking process. Critical theories, on the other hand, argue that the autonomy of the reporters in making news decisions is restricted by the mechanisms in the news organizations itself as well as external factors. However, the extent of this lack of autonomy is problematic. If the news totally represents the perspective of the powerful classes, there can be absolutely no autonomy of the reporter who has a dissident perspective.

Another problem concerns the function of the news in the society. According to critical approaches to news, as news represents the ideological viewpoint of the powerful classes, they present the public with a biased image of the events. In this case, the information and benefit the public receives from the news become dubitable. Is all the information communicated to the public by the news untrustworthy? Is there absolutely no benefit the public can gain from the news?

It seems that there are certain points that the critical approach to journalism and the news is too restrictive. Critical theories has often been criticized from these points. It has also been argued that there can be a middle approach between liberal and critical theories – that the two approaches can be used in a way to strengthen the

weak points of each other.⁶ The liberal approaches analyze the actions of the agents involved in the media industries while the critical approaches analyze the structural constraints these agents are subjected to. However, in order to get a complete understanding of the ways media functions, one needs a perspective that brings together certain points of these two approaches together. A comprehensive approach to newsmaking has to include the possibilities of action for the agents in the media industries within the structural restraints imposed by the corporate ownership.⁷ It is true that the journalists are limited by the structural mechanisms employed by their organizations; nonetheless, as professionals trusted with carrying out certain duties in the newsmaking process, they may be able to exercise some sort of autonomy on the decisions concerning newsmaking.

Investigative Journalism as a Political Tool

I believe it is possible to look at investigative journalism as a political tool from the perspective of both theories. According to liberal theories, investigative reporting serves exactly the function conveyed in its definition: A reporter who does investigative work reveals some part of reality to the audience which was beforehand either purposefully concealed from the public or occasionally unknown by the public. In doing this, the reporter follows only journalistic norms mentioned above. In this context, investigative journalism serves as a watchdog for the society, monitoring the illegal and unethical actions of public institutions and officials, and

⁶ James Curran, Michael Gurevitch and Janet Woollacott, "The Study of Media: Theoretical Approaches" in *Culture, Society and Media*, eds. Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James Curran and Janet Woollacott, (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 28.

⁷ Graham Murdock, "Large Corporations and the Control of Communications Industries" in *Culture, Society and Media*, eds. Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James Curran and Janet Woollacott, (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 124.

rendering them accountable for such actions by informing the public about them. As the liberal approach to media visualizes a working democratic system, when the public is informed about the misconducts in the system, it will take action to alter the conditions or replace the officials responsible for the wrongdoing. Hence, investigative reporting plays a very important role in the democratic system in mobilizing people for taking political action.

From the viewpoint of critical theories, however, investigative journalism can be interpreted in a twofold manner. First, investigative journalism can be regarded as a dangerous but well-paying effort. Investigative stories can and do provide prestige for the news organization that make them, as they are widely disseminated in the media and increase the respect and credibility of the news organization within the media. Hence, making investigative stories is beneficial for a news firm, both economically and professionally. However, it is also a risky endeavor to make investigative news, for the public may fail to see the significance of the story, or the story may be harmful to the interests of those power groups affiliated with the news organization.⁸ Nonetheless, investigative stories do not always harm but sometimes promote the interests of those power groups. As investigative news is concerned with wrongdoing and misconduct, they can also be instrumental in influencing the balances between the powerful groups in society. The reports of unethical and corrupt behavior by officials, businessman or other public figures can be used as a tool to gain advantage in the power struggles between certain groups. However, within corporate journalism, the practice of investigative reporting is more and more undermined. Ben Bagdikian, in his book *The New Media Monopoly*, states that although the media displays some kind of sensitivity to the problems in public

⁸ John McManus, *Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?*, (London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994), p. 114.

administration, it is blind to the problems in the corporate structure. Quoting Bagdikian, “this is an institutional bias which not only protects the corporate system, but also robs the public of a chance to understand the real world”.⁹ Hence, although investigative journalism within corporate media may focus on revealing problems arising from misconduct in public bodies, it does not show the same sensitivity to the problems arising from the conduct of private business. Moreover, the corporate media also tends to tailor its sense of newsworthiness of public problems according to its own interests. However, if investigative journalism is given fully to the service of the power groups in society, the chances that the public will be informed about anything but what those groups are interested in disseminated will be slim. Once a manipulated version of an event is disseminated in the public, it becomes difficult to set to right the public’s perception of that event. The manipulated news has a long-lasting effect on the public; once it is rooted, it influences the public’s ability to make sense of the social developments that influence their lives.¹⁰

⁹ Ben H. Bagdikian, *The New Media Monopoly*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), p. xviii.

¹⁰ Bagdikian, 2004, p. 81.

CHAPTER 3

NEWSMAKING PRACTICES IN NETWORKED CORPORATE MEDIA

Media as a Network Structure

The newspaper as an independent institution with the specific aim to distribute news was already initiated as area of investment whose principal aim is to make profit, even at the very beginning. Newspapers were always initiated as a private enterprise; though in the past, this enterprise was usually owned by someone who was at least affiliated with journalism and the newspaper was usually managed as an independent enterprise, that is, it was the sole enterprise of the owner. However, even this primary structure of press contained problems.

Bending the news content according to the interests of politically and economically powerful is not a new phenomenon. Upton Sinclair, a prominent American muckraker of early twentieth century, made the proposition in his book *The Brass Check* in 1920. Sinclair argued that big business had a hold over the newspapers and they could influence news content that appeared in them to exclude the stories that worked against their interests.¹¹ Curiously, this time is also known as the golden age of muckraking journalism in America. During the early 20s, the muckrakers, as the pioneers of investigative journalism, gave the most prominent examples of investigative reporting, such as Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, in which he exposed the inhumane conditions of work in the meat packaging industry, or Ida Tarbell's *The History of Standard Oil Company*, which brought to light the misdeeds

¹¹ Upton Sinclair, *The Brass Check*, (California: published by the author, 1920).

in the actions of a monopolistic oil firm.¹² Hence, although the press was already controlled by the big business, the chance of conducting investigations not only about political misconduct but also about the wrongdoings of private companies still existed.

Evidently, the work conditions of the muckrakers were almost entirely different than the contemporary journalists. Most of these journalists were either the publishers of their own newspapers or only linked to the mass media as freelancers, rather than waged workers. Hence, they were not entirely controlled by the owners of the newspapers, but they only dealt with owners in the process of finding publishers for their investigative work rather than in the process of investigation itself, with the option of independently publishing their work. Bagdikian claims that the ways and means of these bright individuals has gradually been adopted by the media corporations with different goals, exceeding the goal of informing the public.¹³

One description concerning the structure of journalism in its beginnings points out to a change in the relationship between financing and news. Robert McChesney argues that the ideal of journalism as independent, objective and accurate is a product of the commercialization of newspapers in late nineteenth century. Up to then, newspapers were directly financed by political groups and hence, it was considered normal for every newspaper to voice opinions according to the interests of its owner. However, as the press started to become a separate institution with its own commercial interests and became partly independent from subsidies of political groups thanks to advertising revenues, the partisan attitudes began to be problematised. As the news media became more dependent on its own

¹² Carl Jensen, *Twenty Years of Censored News*, (Seven Stories Press, 1997), p. 13.

¹³ Bagdikian, 2004, p. xiii.

revenues rather than subsidies, mergers in the press also increased. It became more difficult for small dissident newspapers to survive economically, as they lagged behind in competition for advertising. As a result, the press ownership was concentrated in the hands of a wealthy minority who could afford to own many small newspapers. Hence, the structure of ownership in the media changed from one with partisan newspapers owned by many to one with ‘independent’ newspapers owned by few. Partisanship could not be a part of this system anymore: not only it would damage credibility, but also the interests which the newspapers have to pay heed to had gotten complicated and they had to be managed in a different way. This necessity brought about the professionalization of journalism and the separation of commercial and editorial departments in newspapers, though, according to McChesney, this change completely fell short of fulfilling the expectations.¹⁴

When we look at the media structure today, we can easily see that not much has changed in the sense of ownership and the logic of management, though there have been significant changes in the patterns and mechanisms of both. Today, most of the media institutions are owned by corporations as part of large holdings that have investments in many different areas. As Noam Chomsky describes, corporate media consists of large business firms either connected to or owned by major groups that have control over a substantial amount of wealth; and these media corporations “set the framework within which everyone else operates”¹⁵. These media corporations do not exist in a merely competitive environment in which their political stances constitute alternatives for each other to the benefit of the public; but

¹⁴ Robert W. McChesney, “The Problem of Journalism: A Political Economic Contribution to an Explanation of the Crisis in Contemporary US Journalism”, *Journalism Studies*, Volume 4, Number 3, 2003, p. 300-301.

¹⁵ Noam Chomsky, “What Makes Mainstream Media Mainstream?” ZNET, (<http://zcommunications.org/what-makes-mainstream-media-mainstream-by-noam-chomsky>), 1997.

they share common stances and have overlapping interests with other financial and political structures. According to Chomsky, this interlinked structure of the media provides the primary filter that influences the news choices made in news organizations.¹⁶

Murdock and Golding argue that the mass media operates as the producer and distributor of cultural commodities; and as such it is subject to the same economic conditions as every other firm.¹⁷ In that case, it would be naïve at best to expect media firms to act independent of certain financial and commercial interests. However, the function of a media firm in society cannot merely be interpreted as a provider of goods, due to the specific nature of goods they provide. The news, as a main product of media companies, is not merely a commodity; it is a cultural commodity which constructs ideas about how the world works and distributes them to people, influencing the way they interact with the world and with each other. Hence, newsmaking and news should be treated both as an economic production process and as a political process of making choices and constructing a certain ideology; and it should be studied in a way that makes the mechanisms that produces this ideology visible.¹⁸

What is the problem with this corporate structure of media? Why hold it responsible for the vices in journalism today? I think it will be fruitful to look at the aims and motives of such a media structure in order to establish its link with the current situation of journalism. When we consider the media organization as a business enterprise, it obviously entails that, as a media firm, it has an interest in

¹⁶ Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), p.14.

¹⁷ Graham Murdock and Peter Golding, "For a Political Economy of Mass Communications", *The Socialist Register, Volume 10*, 1973, p.206.

¹⁸ Murdock and Golding, 1973, p. 207.

getting a profit in return for the service it provides to the public. Newspapers are not non-profit charity organizations, after all. In order to keep itself functioning, to keep paying salaries and expenses, the media organization has to make a certain profit, which comes from both readers and advertisers. However, considering that the media organizations try to survive within a capitalist system in which the media firm is one of the enterprises to gain financial power, obviously the owners will also aim at the maximization of their profits. This aim, by itself, may not constitute any problems, given that the professional standards of journalism are followed. However, as McChesney points out, what if the professional standards themselves are suspect?¹⁹ The choices journalists make are always value-laden; the professional criteria create an illusion of independence, however, the criteria themselves are always dependent on certain interests: in the case of private ownership, the political and economic interests of the owners.

McChesney provides us with a critique of commercialization in the media. However, commercialization is not the only problem regarding the contemporary media structure. Media firms are not separate independent firms anymore, but mostly part of conglomerate companies. National media in every country is owned by a few national –in some cases, even cross-national- corporations. This leads to another problem: the ownership of news organizations in a single country is concentrated in the hands of a few companies. Concentration of ownership has lately become an issue of concern for many, as it is a hindrance to the pluralist expression of opinions in the media. A 2008 report of Open Society Institute mentions concentration of ownership as a major problem in broadcast media in European countries and advises further regulation in media sector to prevent concentration in

¹⁹ McChesney, 2003, p.302.

order to maintain diversity.²⁰ Monopolization has also been identified as a problem in Turkish media by journalists. In a study conducted in 2006, all of the interviewed journalists stated that monopolization presented the most important problem for ethical conduct of journalism.²¹

I believe that although both commercialization and concentration of ownership are significant problems, they both miss important aspects of the problem which affects the core of the practice of journalism. According to the critique of commercialization of media, the problem affecting the quality of journalism is the aim of profit-maximization of media firms. As the firms aim to maximize their profits, they tend to neglect the public interest involved in newsmaking or become prone to instrumentalise newsmaking in order to achieve more profits. Hence, the commercial approach to journalism justifies sensationalism with the aim of capturing more audience. Although the critiques are right in their disapproval of these two phenomena, the commercialization critique as a whole neglects the current structure of the media. As media today consists of conglomerate companies, it is possible for a media firm to receive subsidies from the parent company that owns it. The news organizations are no more independent private enterprises; and there is more at stake than simply profit making when the survival of a news organization is considered.

The critique of concentration of ownership takes into account the current media structure. As media organizations are owned by conglomerates, a single holding is able to have control over many news organizations. This indeed undermines the diversity of opinion in the media and prevents the media from

²⁰ Open Society Foundation, *Television Across Europe: More Channels, Less Independence*. Follow-Up Reports, 2008. p.44.

²¹ Hilal Köylü, *Press Ethics and Practice of Journalism in Turkey: A Case Study on Turkish Journalists' Self Evaluation of Their Codes of Practice*, (M.A. thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2006), p. 65.

serving democratic ideals. However, the lack of concentration of ownership does not directly entail the existence of a pluralistic media structure in service of democracy. Even if there exists a plurality of firms and owners, the media structure will not become democratic if all of these firms are organized in the same manner and serve similar interests. This convergence of organization and interest will lead to a convergence of news as well.

I believe that the problem of journalism today is better defined if we look at the media structure as a part of a corporate network. The parent companies that own the media firms have investments in many different sectors; usually, investments in media are only complementary, or supplementary, to the other investment areas. In this system, the news organization is not merely a profit-making instrument; it is an instrument that enables the owners to act upon the political environment through their influence on public opinion as well. Through the impact of news organizations on public, the owners are able to negotiate with the political power over the implementation of certain economic and political policies in their interest.

Institutional Mechanisms in the Newsroom

When we take the corporate structure into consideration, we see that the news organization is no different than any other investment of the parent company. Just as in any other enterprise, the work in newsroom has to be organized through a predetermined set of rules and practices in order to guarantee a certain level of productivity. Every news organization has to coordinate the daily actions of the reporters and editors in order to be able to cover the events of the day without missing or overlooking the significant ones. The news organization requires an

internal planning in order to keep the office functioning. The daily practices in a newsroom are performed in accordance with this plan, rather than being spontaneous. This plan enables the journalists to cover the most significant events of the day and turn them into news stories. This internal planning has three stages: at the first stage, the reporters discover news events and gather information about them through certain routine procedures they employ. At the second stage, the stories brought in by the reporters are subjected to an inspection and selection process by the news editors. Finally, the stories that are found suitable to what can be generally described as the news policy of the organization get printed in the paper. Each stage of newsmaking is laden with problems of its own as well as advantages, which I will discuss below.

News Policy

Every media organization frames the news produced in it according to the political attitude it takes. However, when the media organization is seen as a part of a corporate network which consists of complex relations between corporations and political power, this “framing” of news acquires more meaning than the mere selection of news according to a certain publishing policy, but becomes an instrument in serving the needs and interests of this corporate network.

In such a media structure, there is not a single audience market in which the news has to be sold, but there are also the accompanying markets of investors, sources and advertisers.²² The news, as a product of the media company in the corporate network, has to appeal to those who have invested their money into it, to those who have provided information for it, and to those who provides it with

²² McManus, 1994, p.61.

financial resources to attain audience interest, aside from the audience themselves. This requirement turns the news into a complicated product which has to satisfy consumers with diverse outlooks and interests.

How it is possible that journalists follow the news policy of the organization they work for, given that they come from a diversity of opinions, no direct restriction is placed on them, and professional norms dictate that journalists should be autonomous? The most significant mechanism of conformity is what Breed calls “osmosis”: the new reporters begin learning the policy through their socialization during work. Breed defines this socialization as “a process by which the recruit discovers and internalizes the rights and obligations of his status and its norms and values”.²³ This socialization takes place through interaction with editors and more experienced reporters, observation of their behavior and attempt at gaining their recognition and respect as a peer. All in all, it is a praise-and-blame system, in which the reporter is either directly chastised for making news that does not suit the policy, or led to understand such news are not welcome through their constant rejection. The policy itself is never openly presented as a reason for turning news down, or it is ever openly discussed in the newsroom. The policy is there; yet what the reporters can see is not the policy itself but merely its consequences.

Why do journalists follow news policy even when they personally disagree with it? One reason is the authority of the executives and the fear of sanction they may employ, such as demoting, withdrawing assignments or taking away the beats. Control within the newsroom is organized in the form of an editorial hierarchy, with decisions made in the top level and implemented in the lower levels of the newsroom organization; but it is not exercised in a direct form, rather through more subtle,

²³ Warren Breed, “Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis” in *Social Meanings of News: A Text-Reader*, ed. Dan Berkowitz, (Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 328.

informal channels. It is not a coercive form of control, but works through bestowing or withholding certain benefits and setting the limits of possible autonomy that can be exercised by the journalists.²⁴ Also, the members of an office develop an understanding in time about each others' approach to newsworthiness and may act in a way to avoid conflict.²⁵ Through the repetition of the same routine, a mutual agreement about certain boundaries of news content is established in the newsroom over time, constituting newsworthiness through the negotiations in the complex bureaucratic news structure.²⁶

Mobility aspirations also lead the reporters to write news they can easily get printed in the paper, without problems a dissident news story would present. Also, the work has certain extra benefits, such as being close to the politically and socially powerful; first-hand experience and knowledge of important events; getting to know what others do not have access to. Reporters seem to have a different relation to power and status, which Breed defines as: "newsmen are close to big decisions without having to make them; they touch power without being responsible for its use".²⁷

Editorial Hierarchy and the Autonomy of the Reporter

In order to keep these routine procedures organized and coordinated, there has to be a system of organization in the newsroom. The editors are hypothetically supposed to discuss and exchange opinions with the reporters while assessing the newsworthiness

²⁴ Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott, 1982, p. 18.

²⁵ Gaye Tuchman. *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. (New York: The Free Press, 1978), p.33.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 37.

²⁷ Breed, 1955, p. 331.

of an event. The editors are supposed to assist the reporter in the investigation process. The reporter might feel alienated and alone at some points of the process of investigation, and it is the duty of the editors to share the burden and responsibility of that process with the reporter. Hence, the editors are responsible for following the process of investigation as closely as possible as well.²⁸ However, this discussion rarely takes place. More often, reporters and lower-level editors succumb to the directions of upper-level editors, which create a “bureaucratic editorial hierarchy”.²⁹ Hence, the newsmaking can be seen as a bureaucratically organized process rather than a democratic process in which reporters influence the news decisions.

With respect to the process of newsmaking, the concept of control is concerned with not only the agents that can exercise control but also the process through which control is exercised. Murdock distinguishes between *allocative control* and *operational control* in the media industries. Allocative control is concerned with the basic financial policy of the firm and the decisions about the general distribution of resources, whereas operational control is concerned with how to use the allocated resources most effectively and how to implement the policies decided in upper levels of management.³⁰ Within the process of newsmaking, the level of control and the amount of autonomy the journalist can exercise are subject to negotiation as well. That is not an open process of negotiation; but it is experienced by journalists as intra-organizational conflict or tension.³¹ It is argued that professionalism in journalism could act as a response to these conflicts; however,

²⁸ Seyfettin Turhan, *Araştırmacı Gazetecilik (Investigative Journalism)*, (Ankara: um:ag Yayınları, 1997), p. 60.

²⁹ Tuchman, 1978, p.37.

³⁰ Murdock, 1982, p. 122.

³¹ Margaret Gallagher, “Negotiation of Control in Media Organizations and Occupations” in *Culture, Society and Media*, eds. Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James Curran and Janet Woollacott, (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 154.

that is also laden with its own problems. The news organizations have a more and more developing tendency to run their operations similar to a bureaucratic structure. This tendency leads to further routinization of the newsmaking process due to the concerns for efficiency. The development of professional values in that context can be a way of opening up an area of negotiation for autonomy; nonetheless, it also carries the potential to further bureaucratize the newsmaking process via the adjustment and internalization of journalistic roles to the bureaucratic structure.

John McManus, in his article *Who's Responsible for Journalism?*, goes further into detail of the impact the corporate interests of media enterprises have on journalistic autonomy. McManus argues that journalists are more and more becoming "decision-takers rather than decision-makers".³² He recounts three commands of news-as-business: "Do whatever it takes to maximize audience; minimize cost; don't embarrass big advertisers or the owners' other interests"; and argues that these commands are imposed on journalists in a way that limits their autonomy: the journalists can only do their work as they want to if and only if they comply with these commands.³³ This logic of capitalist enterprise can not allow an employee to make his/her own autonomous decisions about the process of making news. Although McManus admits that there is not a complete control of the news room by owners and shareholders, he points out that there is always a hierarchy in the process through which the news made by journalist make it to the paper. Although the journalists are able to operationalize some "tactical control" on their work during the process of newsmaking, the "strategic control" of the policies of news decisions that are to be followed by them still belongs with the upper levels of

³² John McManus, "Who is Responsible for Journalism?", *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, Volume 12, Number 1, 1997, p.5.

³³ Ibid., p.5.

management.³⁴ A process of negotiation is constantly at work, both in the relations of the news organization with political and economic power sources, and the relations of journalists with the news organization they work in. Gallagher sees investigative journalism as a professional reaction to the restraints inflicted by the compromises made within the negotiation process in the latter level.³⁵

Two surveys mentioned by McManus show that the journalists are also aware of this loss of autonomy and go through a feeling of job dissatisfaction because of it. A survey conducted repeatedly in nineteen seventies, eighties and nineties among journalists yielded the results that there was a sense of declining autonomy among journalists. They felt that they had lost their freedom of deciding what the emphasis will be on in the news piece, and they had no say in editing decisions. Four of the five journalists said that the loss of autonomy was due to the decisions of the management that only consider corporate interests.³⁶ The report of another survey conducted by *Associated Press* related that the journalists were not satisfied with the degree of autonomy they are given to the extent that they consider leaving their jobs.³⁷

Under certain conditions reporters may be able to “by-pass” the dictates of this editorial hierarchy and exercise their journalistic autonomy. Although the editors are in control in the newsroom, it is the reporter that makes the decisions at the scene of event. They can use this advantage to determine how a story will be handled by making the primary decision on what to include and what to ignore. A

³⁴ Gallagher, 1982, p. 167.

³⁵ Gallagher, 1982, p. 171.

³⁶ D. Weaver and G. Wilhoit, *U.S. Journalists at Work, 1971-1992*. (Paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication annual convention, Atlanta, GA, August, 1994), p.9 as quoted in McManus, 1997, p.12.

³⁷ M. Fitzgerald, *Sinking morale*. (Editor & Publisher, 1993), p. 26 as quoted in McManus, 1997, p.12.

reporter may also give a story s/he could not get printed to another colleague who can, which is called transferring the story. The reporters' independence also changes with the category of news s/he is handling. In assigned stories, the reporter does not have much opportunity to by-pass policy, as s/he will be under direct supervision of editors. In beat stories, as the reporter is working in the scene of event, s/he can make certain decisions concerning the story; however, these decisions will be negative, in the sense that the reporter can only decide what to ignore rather than what to include. Only in the stories that were self-assigned the reporter can make her/his own decisions. However, the reporters do not have much opportunity to follow such stories due to time-constraints and they usually refrain from spending the limited time they have for a story that may not be published. The reporters that have the most opportunity to crosscut policy are the famous ones, for whom the executives can not take measures.³⁸

This hierarchical process of newsmaking is problematic for democracy. It maintains the power relations in society as it is, and denies citizens certain information they should have. As the amount of investment areas in which the media companies are affiliated with increases, investigative reporting is more and more instrumentalized as a public relations tool for the corporate companies, and the subjects found appropriate for investigative research is further and further limited. This narrowing down of the range of reporting areas also may lead to self-censorship by the reporters concerning sensitive issues.³⁹

Ramonet defines censorship as the impediment to the dissemination of news by the authority that seeks to control the freedom of expression and communication;

³⁸ Breed, 1955, p.333-334.

³⁹ N. Acherson , "Newspapers and Internal Democracy" in *The British Press: a Manifesto*, ed. James Curran, (London: Macmillan, 1978), p.131; as quoted in Murdock, *Culture, Society and Media*, p. 140-141.

and points out that censorship is usually affiliated with autocratic regimes. However, he also argues that in liberal democratic regimes, a different kind of censorship exists: democratic censorship, which operates not through the suppression and exclusion of news content, but its proliferation: the news content the audience is subjected to is so abundant that it becomes impossible to discern what is important or what is reliable.⁴⁰ The audience is so overwhelmed with news that they have no time to evaluate the news critically.

Censorship in news can take different and more subtle forms within the process of newsmaking. Michael Parenti describes a number of ways through which censorship can be applied. While certain stories are suppressed, certain facts within stories can also be omitted through processes of editorial control; therefore altering the tone or perspective of the story. The significance of stories might be denied by the decision-makers during editorial control. Although journalists claim that they try to present the different aspects of an event as fairly and equally as possible, one side may be presented in a more favorable light through expressing the opinions of the sides through positive or negative labels and by transmitting the opinions of official sources at face value without a critical outlook. According to Parenti, these forms of media manipulation constitute the mechanisms that make censorship possible in the media.⁴¹

It is possible to practice censorship in two different forms: open and covert. Open censorship is the obvious suppression and exclusion of dissident news content by the direct interference of political power. Covert censorship, on the other hand, is the portrayal of reality in the news in a way that will serve or will not damage the

⁴⁰ Ignacio Ramonet, *Medyanın Zorbalığı (The Tyranny of Media)*, (İstanbul: Om Yayınları, 2000), p.32.

⁴¹ Jensen, 1997, p. 28-31.

existing distribution of power in society.⁴² The corporate control of the news organizations and their mechanisms of control of the discourse disseminated by media enable this form of censorship.

A 2011 study on censorship in Turkish media makes it clear that the journalists feel a more acute pressure over them. Of the 67 journalists surveyed, 84% thought that the government's interference with news content is an important problem they confronted. 75% thought interference of media owners with news content is an important problem, and 77% thought self-censorship is an important problem. 91% of journalists said that they refrain from turning certain significant events into news; and 96% said this is due to internal political pressure. 92% thought it is due to conflicts with the financial interests of media owners; and 84% thought it is because they know the story will not be published.⁴³ The journalists surveyed also have expressed that the news contents that are subjected to censorship have been shifting recently. While more journalists believe that the news about military and the Kurdish issue is not being censored, which used to be a huge taboo in the Turkish press in 1990s; more journalists believe that news about government and religious communities are being censored.⁴⁴

Routine Procedures of Newsmaking

The daily practices in a news organization have been an issue of significance for the study of journalism. How “news” is discovered, framed and produced on a routine

⁴² Peter Phillips and Ivan Harslof, *Censored: The News That Didn't Make the News*. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1997) as quoted in Esra Arsan, “Sivil İtaatsizlik ve Sansür: Gazeteci Gözüyle Sansür ve Oto-Sansür (Civil Disobedience and Censorship: Censorship and Self-Censorship from the Perspective of Journalist)” in *Cogito*, 69, Yaz 2011, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, p. 58.

⁴³ Arsan, 2011, p.65.

⁴⁴ Arsan, 2011, p.67.

basis by newswriters has been at the focus of a number of studies, trying to dissect and analyze the process of newsmaking.

The newsroom ethnographies that were conducted in the 70s were among the most informative studies concerning journalistic practice. One of the most well-known and profound of these ethnographies is Gaye Tuchman's *Making News*. In her study, Tuchman aimed at understanding how journalists classify and frame the events-as-news on a routine basis in order to produce news. The first step in this routine is to decide which events, out of every event that occurs during the day which the newsroom receives information of, are worthy of the attention and the effort of the organization. In the age of corporate ownership of media, all effort to make news is also a financial liability, therefore the journalists have to have a fair reason that the information they gather will be newsworthy before they spend time, effort and resources on an issue.

The news media also directs its attention only to what is classified as "big" stories. For Tuchman, a big story is not a very interesting or significant story; it is a story that is obvious and visible enough to be classified as a news story by the daily routine practices of news organizations. The stories which are tougher to get via these practices inevitably stay out of the range of interest of the news organization. According to Tuchman, "Occurrences are more likely to be defined as news when journalists witness them or can learn of them with little effort".⁴⁵ This news net can not cover all the occurrences; however, the occurrences neglected by the journalists generally correspond to the same issues. This convergence is justified through "journalistic norms" the journalists claim to apply to occurrences, yet in fact it is enhanced by the similarities in the organizational routines all journalists are subject

⁴⁵ Tuchman, 1978, p. 22.

to. These routines determine which events will be chosen as events-as-news to be focused on. Hence, reporting routines do not only enable the journalists to decide *how* to cover a story but also *which* story to cover. The reporters also perceive news as a positive value, that is, news is valuable independently, on their own. They turn news into a fetish, as they struggle to get more and more news. This creates a quantitative concern in the reporters, valuing the number of news they have written in a day, rather than the quality of the news and the process of writing them.

The idea that the journalists employ routine procedures to cover news events informs our understanding of the role of the reporter in the media system as well. If the reporters use routine procedures to make news, it means that they do not directly represent the exact image of an event as news as the mirror theory suggests; but instead news is the product of a social process the reporters and news organizations undergo.⁴⁶

The routinization of the methods of newsmaking also gives us a clue about the rationality that directs the newsmaking process. It has been argued that the news organizations prefer to use the original work of their reporters rather than using the work of news agencies; though the better work submitted by the news service is used to compare and criticize the reporter's own work.⁴⁷ However, in Turkish media, the trend is to gather information from the news agencies to put together a story, rather than sending reporters out to get the information themselves, hence cutting down the cost of sending a reporter to the scene of event. John McManus differentiates between the way in which a profit-seeking news organization discovers news and a journalistically inclined news organization discovers news. According to McManus,

⁴⁶ Lee B. Becker and Tudor Vlad, "News Organizations and Routines" in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, eds. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch. (New York: Routledge, 2009), p.59.

⁴⁷ Tuchman, 1978, p.24.

a profit-seeking organization would attempt at minimizing the costs and limit the use of resources during the discovery of a news event. Hence, it would resort to passive methods of discovery such as taking them from news agencies or re-framing feeds from TV channels or internet sources; where as a journalistically inclined organization would use active discovery methods such as sending reporters out to directly follow the events and talk to sources.⁴⁸ Though active news-gathering is more costly and time consuming, and hence has a negative value in terms of efficiency, passive news-gathering also has its own costs. It limits the chances of independent monitoring of public events and allows certain nubs of power to control the flow of information instead.⁴⁹

As a result of the requisite of speed in newsmaking, the reporters are responsible for conveying instant information from the scene of the incident, rather than looking into the detailed causes and effects. The instant information, however, creates a “reality effect” on the audience, giving the impression that there is no need for further questioning, as there is nothing to find out besides the obvious immediate reality of the incident. This is a sign that investigative journalism is being eradicated in this process of newsmaking.⁵⁰ In this form of newsmaking, seeing/witnessing is equivalent to understanding.⁵¹

⁴⁸ McManus, 1994, p.96.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.107.

⁵⁰ Ramonet, 2000, p. 39.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 71.

CHAPTER 4

STATE OF JOURNALISM IN TURKEY: THE POLITICIZATION OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

As journalism is a part of the cultural industry, its practice holds certain differences cross countries and media systems. Turkey has its own distinct characteristics of journalism as well, and it is important to note these differences in order to understand the restrictions journalism encounters in media today. Recently, we can talk about three developments in Turkish political agenda that have altered the face of Turkish media and affected the practice of journalism severely: the shift in media ownership, the attitude of AKP government towards mainstream media and the Ergenekon trials.

The Model of Journalism in Turkey

The differences between media systems in a general level have been systematically analyzed by Hallin and Mancini in their book, *Comparing Media Systems*. The authors focus on four dimensions in the media system to compare different media systems. First, they look at how the media market developed in a specific country, with an emphasis on the circulation of the newspapers. Second, they look at the amount of political parallelism, i.e. whether, and to what extent, the composition of media reflects the sides of social and political confrontation. Third, they look at the level of professionalization and autonomy of journalistic practice. Finally, they look at how the state deals with its relations with the media, i.e. whether, and to what

extent, the state and state officials interfere with the structure of media and the practice of journalism.⁵²

Based on these dimensions, Hallin and Mancini mention three different models of media systems that currently operate in the world: the Mediterranean or polarized pluralism model; the North/Central European or democratic corporatist model and the North Atlantic or the liberal model. Geographically speaking, the media in Turkey is an example of the Mediterranean polarized pluralism model.

The Mediterranean/polarized pluralism model is characterized by a low circulation rate; a high level of parallelism with the political sides; the need of subsidy for economically weak and marginal news organizations; low level of professionalization in journalistic practice with conflicts on journalistic autonomy and the state's prominent role as an actor influencing the media, along with a serious deregulation.⁵³ Taking these characteristics into account, Turkey is considered as a typical example of this model.⁵⁴ In the Mediterranean polarized pluralism model, journalistic practice cannot be autonomous; but it is restricted by the influences from the political and economic power sources. However, it is also noted that in systems of polarized pluralism, there has been more conflict about journalistic autonomy. Although journalists have a low level of autonomy in their practice, the level of autonomy they aspire to exceeds the level of autonomy in European countries or U.S., which is confined by property relations.⁵⁵

⁵² Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini. *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). p 21.

⁵³ Ibid., p.73.

⁵⁴ Esra Elmas and Dilek Kurban. *MEDIADEM Project Background Information Report: The Case in Turkey*. 2010. p. 413.

⁵⁵ Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p.116.

The Recent Shift in Media Ownership

The Turkish media has always been shaped as an oligopoly after the de-regulatory processes in 1980s. With the 80s, the ownership pattern in Turkish media changed from the small scale private ownership of families with a journalistic legacy to private ownership of corporate groups with investments in a number of fields.⁵⁶ The most prevalent actors in the media sector along 80s and 90s were the Doğan Group (owned *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Radikal*, *Kanal D*, *CNN Türk*); the Bilgin Group (owned *Sabah*, *Takvim*, *Yeni Asır*, *ATV*); the Uzan Group (owned *Star* –newspaper- and *Star TV*); the Çukurova Group (owned *Akşam*, *Tercüman*, *Güneş*, *Show TV*) and Doğuş Group (owned NTV). All these media groups were part of bigger holdings which had investments and businesses in various sectors. The government was more attentive to legal regulations restricting the autonomy of journalistic profession rather than regulating the ownership and organization patterns in media business.⁵⁷ Hence, as journalism got regulated, the corporate media got deregulated. This deregulation of ownership in media changed the relationship between the media and the political power from one that the state controlled the media through restrictions and regulations into one that the media controlled the state through its ability to manipulate the public opinion.⁵⁸ It became possible for the corporate groups in media to play a give-and-take game with the government to realize their interests in other fields of investment. What was undermined in this process was the democratization of media, its responsiveness to social problems and its contribution

⁵⁶ Raşit Kaya, *İktidar Yumağı: Medya-Sermaye-İktidar (Spool of Power: Media-Capital-Power)*, (Ankara: İmge Yayınları, 2009), p.249-250.

⁵⁷ Christian Christensen, “Breaking the news: Concentration of Ownership, the Fall of Unions and Government Legislation in Turkey”, *Global Media and Communication*, Volume 3, 2007, p.183.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.185.

to political discussion. Up until the 2000s, it could be said that the mainstream media in Turkey had certain advantages over the political power; as their reciprocal relations allowed the news organizations some leverage, rather than being confronted with or subjugated to political power.

However, this picture was reversed in the 2000s. The beginnings of the change in the media system took place in the 1980s. The neoliberal policies employed in the economy along with the after-effects of the military coup in Turkey led to a change in the way the media was structured and regulated. There came a deregulation process which allowed more agents of big business to own media companies; and the relations between political power and media became more strained as the media owners gradually had bigger and bigger stakes in being on good terms with those who hold political authority.

The late 2000s witnessed a change of the most prevalent actors and groups in the Turkish media sector. First, *Star TV* and newspaper owned by Uzan Group were confiscated by TMSF (Savings and Deposits Insurance Fund) in 2004; and later *Star TV* was sold to Doğan Group –who had close relations with the government at the time- and *Star* newspaper was sold to Ethem Sancak, a businessman with investments in pharmaceuticals sector. Sabah Newspaper and ATV owned by Bilgin Group were confiscated by TMSF; and later sold to Çalık Group in 2007. *Kanaltürk*, a TV channel which was critical of the AKP government, was bought by Koza Group. The newcomers to media sector had alleged business or personal ties with AKP members. Berat Albayrak, the CEO of Çalık Group, is the son-in-law of Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan. The Çalık Group had made the purchase with state loans from Vakıfbank and Halkbank.

The investments of these groups are not confined to the media sector. All these groups have investments in many different sectors: the Doğan Group has investments in energy, tourism, trade and finance sectors; the Doğu Group in banking, construction, real estate, automotive and energy sectors; the Çalık group in textile, energy, finance, energy sectors; the Çukurova group in energy, telecommunication, heavy industry, finance sectors; Karacan-Demirören consortium in construction, gas, heavy industry sectors.⁵⁹ Hence, the economic interests of these firms, and their rivalry, extend well beyond the media sector. The variety of investment sectors also make them more vulnerable to political intervention, as the state has more means to influence their policies via its level of control in other sectors.

This shift in the ownership of Turkish media and the entry of new actors in the sector led to a heated debate about the state of media and journalism in Turkey. A lot of claims and accusations were put forward about the relations of the newcomer groups with the AKP government and Fethullah Gülen Community; however, these claims were left hanging in the air, as they were not satisfactorily accounted for. However, most of the newspapers and TV channels owned by the new actors inclined to have news policies that were either supportive or not importantly critical of AKP government. This led to a polarization in Turkish media, in which the more mainstream media organizations, along with the dissident ones, accused government-supportive media of purposefully flattering the government, and the pro-government media accused the others of scheming against the democratically elected government. The discussion was not confined to the media arena, but turned

⁵⁹ Ceren Sözeri and Zeynep Güney. *Türkiye’de Medyanın Ekonomi Politiki: Sektör Analizi* (The Political Economy of Media in Turkey: A Sectoral Analysis), (İstanbul: Tesev Yayınları, 2011), p.105-108.

into a verbal political clash in which both the Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan and the opposition leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu accused each other of manipulating the media.

AKP vs. Mainstream Media

Another development that altered the state of media in Turkey was the open clash between the AKP government and the Doğan Media Group. The Doğan Group had either created or acquired most of the influential newspapers and TV channels in Turkish media up until the late 2000s. Though the Doğan Group maintained its privileged position in the media sector in the initial years of the AKP government, their relations became strained in the later years.

In 2008, the strain turned into an open verbal fight between the Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan and Aydın Doğan, the owner of the Doğan Media Group. After a series of news stories concerning “Deniz Feneri” corruption trials in Germany, which included names from the close circle of acquaintances of Prime Minister Erdoğan, Erdoğan publicly accused Aydın Doğan of purposefully slanting against his government. Erdoğan claimed that Aydın Doğan had made certain demands from him which he declined and dared Aydın Doğan to publicly declare these demands. In response, Aydın Doğan accepted that he had certain demands concerning his extra-journalistic investments from the government; but the government had declined them in favor of the rival media group, Çalık. Doğan also stated that the news organizations owned by Doğan Media Group would not conform to political power and accused the Prime Minister of being dictatorial.⁶⁰ Following

⁶⁰ CNN Türk. “Aydın Doğan: Bizde biat kültürü yok”. August 9, 2008. (<http://www.cnntrk.com/2008/turkiye/09/07/aydin.dogan.bizde.biat.kulturu.yok/4927520/index.html>)

this declaration, Erdoğan made a public call for boycotting the newspapers of the Doğan Group.

Though the fight was suspended, at least from public attention, for some time, it was revealed that it was not over by the severe tax infliction brought upon Doğan Group in 2009. After the financial inspection in the companies owned by Doğan Holding, the holding received a tax infliction of 4 billion 581 million Turkish Liras, a record payment in Turkish history.

Following the tax infliction, a softening took place in the news policy of the Doğan Media Group. Dissident news and news critical of the government rarely found room in the papers and TV channels. A re-organization of the staff also took place. In 2010, some reporters and columnists with a critical attitude towards the government chose to resign from the Doğan newspapers. The staff of *Radikal*, the intellectual-leftist inclined paper of Doğan Group, was replaced and the newspaper was totally renovated, enlisting both columnists critical of the government and pro-government. Finally, in 2011, Aydın Doğan sold the *Milliyet* and *Vatan* newspapers to Karacan and Demirören consortium, declaring he wanted to reduce the scope of his media holding.

A very recent debate I want to touch upon concerns NTV, a news channel owned by Doğu Group. Being one of the oldest and most well-known news channels in Turkey, NTV had always been a respected media organizations and it had kept away from political controversies. Lately, NTV had a TV staff that brought together most outspoken dissident figures with public figures sympathetic to the government, attempting to create a democratic discussion ground between the polarized parties of Turkish media. However, in the summer of 2011, NTV has parted ways with certain well-known journalists in its staff such as Can Dündar and

Banu Güven; and stopped the airing of some programs in which the government had been criticized too often, such as *Basın Odası* and *Yazı İşleri*. The Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan had personally criticized or confronted the hosts of both TV shows, Nuray Mert and Ruşen Çakır. Over night, NTV refashioned itself from the most serious news channel that employ famous public figures and investigative journalists to an entertainment channel that shows re-runs of American History Channel at prime time. Though whether that the news policy of NTV, which was careful to create a balance between polarized parties in society, will be altered remains to be seen; the sudden unemployment of very bright journalists of Turkish media does not look promising.

The Ergenekon Trials and Arrested Journalists

The Ergenekon trials, which concerned the plans of military officers to overthrow the AKP government, also reinforced the polarization in Turkish media. The Ergenekon trials consist of two related trials and an expected indictment. Initially, the Ergenekon case was focused on ex-military members who allegedly aimed at overthrowing the government via undemocratic means. The accusations included the plans to create a chaotic environment in society through terrorist actions in order to manipulate the public opinion to support, or at least not to oppose, a possible military coup. At the beginning, the accusations of manipulating public opinion were directed to small-scale community or political party leaders. However, it did not take long for the case to get directed towards more mainstream media. In 2008, İlhan Selçuk, the chief columnist of *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, was taken into custody for alleged affiliations with Ergenekon; and was accused of manipulating the news made

in the newspaper in a way to influencing the public opinion in favor of an intervention. Along with Selçuk, the reporters of *Ulusal Kanal*, a TV channel affiliated with *İşçi Partisi (Worker's Party)* –that claims to be patriotic leftist-, whose leader was among the accused, were also taken into custody. Selçuk was released from custody; however, the reporters from *Ulusal Kanal* were arrested. Following them, the ex-owner of *Kanaltürk*, which was known as a TV channel critical of the government, Tuncay Özkan, was arrested in September 2008. In March 2009, the Ankara representative and columnist of *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, Mustafa Balbay was arrested. All these journalists were put on trial in July 2009.

The police operations towards media continued in February 2011. The owner of the dissident news website ODA TV, Soner Yalçın, along with Barış Terkoğlu and Barış Pehlivan, journalists who wrote for ODA TV, were arrested. In March 2011, Nedim Şener, reporter of *Milliyet* newspaper who was known with his investigations concerning the role of the security forces in the assassination of Hrant Dink; and Ahmet Şık, who was working on a book concerning the influence of Fethullah Gülen Community on the police force, were arrested as well. The words Ahmet Şık said while he was taken into custody by the police became a slogan commonly referred to in the media during this process: “Dokunan yanar! (Whoever touches them gets burned!)”, associating the reason behind the accusations directed at him with the book he was writing. This idea was reinforced in the minds of the critics of the Ergenekon trials by the following events: the few copies of the uncompleted, hence unpublished book of Ahmet Şık was deleted by the police with a court decision from the computers of his editors at İthaki Yayınları, which was going to publish the book; and also from the computer of journalist Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, who was a second-reader of the book draft as a colleague and friend of Ahmet Şık. The police came to

the office of the *Radikal* newspaper, where Mavioğlu worked at the time, to delete the document. The fact that the police was allowed to delete a document from a journalist's computer in a newspaper building constituted another subject for debate and criticism. However, the uncompleted copy of Ahmet Şık's book still managed to leak. It was distributed in the internet via a foreign located website; and it was downloaded more than 100.000 times.

These arrests led to a huge debate in the Turkish media. Certain members of mainstream media argued that they can vouch for Nedim Şener and Ahmet Şık, while pro-government newspapers argued that the concrete accusations towards these journalists should be known before passing judgment. Journalists organized protests that criticized their arrest, while some reporters also criticized the exclusion of the other reporters that were also arrested from the dominant discourse in these protests and criticisms. Also, the length of the detention periods was problematised, as some of the journalists had been imprisoned for more than two years without a verdict, such as Mustafa Balbay.

These arrests also brought to attention the Kurdish journalists in prison, who were arrested with similar accusations: for their alleged connections to PKK. It was revealed that the problem of arrested journalists was not confined to the Ergenekon case, but similar excuses were being employed by the courts concerning Kurdish journalists long before Ergenekon case. An April 2011 International Press Institute (IPI) report stated that Turkey had 57 journalists in jail which is more than any other country, a number that exceeds countries which press freedom is strictly limited, such as China and Iran.⁶¹ As of now, there are a total of 70 journalists imprisoned due to the alleged crimes they committed through their journalistic activity,

⁶¹ "OSCE Report finds Turkey is holding 57 journalists in prison", European Journalism Centre, April 5, 2011. (http://www.ejc.net/media_news/osce_report_finds_turkey_is_holding_57_journalists_in_prison/).

according to the latest list prepared by Union of Journalists of Turkey.⁶² It is also worth noting that Ferai Tınç, the chair of IPI's Turkey National Committee, resigned from *Hürriyet* newspaper, where she worked for 28 years, in July 2011. She stated that her resignation was a result the governmental pressures on the media seeking to pave the way for a "transformation of the country" in accordance with their worldviews:

The socialist and Kurdish media has always been under pressure in Turkey. Now the mainstream media is threatened. [...] Where almost 70 journalists of various political inclinations are in prison, accused of being terrorists, where media laws do not defend freedom of the press, and where - as a natural consequence - self-censorship is so strong, I, as a journalist, had only one choice, and that was to put a 'punto finale' to my career.⁶³

The Characteristics of Interviewed Reporters

The study has collected its data from the interviews conducted with a total of 28 journalists over two years. 10 of these interviews were conducted between April and June, 2010. The remaining 18 were conducted between February and May, 2011. Semi-structured interviewing was chosen as a method in order to acquire an insight into how reporters conceive and give meaning to the practice of reporting and to understand the problems from their perspective; while keeping the discussion on track of certain topics problematic for journalism.

Two important concerns were taken into account while selecting the journalists to be interviewed. First, the interviewees were mainly chosen among journalists who work or have worked as reporters for the major part of their professional experience. The term 'journalist' is used -maybe too generously- to

⁶² Türkiye Gazeteciler Sendikası (Union of Journalists of Turkey), list of journalists under arrest, August 28, 2011. (www.tgs.org.tr)

⁶³ "Q&A with Journalist and IPI Board Member Ferai Tınç", Enid Portuguez, International Press Institute,, August 10, 2011. (<http://cima.ned.org/qa-journalist-ipi-board-member-ferai-tinc>).

refer to all individuals who have been affiliated with a media institution, regardless of the status they occupy or the kind of work they perform. The term ‘reporter’, on the other hand, refers to a specific group of journalists who do the actual daily work of gathering information and turning it into a news story to be printed or broadcasted. Hence, a commentator, a discussion host, a columnist, an anchorman are all entitled to the label of journalist from a general perspective; while they cannot be called reporters. I believe that reporters differ from other journalists regarding their occupational, societal and economic status. By keeping the study at the reporter level, I have aimed to present the evaluations of those who were most vulnerable to the restricting mechanisms in newsmaking, rather than those who have –for one reason or another- been able to adjust themselves to the media structure.

Another concern was to limit the selected interviewees to those who work in print media only. Broadcast media and print media operate in different ways; and the mechanisms employed in them during the process of newsmaking can be compared only to a general extent. Regarding investigative journalism in particular, the requirements for putting a news story together and the processes of gathering information can be quite different. In order not to fall into a fallacy of conflation, I have limited the interviewees only with print media. I have chosen print media as the more appropriate of the two for the purposes of this study, because of the lack of visual requirements for a news story and the possibility of going further into the detail of the issue via articles, columns and serials.

The reporters were contacted through their office phones, and when attainable, their mobile phones and appointments were made. The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 1 hour 15 minutes. The interviewees were presented with a confidentiality statement signed by the researcher, which promised that the names

and workplaces of the interviewees would stay anonymous. This was done in order to secure the confidence of the interviewees and also to refrain from damaging their personal stakes in case they said anything they would regret later.

The interviews consisted of two sets of questions: a set of short-answer and multiple-choice questions aiming to classify the journalists; and a set of semi-scheduled questions on a list of topics determined by the researcher. First, the interviewees were presented with the classification questions which they filled by themselves, and then the interview was conducted in the shape of a discussion whose course was guided by the researcher via the semi-scheduled set of questions.

As the reporters were asked about their own evaluations, this study represents their perceptions on the practice of investigative journalism in Turkey, rather than independent and objective causes for the problems of investigative journalism in Turkey. However, I believe that the answers and conceptions of investigative journalism in the eyes of reporters provide significant clues for understanding the uneasiness and discomfort in the current media environment in Turkey.

The reporters were asked the classification questions before the interview in order to access information on the extent of their professional experience and their political affiliations. These points were thought to be relevant as they would influence how the answers will be classified and analyzed. The answers given to these classification questions helped in contextualizing and comparing the evaluations of the reporters.

The interviewed reporters can be separated into three groups with regard to the organization they work in. The first group consists of 18 reporters who currently work in the mainstream media, the second group consists of 7 reporters who currently work in alternative/independent media organizations, and the third group

consists of 3 reporters who are currently unemployed or retired. The distinction between mainstream media and alternative media organizations was made by considering whether the organization functioned within a media holding or it was an independent enterprise. The employed journalists were working in 10 different newspapers.

With regard to the length of their experience, the reporters can be distinguished into three groups. First, there are the 5 young reporters who have been working in the media sector for less than 10 years. The word ‘young’ does not pertain to their ages but to their professional experience. The second group is the 12 reporters who have been working for more than 10-less than 20 years. Finally, the last group is the 11 reporters who have worked more than 20 years in the media. This classification emerged spontaneously during the interviews. The older reporters spoke of the reporters with less than 10 years of experience as ‘too young’ and ‘inexperienced’. The young reporters similarly considered themselves as lacking in necessary experience. The middle group, however, consisted of the reporters who are currently most active and who were repeatedly referred to while discussing investigative journalism.

Concerning the education and training of the reporters, two streaks came forward: those who attended communication faculties in university and those who did not. 12 reporters were graduates of journalism departments. Among those who did not study journalism in university, 10 had university diplomas from different departments. 4 other reporters were trained in private journalism courses following their graduation from university. 2 reporters did not have university diplomas. Those reporters who were neither graduates of journalism departments nor got any systematic training in journalism referred to themselves as ‘trained in practice’.

As mentioned before, the interviewees were chosen in the level of reporter. However, a number among them had either recently received executive duties; or had undertaken executive responsibilities for some time in the past, such as coordinator, editor, representative. 13 reporters had never undertaken executive duties. 5 reporters had worked as office chief editors in the past; and 8 reporters were currently working as office chief editors. 2 reporters worked as city representatives of their newspapers. However, those who currently worked as editors or representatives were appointed to their positions after spending considerable time as reporters: all of these reporters had more than at least 15 years of experience.

The reporting beats the reporters worked daily in varied. 5 reporters identified their beat as political party reporting; 4 other reporters as legal beat reporting; 3 as prime ministry beat and 2 as police beat reporting. 3 reporters described their areas of interests as specifically Kurdish issue and human rights.

The reporters who are currently working in executive positions referred to the beats they worked for a considerable time while answering the classification questions. Also, 11 reporters used general or vague expressions while describing their beats: they either gave more than one answer or defined their area of responsibility as ‘freelance’ as they were required to cover more than a single beat within the daily routine.

Given an 8-item-list of political attitudes (Appendix B), from which they could choose two options, 18 reporters defined their political attitude as ‘socialist’ only. 5 reporters defined themselves as ‘leftists’. One reporter chose ‘leftist’ and ‘patriot’; 2 reporters identified themselves as ‘social democrats’. One reporter chose ‘liberal’; and another chose both ‘liberal’ and ‘social democrat’. Though the majority of the reporters turned out to be socialists, this was not intended. The

reporters who called themselves socialists worked in a variety of newspapers and also differed with respect to their experience, training and beats. The reporters were also asked to define the political attitude of the organization they worked for from the same set of attitudes. However, as these choices represent the personal evaluations of the reporters and differ even among the reporters who work in the same newspaper, I choose to mention them in the later chapters, as they become relevant to the theme of the chapters.

The reporters were finally asked to compare their own political attitude with the political stance of the media organization they work for; and assess the compatibility of the two on a scale of 1 to 5. This question aimed at understanding whether the reporter felt comfortable with the relations between her/him and the organization s/he works in. 5 reporters said they were totally compatible; 5 said they were quite compatible; 6 said they were moderately compatible; another 5 said they were quite incompatible and 3 said they were totally incompatible. One reporter refused to answer.

CHAPTER 5

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM: MYTH OR FOR REAL?

Whether investigative journalism can still exist in the environment which the current media structure provides has been an issue for debate for sometime now. The concern over the possibility of practicing investigative journalism increased along with the concern for the decline in journalism standards. In 2010, The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) stated that there is a serious decline in journalistic standards due to the cuts in editorial costs and staff and lack of investment in “investigative and specialist news reporting”; and EFJ President Arne König declared: “A toxic mix of editorial cuts, precarious working conditions and unethical journalism has created a spiral of decline for media and democracy in Europe” (EFJ Pledge, 2010). A 2010 PEJ (Project for Excellence in Journalism) report on the state of media claims that time-consuming investigative reports are cut back due to the reduction of the staff and the increased space allotted for advertisements. Similar complaints come from individual journalists as well. Lowell Bergman, the ex-producer of famous CBS news show, *60 Minutes*, and founder of the Centre of Investigative Reporting, says:

The phrase investigative journalism doesn't mean what it used to mean. It meant something in the early 70s - a formation of the old concept of muckraking being done by "more professional" journalists. [...] In the O.J. Simpson case, people standing outside doing interviews were called investigative reporters because they were tracking down who the live-in babysitter was? Is that investigative reporting? I don't know. There may be some investigation involved and there may be some reporting, but I don't think it has much to do with keeping institutions or individuals accountable who have power and are not accountable. It doesn't have much to do with the old phrase ‘comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable’.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Journalism Jobs. Interview with Lowell Bergman.
(http://www.journalismjobs.com/interview_bergman.cfm). 2001.

This debate about the state and status of investigative journalism gives rise to a set of interesting questions: Is investigative journalism a trend that belongs to the past and cannot be exercised today? What leads to the decline of investigative journalism? Who is to blame: reporters, editors, media owners? What should be done to revive it? It is evident that there is a substantial discomfort with the situation investigative journalism is in, but there is a dispute about whom to hold responsible for it.

The Definition of Investigative Journalism

Journalists in Turkey have a curious approach to investigative journalism: they are doubtful about whether investigative journalism should be treated as a separate category of journalism. They claim that investigation is an inherent part of all journalism, and the category of investigative journalism suggests that some kinds of journalism can rightfully forego investigation. They argue that the necessity to celebrate investigative journalism is born from a decline in the overall quality of journalism: as journalism in general is degraded, it becomes natural to praise examples of good quality journalism as investigative journalism. Most reporters emphasize that investigative reporter is not an occupational identity they would take upon themselves. When they are asked to define investigative journalism, they begin by emphasizing this denial. However, some reporters claim that denying investigative reporting a separate category overlooks the current conditions investigative journalism is practiced in:

When you say all reporting requires investigation, you assume that all reporters are actually doing investigative work, which does not reflect the real situation. There are only a number of people who gained expertise on certain

issues, whose additional value is higher than their colleagues. Those are provided with time and opportunity to investigate.⁶⁵

In their definitions, the reporters emphasize mainly three characteristics of investigative stories: it should be critical, it should be in-depth; and it should be continuous. Reporters associate being critical with focusing on the malfunctioning parts of the system or society with an aim to improve them. They argue that investigative journalism always has a critical perspective, as it is concerned with exposing unjust or illegal behavior. D. even looks at it as the utilization of a right transferred by the people. He looks at investigative journalism as “the right to monitor the actions of the political power”.

The reporters believe that informing the public about the malfunction of the system can lead to a public pressure on political forces. E. believes this is the point where personal responsibility as an individual and social responsibility as a journalist overlap. S. claims that this potential to produce a public response is what sets their profession apart:

Journalism is about presenting the public the malfunctioning parts in legislative, executive, judiciary forces with the power of influencing the public opinion. It produces a pressure on these forces through public opinion, in order to make them function as they should. I don't see journalism merely as announcing events to the public. If that was the case, a journalist would have no difference from a machine, a gadget.⁶⁶

Reporters argue that investigative journalism involves in-depth examination of an issue or an event. The in-depth examination has to do with not settling with the tableau presented by the dominant forces in society but investigating further into the appearances. U. describes it as follows:

There is a photograph shown to us, by the state or other institutions. If you do not take that photo for granted and try to see behind it, that's investigative

⁶⁵ I., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 19, 2011.

⁶⁶ S., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

journalism. Sometimes the public is kept in the dark on some issues for the high benefits of the state. If you go after them and find out what's behind the curtain without caring for those high benefits, that's investigative journalism.⁶⁷

For reporters, investigative journalism is also an ongoing process that does not end at a certain point. They describe it as a process that never has a final point. They emphasize that every bit of information they reach leads to a new question. Ş., a reporter with 36 years of experience, gives the example of one of his investigative stories. He did a follow-up story about the people who were the subjects of an investigative report written 15 years ago and came up with another investigative report. M., a reporter from the younger generation with 11 years of experience, says that the process of investigation is never complete:

For me, this job is about asking never-ending questions. Keeping your curiosity up in all times, not to act with a preconceived judgment, accepting that every given answer is inadequate, that it should be backed up with another question, another source, another truth.⁶⁸

It seems that there are two veins of investigative journalism the reporters use in their descriptions. Some reporters emphasize that investigative journalism is about revealing the information concealed from the public or simply stayed out of public attention for this or that reason. The main characteristic of such investigative journalism is revelation:

The authorities keep information from the public all the time. That's the point the journalistic activity of the reporter starts: to find out the concealed information and share it with the public.⁶⁹

However, other reporters extend the boundaries of investigative journalism to focusing on a social problem and trying to understand its point of origin. This

⁶⁷ U., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 7, 2011.

⁶⁸ M., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 29, 2011.

⁶⁹ Ü., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 8, 2011.

perception of investigative reporting emphasizes its aspect of analysis. Analyzing a specific social problem and spelling it out for the public to understand is considered as investigative journalism as well by these reporters:

Investigative journalism does not only have to expose wrongdoing, but it could be professional work on a social problem. You collect reliable data from various sources and take expert comments; that is also investigative journalism.⁷⁰

Nonetheless, the reporters do not suggest that these two lines of investigative journalism are mutually exclusive, but these are simply different sides of the medallion. I believe that the reasons behind this difference in reporters' perceptions of investigative journalism stems from the conditions under which they have to practice investigative journalism. How these conditions affect reporters' perception of investigative journalism will be mentioned in later chapters.

A common metaphor the reporters use for investigative journalism is a puzzle or knitting: the idea is that the investigative reporter gets a hint of the information s/he is going to acquire and then s/he follows it to the point s/he finds out more relevant information about the issue and is able to understand the underlying relations. O. emphasizes that the process of investigation starts at a point that is considered unimportant, but then the reporter builds a whole structure from it. He resembles this process to "knitting", just like Ç. does. But Ç. emphasizes the process of bringing together disorganized and seemingly irrelevant bits of information to make a whole story clear instead. He argues that being curious on small problems and doubting the accuracy of the information one has constitutes the basis of investigative journalism:

Imagine the facts in a dossier, all complicated, with no organization.... Moving from those facts, you make a specific photograph clearer, weaving it point by point. But that kind of work is quite scarce. [...] You need a flare,

⁷⁰ D., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, June 7, 2010.

sometimes a document, sometimes a single word. You move from there, step by step. Sometimes it gets stuck, then you make a note of it and return to it in time. What is essential for it is curiosity and doubt, even in simple issues.⁷¹

F. uses the “puzzle” metaphor, but the way he describes the process suggests the lack of a preconceived perspective about the investigated story or the power of the facts to alter that perspective:

Investigative journalism is like a puzzle. In many news stories, when I first begin to work, I don’t know where it would lead me. When pieces come together, it reveals a schema and then you understand it. I wrote a feature about the term ‘fascist İzmir’. I did think that İzmir could be called fascist. However, I went there and spoke to political parties, academics, NGOs and people on the street; and I saw that it is not so. Just like any other city, there are different dynamics involved: fascists and leftists, homosexuals and homophobes and conservatives.⁷²

This brings us to the question whether reporters act with preconceived notions when investigating certain phenomena. This is a most controversial point with respect to both the reporters and the literature. Objectivity of the reporter is a long debated concept, and the reporters represent a diversity of opinions on the subject to the point of confusion.

The initial way the reporters approach to the issue is to claim that objectivity is possible and required. These reporters usually emphasize the revelation aspect of investigative journalism and claim that their work consists of presenting the public with the truth. G., a reporter with 30 years of experience, denies that ideology is an aspect of news unless the reporter intentionally makes it so:

I believe that news should be independent of ideology. News is the communication of a truth to the public, informing the public. There is no necessity that it should be ideological, unless you try to shape it as such.⁷³

⁷¹ Ç., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 9, 2011.

⁷² F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

⁷³ G., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, May 1, 2010.

However, there are reporters who do not deny the problematic nature of the relationship of truth and journalism. V. who has worked as a reporter for 20 years, although he has difficulty with articulating what the problem is, recognizes that different way of looking at news is possible. However, he still feels that loyalty to truth has some merit:

Everybody has their own perspective. One looks at the story from this side, the other from the other side. Everybody has their own truth, but one still has to take side with that truth.⁷⁴

B., a young socialist reporter working in a “socialist”⁷⁵ newspaper, is quite honest and articulate about the way he perceives objectivity. He recognizes the importance of the reporter’s attitude:

All news have two sides, like it or not. Objectivity is described as depicting both sides neutrally. But I don’t believe that is so. There is a side to be taken in many issues. If we are going to put forward a truth, you have to include what happens to the relevant parties, how they are affected, who benefits from it and gets harmed by it.⁷⁶

R. provides a more significant example of how his own values affect his newsmaking. However, he argues that it is a positive influence, rather than an unwanted intrusion:

Say, I have a document proving that the slum houses are illegal and have to be demolished. I would not write that. My criterion there is that everyone has a right to housing. I take a side. There is no such thing as objective news; everybody makes news according to their worldview.⁷⁷

The reporters are aware that investigative journalism has certain negative connotations in the eyes of the public. However, they believe that those negative

⁷⁴ V., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 1, 2011.

⁷⁵ The stances of news organizations given in quotation marks are the descriptions of the reporters concerning the news organizations they work for, rather than independent assessments.

⁷⁶ B., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, April 28, 2010.

⁷⁷ R., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

connotations are a part of the job, and the investigative reporter should be receiving them gladly. C. describes the investigative reporter as “the devil’s advocate” and says it is not possible to perform journalism unless the reporters “risk to be cursed”. D. also accepts that investigative journalists are not very well liked, but claims that in order to be useful to society, they have to be disliked:

The investigative reporter is not very much liked, by public officials and etc., but they should still keep going like that. The investigative reporter should be “vicious” in the manner the society needs them to, perceptive of what their role in the society is.⁷⁸

To sum up, we can say that the reporters define investigative journalism as a critical, in-depth and continuous process of reporting, though this definition is quite reluctant. The reporters are not very happy with the label of investigative journalism and argue that there is no distinction between journalism and investigative journalism. The reporters define two different aspects of investigative journalism: revealing and analyzing. They argue that an investigative story has to be brought together by a step-by-step process of attaining bits of information. Finally, reporters differ on their opinions about how their values and opinions influence their investigative work. Although some reporters believe in the value of objectivity in the sense of detaching their opinions from their work, some reporters accept that it is not possible to be objective in this sense and celebrate their own values as a positively contributing factor to their newsmaking.

The Methods of Investigative Reporting

Three elements stand out in the definitions reporters use to describe investigative journalism: multiple confirmations, the principle of “following-up” and “dossier

⁷⁸ D., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, June 7, 2010.

journalism”. M., a journalist who has retired after 24 years of active work, argues that what sets investigative journalism apart is the requirement of confirmation it entails. According to M., the process of making news has become less and less important for the media sector, to the point that not every news story is required to be thoroughly confirmed. When there is no confirmation, the news story is merely confined to what the main source has revealed. Hence, the news stories that include information confirmed by multiple sources, providing the reader with a more complete outlook to the presented issue are labeled as investigative reporting.

Ş., who has been practicing journalism for more than 30 years, states that an important element of investigative journalism is ‘following-up’ the story, that is, improving on the existing news story by finding out further details concerning the issue at hand. Ş. defines this endeavor as “updating the news story for the society”, and sees it as an ongoing process of deeper re-investigation.

Both the principle of multiple confirmation and the principle of following-up concern the ways in which the journalist gathers information for the story. While older, more experienced journalists point to the methods of gathering information in their definition, the younger generation of journalists makes a point about the content in the form of *dossier reporting*. A *dossier* is a term that usually pertains to legal beat reporting, meaning a compiled body of information and documents on a single case or trial. Legal beat reporters often focus on dossiers as a source for news stories.

A number of journalists give this kind of journalism as an example of investigative journalism. However, when asked to articulate what they mean by *dossier* reporting, they retreat to explanations concerning methods of journalism. Z., a reporter with 13 years of experience, defines it as the work of reporting including

background information and multiple confirmation. Ç., an experienced legal beat reporter, argues that dossier reporting entails breaking free of the daily routine and following-up the stories even after they drop off the agenda. Hence, though they use a different term, younger journalists also articulate investigative journalism in the same lines as their predecessors. T., who has been working as a journalist for 10 years, also says that an investigative journalist does in-depth work on *dossiers*; however, he includes an articulation on content:

An investigative journalist practices a journalism of rights, takes interest in violations of human rights and has a class-based outlook.⁷⁹

Although these characteristics are all necessary parts of investigative journalism, they do not automatically embody the critical attitude or questioning an investigative story must have. Nor they lead a journalist to the substantial in-depth analysis required for an investigative story. These characteristics the reporters count may serve as a basic necessary guideline; however, they do not seem adequate to prepare a solid investigative story in the way they describe it. I believe that the reporters' denial of investigative journalism as a separate category has to do with the limitations of the methods they are able to employ in their practice of investigative journalism. The requirements the corporate system in journalism impose on reporters –which will be mentioned in the following chapters- narrow down their conception of performing investigative journalism.

Standards for Investigative Journalism in Turkey

The reporters agree upon the fact that investigative journalism as it is practiced in Turkey does not live up to their expectations. The reasons they give for

⁷⁹ T., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 21, 2011.

the problems of investigative journalism will be mentioned in the upcoming chapters. This section will only mention the general attitude of reporters concerning the conduct of investigative journalism in Turkey.

Most of the reporters think that the investigative journalism in Turkey is of low quality. Most reporters state that there is a recent decline in the quality of investigative journalism in Turkey. K., a reporter with 17 years of experience, states that the last few years has been the worst period for journalism for almost 20 years, which suggests that he is perceiving a bottom-point in the quality of journalism during his career. Still, some reporters also point out that investigative journalism was never practiced in high standards exactly. As the most experienced reporter interviewed, Ş. says:

There was never a golden age of investigative journalism. There has only been golden, bright individuals; a few examples who have adopted it as a lifestyle.⁸⁰

D. also stresses that the journalism practiced in Turkey has always excluded journalistic standards, and now it is even more difficult to get such standards accepted in the corporate media:

Journalism never developed in Turkey in the lines of public good or in the name of people. We are now trying to infiltrate those concepts into an extremely developed corporate structure. Even though one is a part of that structure, still they have to prioritize the public good and its right to be informed. [...] However, the corporate network is so accustomed to its own function; it is weird for them to allow a reporter to monitor their operations.⁸¹

However, some reporters also argue that the quality of investigative journalism is increasing as the term is more widely used in the public and what the public understands from the term is transforming in a positive manner. A. argues that the

⁸⁰ Ş., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 8, 2011.

⁸¹ D., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, June 7, 2010.

methods of practicing investigative journalism are refined and the unacceptable and unethical methods used in the past are denounced today:

In this country, for years they made us believe that taking shots with a hidden camera was investigative journalism. They recorded such shots, broadcasted them in TV channels, and we watched them with pleasure. But today, we have realized that hidden cameras are something else. It is even in the criminal law now; it is a crime to shoot with a hidden camera.⁸²

In addition, the reporters have an overall attitude that localizes the problems they perceive in the conduct of investigative journalism. Most reporters phrase their protests under the clause “in Turkey”, which suggests that they assume such problems are unique to this country and do not exist anywhere else. They usually compare Turkey to “Western countries”, usually without specifying which, and claim that such problems are not experienced in other countries.

The Effects of Investigative Journalism

The importance attached to investigative journalism primarily concerns its consequences. Both liberal approaches and critical approaches put a particular emphasis on the effects of investigative news. Liberal approaches assign a democracy-enhancing role to investigative journalism via informing and mobilizing the public, whereas critical theories argue this democratic effect is manipulated by the elites that control the news organizations.

Reporters talked about the effects of investigative journalism on three agents: the public, the political power and the journalists or the media itself. Although most seem to believe that the primary recipient of the investigative stories is the public;

⁸² A., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 5, 2011.

they also think that investigative journalism has a direct influence on the political power and the media as well.

Reporters tend to differentiate between the public demand and the public need for investigative journalism. They seem to believe that the demand and the need for investigative journalism do not necessarily or constantly overlap. They believe that the public needs investigative journalism, but is unaware or dismissive of that need. E., a social democrat reporter with 25 years of experience is quite pessimist on the subject:

I'm not sure that the public needs investigative journalism. There is no such public. What we call interested public is a handful of people who trouble themselves and worry about this country. The rest of the people are busy with their own stomach and homes. Hence, people do not demand high-quality, ground-breaking investigations.⁸³

Similar to E., Ş. also believes that the public is apathetic and unresponsive to investigative journalism; however, he thinks that his contribution lies elsewhere: in the accumulation of knowledge of future generations rather than the current society:

I do my duty regarding the public, but they don't read. Even though I work hard and write, our society forgets quickly. [...] Hence, what we do is making a note in history. Researchers in the future will look at our news and say such and such have happened. That's what matters to me.⁸⁴

However, I. points out that there are different kinds of information the news provide for the public. He differentiates between the information the public seeks and demands, which is about the events the public has knowledge of beforehand, e.g. the elections; and the information the public receives from the reporters without seeking for in particular. The investigative reports are of the latter kind. Hence, the public does not particularly demand investigative stories, but it is part of the reporters' job to provide them anyway.

⁸³ E., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 4, 2011.

⁸⁴ Ş., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 8, 2011.

Ç.'s point of view, on the other hand, seemed to suggest that the practice of investigative journalism depends on the quality of political conduct, e.g. the level of corruption in the system, rather than the public attention investigative stories receive. Ç. points out that the need for investigative journalism is directly linked to the level of dishonesty and corruption in the public administration:

There is a great need for investigative journalism in Turkey lately. In Turkey, most officials and politicians lie or misrepresent the truth to the public. And our job is to reveal that truth.⁸⁵

Reporters also believe that the public reaction to investigative news, which, according to the liberal approach, should be a politically mobilizing factor for the society, is in fact very weak. A. associates this weak public response with the current political polarization in the society:

Everyone wants to read things that are in line with their beliefs. That's what the public needs. The ones who support the government get happy when they read investigative reports that the government will favor. Others get happy when they read reports that criticize the government.⁸⁶

In turn, J. believes that the media is also responsible for the lack of public response to investigative stories. According to J., the public does not believe that the news tell the truth. The media have lost its credibility, hence people tend to mistrust and disregard the accuracy of the news stories they read and they believe "if it is in the paper, it is not true".

Reporters also describe the supply of investigative journalism by the media as a factor influencing the public demand. Some believe that there is no supply to meet the existing demands, and others argue the lack of supply leads to the decline of the public demand as well. U. believes that there is a strong need for investigative journalism, but he is in doubt about whether the quality of investigative reporting

⁸⁵ Ç., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 9, 2011.

⁸⁶ A., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 5, 2011.

that is supplied can meet that need. S. believes that the media is unwilling to answer the demand for investigative journalism:

There is definitely an active public demand for investigative journalism. However, the media institutions don't answer that demand. There is demand, but there is no supply. There is a monopoly in the media: all journalism is on the same track, same standards, same outlook. There is no ground for investigative journalism as all existing papers are in the same convergent structure.⁸⁷

Conversely, Ü. believes that there is no demand for investigative journalism, but that lack of demand is reinforced by the media itself. However, he still believes that it is the public who has to take action to alter the choice the media makes:

[The people] want to live in a fantasy world built by their dreams, reinforced by TV series and what not. That is understandable for a fabricated society. The media can rip that apart, but has no intention to, because it benefits from it. The people have to have a demand for news. They have to be conscious consumers of news; otherwise it will never be supplied.⁸⁸

D., on the other hand, believes that the transformation of the media and the public is a dialectical process; hence, one cannot be altered without the other:

For a respectable media, there has to be a respectable society, but it is also true the same way around: for a respectable society, there has to be a respectable media.⁸⁹

Reporters also comment about the effect of investigative journalism on political power or the government. Some reporters believe that rather than influencing the political agenda through the actions of the public, investigative journalism affects it directly via the perceptions of politicians and public officials. As they refrain from a negative estimation by their superiors or in the eyes of the public, they may tend to take action concerning the issue on the investigative report:

⁸⁷ S., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

⁸⁸ Ü., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 8, 2011.

⁸⁹ D., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, June 7, 2010.

If the political power acts upon its common sense rather than its automated reflexes of preservation, and if it sees that what you wrote is true; then it does take steps to respond to it.⁹⁰

However, Ç. believes that recently, the response of public officials in Turkey to investigative news is growing weaker as well. According to Ç., as the public grows accustomed to the news of misconduct of the public officers, the public officers also become unresponsive to the stories of corruption about them:

In the last five years, the issue of corruption has been normalized by the society. People see the relationship of a businessman with a politician as a normal thing. In 2005, I had written a story about some ministers; they held a press meeting and gave an explanation about their affiliations. They were bothered that their names were involved. In 2010, their names were involved in another story; they did not even bother to give a press release.⁹¹

Reporters also believe that the practice of investigative journalism has an impact on the media itself. The media in general can benefit from the conduct of investigative journalism, as the instances of investigative journalism remind the reporters the alleged integrity of their profession:

We need investigative journalism to create an environment that reminds us our professional responsibility. Without it, this profession will be worthless; we can't save ourselves from being mere announcers.⁹²

However, not all reporters are so pessimistic about the public response and memory. B. believes that the reporter's manner of presenting the news influences the way the public looks at issues. The reporter is responsible for presenting the social problems in a manner that will lead to mobilization of the people. He gives the response the protests of the TEKEL workers elicited from the public as an example:

In Turkey, politics are operated from top-down, which is also reflected in peoples' lives. People are always passive. They have to be confronted with certain realities to get mobilized. There lies the responsibility of the reporter;

⁹⁰ O., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 10, 2011.

⁹¹ Ç., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 9, 2011.

⁹² C., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, June 11, 2010.

they have to show that reality so that people know how to react. I believe there have been some breaking points, things are not as horrible.⁹³

M. claims that the high-quality examples of investigative journalism always find a place in the collective memory and that kind of investigative journalism will prevail:

Uğur Mumcu, Abdi İpekçi, Mustafa Ekmekçi, Hrant Dink are not forgotten. But those who had accused them because of their work are. The slandering campaigns and provocations against them are remembered, but those who were involved in them are only remembered as a bad memory. The act of questioning may be suppressed for a while, but not all the time. The public needs investigative journalism, it did in the past; it will in the future.⁹⁴

The views of the reporters on the effects of investigative journalism bring substantial criticism to the way the liberal approaches perceive that effect. The reporters believe that investigative journalism has a direct influence not only on the public, but on political power and the media as well. Although they are of different minds about to what extent investigative news is appreciated by the public, they still believe that it corresponds to a certain public need and carries the potential of altering the dominant views in society, even if that happens in the long run. They argue that investigative journalism leads to more imminent responses of the political elites rather than influencing their behavior via the democratic actions of the public. However, the public attention or evaluation of the misconduct by political elites also alters their response to investigative news.

According to the reporters, investigative reporting is also functional in maintaining or increasing the integrity of the profession as a whole. Even observing better examples of investigative reporting persuade reporters to remember the ideals and expectations from their occupation and strive to live up to it. However, the reporters seem to be quite pessimistic about the potential of investigative journalism

⁹³ B., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, April 28, 2010.

⁹⁴ M., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 29, 2011.

to alter the public and its values. They point to two reasons for that: the apathy of the public concerning news and the unwillingness of the media to undertake a potentially transformative kind of investigative journalism.

CHAPTER 6

NEWS POLICY

Every media organization has its own news policy which provides the people who work for it with certain guidelines on how to select news they are going to focus on and print, and how to write the news. The news policy provides the basis of editorial control and auto-control. It determines the stance the newspaper will take on issues important to the public. It shows the side the newspaper will take in times of crisis. It is also the most significant indicator of a newspaper's political-economic agenda.

However, this news policy is almost never a strict set of rules clearly spelled out, neither for the journalists nor for the readers. In some media organizations openly affiliated with political parties or groups, or civil society organizations, the outlook of those groups and organizations help define the news policy. However, in the media organizations that claim to be independent and neutral, which have no bonds with interest groups –at least not immediately visible bonds- it becomes difficult to interpret news policy. The news policy of a newspaper can only be recognized via its choice and tone of its news throughout the period it is printed, and in some cases it is not even stable and continuous during that period.

Journalists in Turkey seem more or less reconciled with the idea of a news policy restricting their news stories according to a certain political-economic agenda. They take the effects of news policy on their work as a given, and argue that no matter the stance of the newspaper, it would not be possible to escape the limitations of the news policy. Ş. says that there are ways to deal with the restrictions that arise from news policy, in the case that both the reporter and the newspaper act with good intentions.

The Relation of Media to Political Power

The general attitude of the political power with respect to media and its specific relations with media firms and organizations are factors inevitably affect the news policy. According to liberal theories, the media has to play an important role in the system of checks-and-balances. It has to undertake a watchdog role and monitor the actions of political power. Even in that case, it is understandable that conflicts will arise between the media organs and political power. However, in a corporate media system, the media is rarely a mere controller, but at times an ally and at times an adversary to political power based on how their political-economic agenda is shaped. Hence, the attitude of the political power towards the media depends on how beneficial they think the media support will be for them.

Recently, the attitude of the AKP government towards media has grown more repressive and domineering. This attitude and its effect on news policies of media organizations is what journalists take issue with, rather than the restrictions imposed on them by the mechanism of implementing news policy. The reporters argue that what is most damaged by this attitude of the political power is the critical aspect of investigative journalism. They argue that the numbers of critical investigative stories that find room in the news organizations are on the decline, which creates an illusory perception of recent developments in Turkey:

When the number of critical news printed is assessed, one would think that Turkey has no serious problems whatsoever. There is something wrong with that. The political power controls the media as it is intolerant to such news. It either lays the ground for affiliated corporate groups to gain access to the media structure; or threatens the existing media organizations into blocking the critical news.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ S., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

Some reporters directly blame what they perceive as the government's intolerance for criticism for the restrictions they are confronted with:

Parties in political power do not tolerate the criticism and control duties of the media in Turkey, unlike advanced democracies. The media institutions have gradually become bound to political power. A government who rules the state, manipulates the judiciary and controls the police force has no toleration for a model of critical journalism.⁹⁶

Some reporters even argue that it is a deliberate choice of the government to suppress critical news. H. believes that the determining factor for the state of investigative journalism is the way the political power reacts to it, and in Turkey, it is not favorable at all:

All political power is disturbed with investigative journalism. What matters is the reaction given to it. In Turkey, the government reacts in the manner of "elimination", hence does everything in his power to suppress the media.⁹⁷

Journalists talk of a recent polarization in Turkey between pro-government newspapers and those newspapers that had been more 'critical' of governmental actions. According to the reporters, lately even those more 'critical' newspapers are getting closer to the government. This has led to a total neglect of the news that gives voice to the arguments of the groups who criticize the government on various issues.

Although the journalists argue that in this atmosphere it is becoming more and more difficult to perform investigative journalism, they also recognize that the news reports on certain issues that were nonexistent in public discussion a decade ago has been on the rise. News about the misconduct of military, coup plans and JITEM, which were the taboos of the past decade, finds room in newspapers quite easily. However, the journalists do not interpret this situation as democratization or liberation of the press. They argue that although it has become easier to talk about

⁹⁶ S., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

⁹⁷ H., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, May 9, 2010.

such issues, new restrictions are created in their place, and now there are other issues that are prohibited to appear as news via the mechanism through which the media operates.

The reporters argue that the “polarization” in Turkey is affecting newsmaking negatively. They claim that as the newspapers are forced to take sides, the newsworthiness of the stories are assessed according to the side they have taken, and as Z. says: “A good story which would be printed anywhere 10 years ago, is ignored by the editorial staff, because of certain connections you can never have clear knowledge of”. U. is clearer about the sides taken in the Turkish media:

We make news in the conditions of Turkey. There is no reason to talk tall. In this country, there are community newspapers [the newspapers of Fethullah Gülen Community] and there are corporate newspapers. Both come with a baggage. Free and independent journalism is not possible. Plus, recently, with the polarization between the newspapers, both sides ignore each other.⁹⁸

The reporters believe that this polarization is not merely a political phenomenon, but has a direct influence on the practice of newsmaking in Turkey. They believe that it affects their everyday work and the way they look at news. T. describes the effects of this fission in Turkish media as follows:

In the last eight years, there has been a shift in the mainstream media. There has been a diversification of the newspapers that used to be uniform; but that diversity is a reflection of the political power struggles. There is a conflict between the journalistic style of the corporate groups close to the government and of the groups that used to constitute the centre of the mainstream media. It is as if a new kind of journalism is evolving through that, but we can’t define it yet. The issues that were not talked about before found their way into the pro-government newspapers due to settling their scores with the state and its ideology; and so effectively that the mainstream media couldn’t ignore it. But is it positive or negative? Some taboos are broken, such as the Kurdish issue, state crimes issue; but different taboos replace them, such as the issue of religion. Certain events and problems are being discussed, but on the other hand, certain communities become untouchable, no one wants to

⁹⁸ U., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 7, 2011.

mess with them. There was a corrosion of state ideology, but it is being replaced by new taboos and a new state ideology.⁹⁹

Although such a state ideology persists in every period, the reporters claim that the last few years have been different from the past. They ground this difference in the structure of the political power. According to the reporters, having a single party in government creates a significantly different effect on the media than having a coalition in government:

In every period, there are news organizations that support and are supported by political power. But in those periods, governments were not single party and long-term; there were coalitions who were partly allied with media owners. Hence, they were not able to keep such a media network under control.¹⁰⁰

However, reporters do not describe a one-way suppressive relation between the media and political power. They argue that the corporate structure of the media in Turkey is also responsible for the problematic relation between the two. Just as the media organizations have information they can use against the political power, the political power also has its own instruments they can use against the media organizations, due to their financial and business connections. Y. describes this network of relations as “a symbiosis between political power-corporate capital-media” and argues that these three structures have merged with each other, both in the level of actors in them and in the ideological level; that is, apart from sharing similar worldviews, the actor that occupy the decision-making position in all three structures are the same. İ. points out that this convergence led to a modification in the aims of the media sector, altering the nature of the newsmaking process:

Due to the monopolization of media in Turkey, journalism is not solely journalism anymore. It went beyond the responsibility for truth and responsibility to the reader; it became a problem of gaining profit. That

⁹⁹ T., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 21, 2011.

¹⁰⁰ M., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 29, 2011.

created a problematic relationship with the political power: a manipulative and manipulated relationship.¹⁰¹

Some reporters interpret the media and journalism as the loser in this structure.

According to them, the media is under the control of both the political power and the corporate capital as it is the weakest link in the chain they constitute. They use the metaphor of “bulletin (yayın organı)” for the situation the media is in within this symbiotic relationship. G. believes that “the systemic policy of the political power enabled the businessmen to acquire news organizations and newspapers became the bulletin boards of corporate firms”; whereas Ü. suggests that it is the political power that uses the media as a “bulletin”:

There are news organizations that give absolute support to the government. That is normal, but those are not newspapers, but bulletins. You don’t expect news from those; you only get information on how that political group looks at issues.¹⁰²

The structure that the reporters compare this one with is the structure of Turkish media prior to the 80s, during which the news organizations were either family owned or owned by people who had worked as journalists. During that period, newspapers were the sole enterprise of the owner. There is an idealization of that period by the reporters. They argue that the journalistic standards were higher then and journalism was more independent as the political power did not have much leverage over the media:

In the past, when Özal [the ex-prime minister] and Simavi [ex-owner of Hürriyet] had a disagreement, the only advantage Özal had over Simavi was the control of the price of the paper and ink. If he raised them and Simavi was able to meet the price again, there was not much else the political power could do. But looking at the case of Doğan, he got a tax infliction, but not due to Hürriyet’s tax debts, but due to the debts of Petroleum Office [oil company also owned by Aydın Doğan’s corporation]. Hürriyet’s debts were minor compared to the other companies. The soft spots of the owners expand

¹⁰¹ İ., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 18, 2011.

¹⁰² Ü., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 8, 2011.

as they get corporatized. So they turn to journalism to use it as a defense mechanism, independent of good will or bad will.¹⁰³

Reporters also believe that the period prior to 80s was better for journalism, because the requirement to make money solely by making news increased the quality of reporting. The newspapers had to make better news to attract the attention of the buyers:

As media owners did not have extra-journalistic investments, they had to make money from news. Hence, they had to produce news that would appeal to the hearts and minds of the public. The circulation rate was important. But now the real profit is gained from extra-journalistic investments.¹⁰⁴

Reporters believe that the financial and business interests of media owners in other sectors make them even more vulnerable to manipulation of political power. The example most frequently mentioned is the tax infliction given to Doğan Group. Ş. emphasizes that it signifies the manipulation of a certain kind of relation that both political power and the media group:

When the Doğan Group tried to be a little critical, they got the tax infliction. Though there is also the other side to the story: they should not have evaded taxes. But they were used to it; they believed if they got well on with the government they could avoid taxes. Well, the government exploited that belief of theirs.¹⁰⁵

H. points out that investigative newsmaking in particular becomes impossible precisely because the official financial duties and processes of the state are used as an economic threat mechanism directed to the news policy of a news organization:

If a newspaper feels the fear that in the case they make critical news, they will be subjected to financial inspection, nothing can be done in that newspaper. No investigative story can find room. That's censorship.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ İ., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 18, 2011.

¹⁰⁴ Y., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, April 8, 2010.

¹⁰⁵ Ş., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 8, 2011.

¹⁰⁶ H., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, May 9, 2010.

Instrumentalization of Investigative Journalism

Considering how the current relations between media and political power are perceived by reporters, it can be inferred that investigative journalism is more open to instrumentalization than ever. According to critical theories, news is already an instrument in the service of powerful classes to disseminate their own standpoint to the public. As investigative journalism is about misconduct and exposure, it is a kind of reporting that can be considered as “beneficial” to instrumentalize in favor of various interests. It carries the potential of being used as a Democles’s sword hanging over rivals; and it also can be used in swaying the public perception of events in certain directions.

The attempt to manipulate public opinion through news is not a new phenomenon. In fact, it can be said that all news are directed to influencing the public opinion to convince or deter it from a certain perspective. However, when we consider that the media is under the control of powerful classes, it becomes obvious that the spectrum of opinions represented in the media is very limited, and does not present the public with a sufficient number of perspectives.

The level in which the instrumentalization occurs is also a distinguishing factor. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the reporters admit that their own values and worldviews are inevitably a part of the newsmaking process. They also complain of the unethical actions of their colleagues for personal gains. These also can be considered as forms of instrumentalization. However, instrumentalization becomes most problematic when it is adopted as a policy by the news organization, rather than being a part of the behavior of reporters at the individual level. At the individual level, the use of newsmaking for personal interests can be remedied with

the invocation of individual ethics. But when it is adopted as a policy at the organizational level, instrumentalization becomes an inherent part of the newsmaking routines; hence it affects the work of each and every reporter regardless of their personal ethics.

Reporters state that it is inherent in the current structure of media to use news as a tool to create advantage in their relations with political power. They even argue that certain news organizations that do not make profit for the corporate firm are intentionally kept in business despite the economic losses they cause, as they provide a channel to put into circulation the news that the owners of the media groups has an interest in disseminating:

All newspapers lose money. If you think in economical terms, they should not be published, but they are; because it helps the corporate firm to gain a profit in other fields. That's where it gets dangerous: the firm can turn that newspaper into a weapon, as an instrument to arrange its relations with the political power.¹⁰⁷

Similarly, Y. argues that the corporations have a double-fold aim in keeping such news organizations in operation. He calls these organizations “defense expense”: although they are a financial liability on the owners, the owners gladly bear this burden:

News organizations are “defense expense” from the perspective of the media owners: both their sword and their shield. They use news organizations both for protecting themselves and harming rivals and for acquiring the channels of economic wealth accumulation.¹⁰⁸

Despite their recognition of the role news organizations plays within the mechanism of instrumentalization, it is not clear where the reporters place the blame for instrumentalization of investigative journalism. They do not make the distinction between the news organizations and the reporters, which they are careful to make in

¹⁰⁷ G., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, May 1, 2010.

¹⁰⁸ Y., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, April 8, 2010.

other occasions, when talking about this subject. For example, H. talks about the intentions of the reporters in making news when criticizing instrumentalization of investigative journalism, and argue that it is their intentions that prevent credible newsmaking:

They do not aim at making news but inflicting harm. However, that urgency to inflict harm prevents the necessary examination of the information they have. Even though there is no substantial evidence that what they say is true, still they turn it into news.¹⁰⁹

However, certain metaphors and phrases the reporters use suggest that they believe the reporters act under the control of news policies implemented by news organizations. Z. says that there are reporters who act like “hit men”, keeping information about public figures and institutions to themselves and reveal it when it is most beneficial. The “hit men” metaphor implies that the reporters think that there are reporters who follow the instructions and interests of others rather than their own conscience.

The reporters also argue that especially investigative journalism has become the ground for the polarized groups both in society and in political administration to settle their scores. T. points out that the atmosphere in Turkish media today resembles the Western media in 1800s as it is organized in the form of “partisan press”. He also adds that even very naïve incidents are exaggerated and turned into weapons to humiliate the other side. K. states that the polarization has a direct effect on the reporters in the sense that “both sides have their own investigative journalists”, and F. adds that investigative journalism can even become “a tool to conceal the truth”. In this case, reporters feel that the investigative stories published in news organizations are not a contribution to the journalistic profession, but their

¹⁰⁹ H., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, May 9, 2010.

timing and the contexts in which they are brought forward must be examined. D.

expresses his dilemma about how to evaluate these investigative news:

There are not many people who attract attention with investigative reports; and the reports that we see are much too conditional and dependent on relations of interest. I'm not going to dismiss them just because of that; it is positive that things are coming out in the open; but it is not an achievement for the journalistic profession that things are coming out only under certain conditions and through certain frequencies.¹¹⁰

Within this context, reporters feel that they are falling victim to the interests of news organizations. Rather than making news that belong to them, that are shaped through their own perspectives and values, they make news that are shaped by the organizations' value and interest, that can be alien to and even conflicting with theirs:

The reporters are turned into tools of the political maneuvers of the conflicting groups. News is used by various power groups to convince and channel the people to an opinion. This endeavor is not newsmaking, but it has been done forever.¹¹¹

Reporters who try to defend the practice of newsmaking emphasize that the reporters should be writing the truth, no matter what. The jargon the reporters use to defend investigative journalism in the face of instrumentalization borrows a lot from the mirror theory of newsmaking. Reporters claim that the truth should be taken as a "reference point" and if it is substantially documented, the reporter should not consider to whose advantage the story will work.

I believe that the perceived polarization in Turkey also affects reporters' approach on this issue. Observing the news that are made to serve the interests of the polarized groups, the reporters react by retreating to the safe ground provided by holding on to the concept of "truth", which is in fact controversial and problematic

¹¹⁰ D., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, June 7, 2010.

¹¹¹ B., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, April 28, 2010.

for them. F. criticizes the plurality of truths in the media and its operationalization along with the polarization in Turkey:

We [journalists] try to arrive at the truth. However, there is a market of truths in Turkey, in which everybody is trying to sell their own truth as political material. And the reporters that say ‘I write the truth, no matter who benefits from it’ are not harbored anymore. Some perform investigative journalism for AKP, some for CHP, the documents are printed accordingly.¹¹²

Although the reporters see the instrumentalization of investigative journalism as a serious problem, they either dismiss it as a non-journalistic effort or maintain their belief that the public will eventually see through the manipulation attempted through such news. R. thinks that the instances of instrumentalised reporting can not be called investigative journalism, but the abuse of investigative journalism:

It is problematic if you are trying to get a document about someone on purpose. It is again problematic if you have the document but refrain from writing it.¹¹³

M. points out that instrumentalization is not a recent case, but has taken place continuously. Still he believes that such a kind of newsmaking has no effect on public in the long term; hence he is not very much disturbed by it:

A manipulative, sensational journalism with economic or political concerns has been and will be performed. But I don’t believe that it receives a response from the readers, when seeking and telling the truth and public’s right to know is considered.¹¹⁴

Reporters believe that investigative journalism could be protected from instrumentalization both by a specific attitude of the news organizations and the reporters. They argue that news organizations will also benefit from standing against instrumentalization as monitoring the actions of the circle of groups with shared interests will provide the news organization with a higher prestige in the media. I.

¹¹² F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

¹¹³ R., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

¹¹⁴ M., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 29, 2011.

states that if a news organization is “not rallying for a side, or chanting slogans”, it will inevitably receive respect from the rest of the media and be a reference point for them regardless of their political stances. D. claims that this is the kind of prestige that the public should demand from news organizations. R. stresses that investigative journalism has to be conducted with a “true critical perspective” and the reporter should “rise above the struggles to share political power” while practicing investigative journalism. He also agrees that this is the kind of journalism the public needs, but he pessimistically believes that the public has no such worries.

The reporter also has a responsibility in standing against instrumentalization. Reporters argue that it is possible to read through the attempts of the news organization to use the reporter for instrumentalization. In such cases, they claim that the reporter should have a decisive attitude against it:

Instrumentalization also has to do with whether the reporter has internalized it or not. The attitude of the reporter matters. The reporter realizes whether s/he is given a role of hired gun. S/he can keep on, and benefit from its advantages. But s/he can also stand against it.¹¹⁵

The Impact of Ergenekon Trials

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Ergenekon trials proved to be a breaking point for the debates concerning journalism in Turkey. The accusations and assertions towards journalists in the course of the trials had a strong impact in the way the reporters perceived their own standpoints during the activity of newsmaking. As the Ergenekon trials is an issue which acts as a litmus test concerning the polarization in

¹¹⁵ D., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, June 7, 2010.

society, the reporters felt a need to state their own position while criticizing the method of newsmaking in the course of these trials.

Reporters feel that the news stories about Ergenekon are the most apparent example of the instrumentalization in Turkish media. The journalism practiced during Ergenekon trials revealed two major problems in Turkish media: first, it revealed the level of polarization within journalism; and second, it led to the employment of certain problematic methods of gathering information. L., a reporter who extensively worked on Ergenekon case, is quite disappointed with the split in Turkish media. She argues that that split may cause the reporters to unintentionally serve different power groups and alienate those who want to stay out of it:

With Ergenekon, two kinds of journalism came forward: One rejects the case eyes closed, tries to do things for the benefit of the accused; and the other side will accept no criticism about the trials whatsoever. The journalists have taken sides. When you take sides and begin to serve, you might be serving maybe not this but another state-within-a-state. I have never felt so much 'other' throughout my life, because I can not get in favor with both sides. I can not work in a pro-government paper, but I can not work in a mainstream paper as well. Never before was there a more confrontational and polarized society. Hence, journalists use their investigative skills to serve different ends.¹¹⁶

U., who defines himself as "liberal", points out that the Ergenekon trials are a process that require the support of the public, rather than a mere legal process. Hence, according to U., the forces behind the legal process are eager to share their perspective with the reporters to convince the public. However, this sharing of perspective did not take place through the standard channels the reporters employ, such as press releases or interviews, but through serving information, which was sometimes confidential and at times incorrect, to the reporters. This process of

¹¹⁶ L., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 6, 2011.

serving information is what reporters find problematic. U. states that those mistakes changed the way he treats the information that come from legal sources:

I was very keen on the issue [on Ergenekon]. I had a very strict attitude, even a prejudice. But I came to a breaking point along with the legal mistakes that took place over time. Now I look at it with some distance: I do not report every document I have, even if it is in the indictment file. I am not easily persuaded; I need to check. I try to confirm it myself. I try to fine-comb it, but that does not come without going through all that process. In a country with that much ideological polarization, the journalists also act on that polarization reflex.¹¹⁷

Reporting from Leaks

The other problem that presented itself throughout the Ergenekon process concerns the method of gathering information rather than the character of the information gathered. The journalists describe different ways to receive investigative leads and information from several sources. One of them is using leakages, that is, the information provided to the reporter by a source – a related party. Leakages can be used in newsmaking in different ways. One option is to keeping the leaked information as off-the-record information, not directly used, but informing and enriching the perspective of the reporter on the issue. Another way of using the leaks is to include them into the news story as background information, rather than making it the direct subject matter of the story. Finally, leaked information can be used directly as the as the main content of a news story. Although journalists accept that leakages are an essential source of information for them, they emphasize certain requirements in using leaked information: the information should be double-checked and it should not be manipulative.

¹¹⁷ U., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 7, 2011.

Some reporters argue that leaked information is a common part of newsmaking through the relations between reporter and source. S. argues that leaked information is a usual way of generating news. He argues that it is a common strategy for a bureaucrat who is not content with a certain policy to leak negative information about it to a reporter s/he trusts:

A journalist does not come up with anything out of the blue. S/he gets a sign, a hint and follows it. It is normal for a reporter who has devoted years to a certain field to be acquainted with a lot of officials in various levels of the state; and when a relationship of mutual trust is established, it is normal for those people to leak certain information and documents to you.¹¹⁸

A. also feels that the discussion that arose about leakage reporting with Ergenekon is somehow misplaced. He agrees that the reporters made use of leaks in the Ergenekon process; however, the employment of leaks by reporters is not new, and the information the reporter attains is always limited by the source:

You conduct your investigation within the regime, the system, whatever you call it, and in its extensions. In this case, what you are able to reach is limited to what the system or the regime allows you to write. Your source only shares what he wants written. This has been the same since 10, even 40 years.¹¹⁹

S. argues that the criteria a reporter should employ in using leaked information concerns the newsworthiness and the accuracy of the information received. If the reporter decides that the information is newsworthy, and can vouch for its accuracy, then s/he should use it. However, a lot of other factors come into the decision of newsworthiness, such as reporters' own values and the policies of news organizations. Hence, the decision of newsworthiness is not a simple individual decision. Vouching for the accuracy of the information, on the other hand, has to do with confirming the information the reporter receives. S. argues that the reporter

¹¹⁸ S., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

¹¹⁹ A., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 5, 2011.

should refrain from directly printing the information s/he has and “pursue the double confirmation” first.

K. also refers to the intentions of the sources when they share information. He argues that the sources always consider the policy of the news organization a reporter works for when sharing information. All sources want their information to be published in a noteworthy manner; hence, they share it with the news organization they believe will use it in the most expansive way. Still, it is up to the reporter to use the information exactly the way the source wants her/him to, or to turn it into his own story:

All sources send the information to the newspaper that will expand it. If they assume the story won't be printed here, they send it somewhere else. If you write the story as the source wants it to be written, what is the value of your by-line? Then the sources had better come over and write the news themselves. [...] The sources use the reporter, clear-as-crystal. But to what extent, that is for the reporter to decide.¹²⁰

However, some reporters perceive a difference with the leakage journalism practiced today and the commonplace leaks. The reporters are extremely critical of the reports written from leaked information and condemn such reporting with very harsh words. The reporters emphasize that the information related in such stories are very hard to get, but they do not perceive the effort required for investigative stories. Y. states that an investigative reporter does not confine herself to the information and document they are directed towards by the source, but investigates further into the issue by inquiring for more information.

Both U. and İ. call reporting from leaks as “suitcase” journalism, referring to the instances the reporters received documents in suitcases. U. says that although there is shocking investigative stories in the newspapers, there is no investigative effort behind them. E. questions the originality and reliability of the documents

¹²⁰ K., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 8, 2011.

received in such a manner, saying that she can not decide whether they are real or forged. İ. denies that such reports can be called investigative journalism, though they resemble it:

In Turkey, it is suitcase journalism rather than investigative journalism. If you are close to political power or other institutions, they feed you some documents from time to time, you write those. It looks like an investigative report from outside. But it is not; someone has prepared it beforehand, passes it to you, you write it. It is one thing to acquire information by investigating, by journalistic activity; and another thing to receive a file from someone and write it. Then you are manipulated. If someone wants to disseminate information to the public through your activity, it is not his intention to make the truth known by the public; s/he wants to acquire something by disseminating that information. You can receive information in a file, but you still have to investigate it, if you do, that's acceptable.¹²¹

The reporters who defend “leaks” and who criticize them seem to have different interpretations of the concept. While S. and A. use the concept as the information a reporter receives from a certain source; other reporters add two qualifications to this definition. For them, it is also important whether the reporter attained the information through the use of his own connections and efforts of investigation, or the information was presented to the reporter with no effort on her/his side. It is also important whether the reporter attempts at re-confirming the information even if he received it with no particular effort. G. makes a distinction between “acquired information” and “provided information”, and argues that the latter makes the reporter vulnerable to manipulation:

Acquired information is always more important than received information, more accurate, more realistic. The chances that you are manipulated by received information are high. Received information is certainly in the favor of the person or the institution that supplies it. Acquired information, on the other hand, reveals the inconsistencies or missing points of the incident.¹²²

¹²¹ İ., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 18, 2011.

¹²² G., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, May 1, 2010.

The reporters also underline that the reporter has to be perceptive of the intentions of the source for providing the information, and consider those intentions when s/he is turning the information into news. P. states that the reporter has to question why that information is provided to him rather than any other reporter, if s/he wants to avoid using investigative stories as a weapon. R. believes that this is one of the deficiencies of current investigative reporting in Turkey:

Recently, investigative journalism has become reporting the information given by the state, rather than acquiring information hidden by the state. There is no questioning of why this information is provided.¹²³

However, not all reporters agree that the intentions of the source or the intended consequences of the stories should not be the concern of the reporter. S. argues that if the reporter begins considering anything other than the newsworthiness and accuracy of the information, this would obstruct the reporters' productivity and render him unable to make news as every news story has such consequences.

Although the reporters interpret reporting from leaks as a crucial problem the media in Turkey have to deal with, they are not entirely pessimistic about the outcome. M. argues that although the relations of political power and media have led to a differentiation in the practice of investigative journalism, "decent" form of investigative journalism will prevail eventually:

First, those who work in pro-government news organizations: through their connections with certain communities, they are provided with documents and prepare investigative news. Then, the other group that comes from the Uğur Mumcu tradition, who does not use one-sided flow of information but information from multiple sources and confirms each bit of information from some other source. I feel closer to that second one; and I think that one will overcome at the end.¹²⁴

¹²³ R., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

¹²⁴ M., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 29, 2011.

The reporters also believe that even without any alteration in the current form of journalism, the reporters who utilize leaked information without further investigation will encounter problems in the long run. K. argues that constant use of information leaked from a single source will alienate other sources from the reporter and impede the flow of information:

After a while, you will be receiving information from a single source, but no one else. Then you will be making highly manipulative and controversial news. It is very difficult to get over that.¹²⁵

Reporters are generally highly critical of leakage reporting, as they believe it is not reporter's own achievement to attain that information. Hence, they think that using leaked information renders the reporter vulnerable to manipulation and provides opportunity for instrumentalization of investigative stories. Still, there are reporters who believe that the leaks are a common way of receiving information for news, but they also agree that it is not acceptable to use the information from the leaks unless it is separately confirmed by other sources. However, they claim that the recent conduct of investigative journalism in Turkey does not comply with these requirements. They are dubious about the credibility of such news.

¹²⁵ K., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 8, 2011.

CHAPTER 7

JOURNALISTIC AUTONOMY

Journalistic autonomy is not a concept that the journalists have included in their occupational jargon. Though journalistic autonomy has been defined as journalist's independence from being directed from above in the choice of the lead, the sources and the style to write the news story for the purposes of this study, these issues have been discussed by the reporters with relation to different concepts, such as editorial independence, self-censorship, reporter-source relation and news language. Hence, one concludes that for journalists, autonomy is a concept interwoven with various dynamics in the different levels of the newsmaking process. In each step of the newsmaking process, the journalists first describe an ideal way of carrying on with their work and then a certain habit, pattern or mechanism that poses a threat to their journalistic autonomy.

First, the reporters talk about the relations between the reporter and her/his source in the level of gathering information. Then, there is the issue of editorial independence of the reporter, which includes, first, the editorial control exercised on the reporter and her/his work by the editorial staff; and second, the auto-control exercised by the reporter herself on her own work. Finally, there is the concern for news language in the process of putting the gathered information into words.

Although the lack of journalistic autonomy affects any kind of newsmaking, it has a significant impact on investigative reporting. Investigative reporting is by definition directed to exposing wrongdoing, which implies that the reporters who carry on investigative work should have a concern for justice and care for amendment of misconduct. In order to perform investigative reporting, the reporter

must be independent of the pressure of private agendas – both economic and political.¹²⁶ However, independence from private agendas is easier claimed than accomplished. The reporter is confronted with private agendas in each step of the newsmaking process: during her/his relations with the sources and during her interaction with the media organization. The reporter may also have her own private agenda to follow. In this case, even though it is not sufficient for guaranteeing independence, journalistic autonomy would provide the reporter with a leeway to work through the demands and pressures s/he is confronted with during the process of newsmaking.

From an overall perspective, the journalists believe that although journalistic autonomy is crucial for the welfare of the occupation, it has never been seriously discussed in Turkish media. The reporters not only lack standards for attaining journalistic autonomy; they also lack the means for setting standards for journalistic autonomy.

Reporter-Source Relations

Journalism is often described as the profession of “contact-and-distance”. The reporters are required to have close contacts with the officials who are sources for their stories. Most of the time, the ability to maintain good relations with a source determines the quality of the news story a reporter brings in. The reporters work hard to get in touch with these sources; to form a reliable acquaintance and build a relationship of trust, so that they can acquire the information these sources have when they need it. However, in order to protect both the fairness of her news and her

¹²⁶ Forbes, 2005, p.6.

integrity as a journalist, a reporter also endeavors to keep her relations with the sources at a certain distance. Being too closely and personally associated with a source, while providing the reporter with a constant flow of information, threatens the credibility of the news stories s/he writes. Hence, the reporters are expected to maintain relations with the sources as close as possible without casting a shadow over their credibility.

However, this ideal way of building contacts does not always function as it is supposed to be for a number of reasons. First, the reporters themselves may be tempted to have a closer contact with the source. As these sources are usually people of power and influence, they can provide the reporters with certain advantages in the case of a favored approach. Even though there may be no material advantages, the reporter may benefit or enjoy from the mere proximity of the acquaintance. Being close to people who are implementers of power or decision-makers for a community may also be tempting for the reporter on his own.

Second, a closer contact with a source may be sought for by the editorial staff. The reporter may be required to establish closer relations with certain sources, because these sources yield information that fits the news policy the media organization follows. The media organization may require such close relations with different aims in mind as well, such as realizing certain political-economic interests via the effects of newsmaking.

The sources may also push for closer relations with the reporters. Having the favored approach of a reporter guarantees that the negative news concerning the source will be printed less. Hence, the sources may insist on personalizing the relationship; and if the reporter declines the attempts, the source may start withholding information from that reporter.

The journalists argue that the pattern of these relations have been deteriorating, allowing the reporters to be used by their sources. The reporters become “embedded” to their sources, and the eradication of journalistic autonomy ceases to be problematic for the reporter. J. points out that the reporters have begun benefiting from the resources that the sources specifically provide for them, which threatens their autonomy in making news about these sources. It is the responsibility of the news organization to finance a reporter:

When a reporter goes to a trip with the money of the politician, s/he can not write a negative thing about it. If it has the resources, the newspaper has to send you.¹²⁷

A reporter’s utilization of resources at the service of a source is a very disturbing practice for reporters and such actions are highly criticized by them. Most reporters see such behavior as the corruption of occupational ethics. However, there is confusion about where the line should be drawn. Apart from going on to trips, J. also criticizes the press conferences conducted in dinner parties:

It is my job to follow the press conference at all conditions; why is the need for breakfast? I can have my breakfast at home. We released a notice about those conferences and asked the reporters not to join them. Give us a pen, a pocketbook, but nothing else.¹²⁸

P. also points out that the decline in professional ethics has to do with the financial situation the reporters live in:

You may wonder how a reporter can receive a salary of 1500 liras and live in Istanbul with it. Well, they become reporters to get involved with improper things. Free trips, free dinners, news made for certain compensations....¹²⁹

However, reporters are also aware that such claims are a serious offense for the profession of journalism. Hence, they demand explanations or naming when such

¹²⁷ J., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 7, 2011.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ P., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 18, 2011.

claim are made public, as all the reporters bear the burden of those who act unethically. Ö. provides an example:

A columnist once wrote that economy beat reporters make money out of the stock market and gain improper benefits. This claim incriminated all the reporters working in that field, so we gave out a press release and demanded that he announces the names of the reporters who do it.¹³⁰

Sources of Investigative Reports

Investigative reporters run an even more serious risk of being usurped by their sources. As H. points out, a source has her/his own agenda in sharing information with a reporter. S/he shares information with a specific intention at the back of his mind. If the reporter uses the information s/he received without checking, then s/he has played into the hands of the source in his attempts to realize his aims. When we consider that the general subject matter of investigative reports is wrongdoing and misconduct, a reporter's being used as such may have serious and irreversible consequences for related parties. Ş., a reporter with 36 years of experience, defines this relation as follows:

The reporter uses his source, not vice versa. You don't call the person used by his source a reporter, you call him an informant. [...] Every reporter, due to the inexperience, allows her/his source to use her/him when s/he first starts working. [...] All reporters look out for their sources. Hence, there is no objectivity or independence in newsmaking. But a good reporter has to maintain that distance with his/her source.¹³¹

The reporters point out that the sources they receive information for investigative reports differ from those they get routine reports. Having contacts with the sources of routine reports, such as press counsels or high-ranked officials, is necessary to get acquainted with other sources associated with them. It is also possible to get a lead

¹³⁰ Ö., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, April 24, 2010.

¹³¹ Ş., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 8, 2011.

for an investigative story from a routine report, such as a follow-up story. However, some reporters also claim that routine sources usually do not provide substantial investigative leads. They state that secondary sources that are not known by public are better for receiving information on investigative leads. Ş. calls this “particularization of sources” and argues that it is an indispensable part of investigative reporting.

Reporters point out that the sources they have to speak with to get information in the course of an investigation are quite discreet and hard to contact. Mostly it is the source that chooses the reporter rather than vice versa, in the sense that they do not share information with all the reporters that approach them:

The sources you speak for investigative reports are very selective. They do not talk to everyone. But once you get a healthy relationship going, you know that he will not mislead you.¹³²

J. says that the trustworthiness a reporter is what separates her/him from other reporters. According to J., as the people believe that one is a reliable reporter, s/he will receive more leads for investigative stories from sources at different levels, be it a government official or a man on the street. Reporters believe that the stability and trustworthiness of the reporter always works, even with the most discreet sources, despite the accusations that may be directed to reporters. Ç. shares an anecdote from the years he was an inexperienced reporter:

When I first started this job, I was convinced that Uğur Mumcu was affiliated with state. I thought that an ordinary reporter could not obtain such information, so it must be that state itself provides the information for him. But today I can tell that he was not. There is no information or document a reporter can not get hold of, if he maintains stable relations with his sources.¹³³

¹³² Ç., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 9, 2011.

¹³³ Ibid.

The reporters state that they usually contact lower-ranked officials in order to acquire the information they need during an investigation. A. says that this has two reasons: first, it is easier to get in touch with those people; and second, lower-rank officials are the people who have broader information about events. U. also points out that these sources are more discreet, inclined to keep the information they have to themselves. The reporter has to push and persuade those sources to get information. M. adds that the relations with the sources of investigative stories have to be continuous and stable; they should be strong and based on mutual trust. Z. claims that recently, this mutual trust has been damaged, not only on the side of reporters, but on the side of sources as well. According to Z., the sources are more reluctant to pass on information as they are doubtful whether the information they give will be used credibly and accurately.

The continuity of investigative stories requires the reporter to contact new sources constantly. T. states that the new questions that arise in the course of an investigation have to be answered through new sources:

In the course of an investigation, you will always be confronted with new questions, and will have to reach new sources. If you are trying to expose an event, you have to move from one source to another smoothly, there is no end to that.¹³⁴

This process may work both to the advantage and the disadvantage of the reporter in the process of investigation. The unfamiliarity of the source may allow reporter to exercise more autonomy in her/his relations with the source, as s/he does not have to consider the baggage of the past deeds. However, contacting a new source is always problematic for a reporter because of the lack of mutual trust between the reporter and the source. The reporter does not know whether the source will attempt to

¹³⁴ T., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 21, 2011.

manipulate her/him or not; and the source does not know whether the reporter is trustworthy, i.e. will not distort the information s/he shares or reveal his identity. Ç. shares an incident in which he was tested by a source:

He [the source] related a quite important incident to me, and told me that it was published in the official gazette. But I'm quite the unsettled type, I wanted to check it out myself; and I saw that the official gazette was actually not published that specific day he mentioned. I did not use the information. This is quite a psychopathic perspective of the source, but it led us to an interesting point. Later on, the source asked why I did not use his information, and I told him that the gazette was not published that day. He congratulated me on it. He said, 'I don't want a reporter to perch on ready-made information'.¹³⁵

Still, in the case of investigative stories, the source may both enable and impede the course of the investigation at the same time. A. points out that the sources contacted during an investigation are usually state officials who are, in some cases, representatives of the regime the reporter aims to challenge. Hence, the reporter is always limited by what her/his source allows or wants her to find out and be printed.

Y., a retired reporter after 24 years of work, emphasizes that there is a relationship of "mutual dependence" between the reporter and his source, but the source always has the advantage of withholding information over the reporter and investigative stories increases that strain in their relationship:

There is a mutual dependence between the reporter and her source, which is an impediment to investigative journalism. Every source needs a reporter to represent him in the media, and the reporter needs a source to keep the flow of information going. Well, what if your investigation leads you to write something negative about one of your sources? You can not receive information from him anymore.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Ç., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 9, 2011.

¹³⁶ Y., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, April 8, 2010.

Editorial Control in the Selection of News

Editorial control is one aspect of the editorial independence of the reporter. The editorial staff of every news organization has the ability and authority to control and alter the news stories followed and written by their reporters. As mentioned before, this system is supposed to function in the favor of the reporter in the process of newsmaking: to facilitate gathering information by directing the reporter to important stories, to correct both factual and linguistic mistakes that can be made by the reporter before the story gets printed and to prevent the waste of time and resources in the name of efficiency. However, when the corporate network structure of the media is considered, it becomes apparent that this editorial control is also the control over the news stories that do not fit the news policy followed by the media organization at best; and at worst, a control for plucking out the stories that will harm the political-economic agenda of the media organization.

The news policy guides the editorial staff and reporters in selecting the news to be made and the news to be printed. Selecting the news according to a news policy allows the editorial staff to follow a more stable attitude on political and social issues. It also saves valuable time and resources to focus on stories that will not go against the news policy of the newspaper. However, when we take into account the political and economic concerns which newsmaking can not be independent from, following a certain news policy leads to the exclusion of those news stories that come from sources or focus on issues that do not comply with the news policy of the newspaper, regardless of their newsworthiness.

Although the process of editorial editing is supposed to operate in favor of the reporter, the reporters see the process of eliminating the news as a hindrance of their

editorial independence. One of the reasons behind it is that they perceive the editorial control in news organizations is under the influence of non-journalistic incentives. As investigative stories carry the potential of harming people in important positions in society, those stories are most carefully monitored by the editorial staff. This control may be aimed at preventing false accusations; however, it also serves to filter the stories which will harm the political-economic standing of the news organization.

News That Is Not Fit to Print

The reporters recognize the fact that their news reports are going to be assessed by the editors according to the criteria provided by the news policy. They accept both editorial control and news policy as a given in their profession; and the necessity of their news stories to comply with news policy does not disturb them as much. However, there are certain points in the process of editorial control that they find problematic. They criticize the non-journalistic influences on the way the news policy and the criteria through which the stories are evaluated are set. The two methods reporters most complain of concerning editorial control is the trivialization of their stories and their exclusion from the newspaper as a result of editorial decisions. This section will focus on the reporters' responses to the exclusion of their stories.

The reporters argue that the quality of the news stories is not the main criteria in the process of selection of news anymore. They have lost their belief that if a story is "good", if it is "newsworthy", it will be published. P. suggests that the assessment of quality has been working against "good news":

There is a common phrase ‘Good news drive out the bad news’. That’s crap. Good news has not been driving out the bad news for a long time in Turkey now.¹³⁷

The reporters blame this lack of quality assessment on the non-journalistic criteria based on the political-economic stances of news organizations. A. admits that all news organizations have their own worldviews and certain groups they are closer or distant to, and they select news stories to be published accordingly. When the reporter makes a story that is compatible with position of the paper, it is expanded; if not compatible, it is not printed. A. also says that news stories with certain angles are specifically demanded from the reporter time to time.

Z., a socialist reporter who works in a paper she identifies as “conservative-Islamist”, argues that it is the reporter who has the responsibility of “marketing” the story even if it conflicts with the news policy of the organization. She argues that if the reporter is able to make the story “printable”, the story is used regardless of the news policy. Still, this narrative also points out that the reporter has to take into consideration the policies and preferences of the organization in the process of framing the news, if s/he wants the story to be published.

One of the most important elements in the assessment of a news story by the editors is its political content. Although political news is the *sine qua non* of a newspaper, political content in a news story is considered a dangerous ground to tread on. Editorial assessment of political stories is carried out with extra care, to the point of ignoring them when their stance can not be classified. L. shares an instance:

I had conducted a political interview with an important businessman about his views on AKP government and Ergenekon trials, which were positive. However, my paper chose not to use it. A week later, another interview about the private life of this businessman was all over the paper. The problem here

¹³⁷ P., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 18, 2011.

is that my story, which has an important political dimension, is ignored; but the private life story is not, thinking that it would not annoy anyone.¹³⁸

Investigative journalism, being political in essence, has become a form of reporting which is less and less demanded from the reporters. One reporter explains the political aspect of investigative stories via their inherent adversary character to power. As it is those in power who always violate the laws and people's rights, "investigative reporting is inevitably critical of those in power", making it something to be cautious of for them.

The reporters mention two main mechanisms of editorial control through which they perceive this lack of demand for investigative stories: systematically ignoring investigative stories or excluding the reporters who are capable of making investigative news from the media. H. argues that even when an investigative story is written, most of the time it is ignored; hence he has lost his belief that investigative stories provide prestige to the news organizations. He says that investigative reports are treated as "trouble" rather than "the glory of a newspaper". Some reporters also argue that what determines whether an investigative story is published or not is the way they serve the interests of the owners. The way O. articulates the problem is one of instrumental rationalization. He says that the media owners compare the gains and losses a story will lead to and decide:

If the reporter insists on criticizing the political power, the media owners say, 'It is not so necessary'. On the one side, there are the million-dollar worth investments; on the other side, there is the ambition of one reporter for journalism. When two is weighted, the result is evident.¹³⁹

Another mechanism that leads to the decline of the examples of investigative journalism is the gradual elimination of the reporters qualified enough to conduct

¹³⁸ L., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 6, 2011.

¹³⁹ O., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 10, 2011.

investigative journalism from the media. J. argues that this elimination leads to a change in the manner stories are made:

The people on the top of the media do not let investigative journalists into the media anymore. They provide the news editors with certain questions to call a certain person and ask. That story makes the front page under the by-line of a reporter, but there is someone else behind it who directed the process. And you end up with a nonsensical, inconsistent story.¹⁴⁰

L. points out there can be two reasons why editors ignore a sound, newsworthy political story. First, it may be due to the ineptitude of the editorial staff. L. claims that there are many editors who are not qualified enough to evaluate news stories as they lack substantive experience in reporting. Hence, the editors may not be competent enough to understand the implications and significance of the story. The second reason L. mentions is the opposite of that: the editors may understand the implications of the story very well and refrain from using it exactly because of that. In the words of L., “if they are politically competent and able to see where that story leads, and it leads to susceptibility between certain powers, they pretend that they do not understand and don’t use the story”. L. also claims that the editors trivialize an excluded story to the reporter, saying it is not new or not newsworthy, so that the reporter “doesn’t get suspicious” about why the story was not printed.

Within the editorial hierarchy of a news organization, it is the editors who are responsible with editing and changing the stories. However, it is not only their decisions that stand in the way of editorial independence of the reporter. F. points out that editorial control is not always exercised as a direct order from above, making it difficult to place the blame:

I had written an article about a mayor of one of the eastern provinces. He had implemented some interesting practices in the city. The editor-in-chief was reluctant to print it. He told me: ‘We could print it, but then the boss (the

¹⁴⁰ J., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 7, 2011.

owner) would ruin me, would you like that to happen?’ In that case, the editor-in-chief does not hold you back, but reminds you of something. When he says that, you have no choice but to say ‘rather not print it than get you into trouble’. Hence, it is not easy to determine who hinders the editorial independence.¹⁴¹

Reporters point out that the relationship between the reporter and the editors also play a role in getting the news stories printed. K., who has been working in the same newspaper since he started working as a reporter, argues that this relationship must be a relationship based on trust: the editors must trust the credibility of the stories the reporter brings in, and the reporter must trust his stories will be appreciated and properly used in the paper. However, according to narratives of the reporters, such a relationship is quite rare. Most reporters complain about the lack of communication between the reporter and the editors. Some reporters even take their exclusion from the process of editorial control as a personal insult. L. claims that the lack of interaction is a sign of disrespect for the reporter:

They have to address the reporter and explain why our story is not printed; but they don’t do that. It is as if we are state officers, there is a hierarchical relationship. They insult you, ignore you. There can be no career in journalism, no upper rank. But they have classified it as such.¹⁴²

Although reporters have serious complaints about the manner editorial control is managed, quitting directly because of disagreements on news policy is rare. The reporters see it as an option, however, not one that they would choose except in the case of very crude interventions. P, a socialist reporter who says his political attitude is completely incompatible with his newspaper, points out that no reporter would resign merely because of this incompatibility. He justifies it by saying they are providing an example for the other reporters who do not practice journalism as it should be:

¹⁴¹ F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

¹⁴² L., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 6, 2011.

Nobody says that her/his views do not fit the news policy of the organization and leave. What you do here is protecting your station, because as long as we are here, we tell them that the king is naked, with our words, our looks and our behavior. We do not let them forget what they do is wrong. Once we left, they would sleep in relief.¹⁴³

Altering the News Articles

Some reporters complain about the alterations made by the editorial staff in their news articles, rather than ignoring the news story. Although the reporters state that the body of the news article is not much interfered with, they mention alterations in headlines, spots or the place given to the news story in the paper. Some argue that even the alterations in headlines are natural, as there is a certain limit to the number of columns that can be reserved for a news article. However, what is most disturbing for the reporters is the trivialization of an important news story by giving it a smaller space than it should occupy. T. mentions an incident:

I had written the story of the trial of Yaşar Büyükanıt in Şemdinli case. In all the other papers this story had made the front page. In my paper, it was given in a 100-200 character box. This was a serious obstruction. The newspaper had a more nationalist stance back then, and so it chose to trivialize the story.¹⁴⁴

Reporters also talk about the ways they use to protect their news articles in the face of editorial altering without their consent. A. says that he does not share his story with the editors until he is finished with it, and this provides him an escape from ignoring certain stories due to the disaccord between him and his paper. However, in that case, it is still up to the editorial staff to print the story or not. F., on the other hand, says that he “weaves his story like a web” so that the editors cannot alter it by

¹⁴³ P., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 18, 2011.

¹⁴⁴ T., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 21, 2011.

themselves but have to send that article back to him to be altered. In this way, the reporter is able to exercise some control over the final state of the article.

In the case of a confrontation with the editorial staff about altered news, it is also an option for some reporters to withdraw the article. P. claims that the reporter receives certain signs that his article will be altered:

Sometimes they ask a counter question, which shows that they want to say the opposite of what I said in the story. In that case, I can withdraw my article. But not every reporter can do it. One's professional status is a key factor in this situation.¹⁴⁵

Hence, only a number of reporters who have reached a certain status in their occupation have the chance of exercising this kind of control. However, given the low job security and the instability of careers, most reporters do not feel secure enough to do it. If the reporter confronts the editorial staff too often or in crucial matters, this attitude is marked down:

When I criticize the missing or faulty sides of the news in the daily meetings, this turns into a problem after a while. I don't say those things to create a problem but all with good intentions. But when there is a general conviction on an issue, you turn into a man who spits against the wind. It does not matter whether you are right or wrong. You are expected to be convinced easily, just like the rest of the society is convinced, even though you have a clearer view of the issue.¹⁴⁶

The reporters wish for a closer interaction with the editors in the process of editing. Such an interaction would not only increase their control over their news but also the overall quality of the news. A. talks of such a process he observed in one the papers he worked in:

When the editor thought there were some mistakes, he would call the reporter and ask whether it would be better to change it: there would be a discussion. In such a process, the news would be a better quality product. There is no

¹⁴⁵ P., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 18, 2011.

¹⁴⁶ U., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 7, 2011.

such discussion in any of the papers now. The editor in İstanbul does not call a reporter and ask ‘Should we do it like this?’¹⁴⁷

T. mentions that such a discussion has no impact whatsoever on the editorial decisions nowadays:

Such discussions are a form of letting off steam between the reporter and the news editor. A complaint, that’s all. We can not determine the headline, the spot, which stories are going to get printed, unless in very specific circumstances. The news article is the property of the media organization, not the property of the reporter; and the media organization is free to use it in any way it wants.¹⁴⁸

Reporters diverge about how editorial independence can be salvaged. Some reporters argue that it requires the transformation of the media structure as a whole towards a system in which the media owners are journalists with no other business affiliations. According to the reporters, the media owners would automatically accept the limits the reporters set for editorial independence, as they are journalists as well. Some also argue that a strong professional organization of the journalists would be able to set standards for editorial independence. In this case, the professional organization would be able to maneuver the news organizations into implementing the standards they set via the control they can exert over the workforce of reporters. There are also reporters who believe that if the media owners aspire for higher standards of journalism, the reporters will be able to negotiate about the standards of editorial independence with the owners.

¹⁴⁷ A., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 5, 2011.

¹⁴⁸ T., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 21, 2011.

Auto-control in the Process of Making the News

Auto-control is the other aspect of editorial independence – or rather the lack of it. Knowing that the editorial staff will have certain demands from the stories s/he brings in, the reporter frames the news story according to these demands beforehand. This auto-control is supposed to render the reporter to carry on a more careful and thorough newsmaking process prior to the control of the editorial staff. It also speeds the editing process up: as the submitted news story is smooth and requires only minor corrections, the reporter does not have to revise the story in the case of a mistake after editorial control.

However, as in the case of editorial control, the process of auto-control serves a different purpose in a corporate network media structure. As the reporter gets aware of the news policy of the media organization, s/he begins to shape her/his news stories in accordance with this policy during the process of newsmaking. Hence, the auto-control which is supposed to facilitate the editing process turns into a process of self-censorship, as the reporters refrain from looking into the issues that will not suit the news policy of their media organization. In the case of investigative stories, the reporters refrain from a time-consuming and painstaking process of investigation when they think that the finalized story will not be printed in the paper.

Auto-control seems like a more subtle way of censorship. The reporters state that it is possible to develop a “self-censorship reflex” even though they do not receive explicit directions from up-above about what to write and what to neglect. As S., who is a highly experienced reporter currently working as news editor, puts it:

In my paper and its hierarchical managing mechanism, we have never encountered any pressure as ‘Write this, don’t write this’. There has never been any demand against ethical conduct that would disturb us. Still, every paper has a stance, careful to get along with the government, careful not to

challenge them. Every reporter is aware of the character of the newspaper s/he works in. Hence, they take care to act in accordance with that character. This inevitably leads to self-censorship. No one asks you why you wrote that story, but the odds that it would get printed are low. Then comes the self-control reflex: ‘Why should I put any effort into this, it won’t get printed’.¹⁴⁹

According to the reporters, the issues a reporter is not welcome to write about are revealed quite easily. They point out that the process of auto-control is a quite common and almost normalized process. They argue that a reporter understands the restrictions brought to the newsmaking in a certain news organization very quickly. Y. recounts this process in a striking manner. He argues that auto-control employed by the reporter allow the media owners to control the newsmaking process without actually interfering with the activity of the reporters:

The reporter does not need any warning to internalize the restrictions. The reporter carries her boss inside her. S/he is a copy of her boss within the hierarchy. Aydın Doğan boasts of not interfering with any of his reporters. Well, there is nothing to boast of, he does not have to interfere. Every reporter carries the boss inside and internalizes their connections in the form of a required self-censorship.¹⁵⁰

S. emphasizes that the stories that a reporter leaves out is not restricted to “leftist, socialist” stories that are evidently dissident to a capitalist ownership or politics; but they include any kind of news critical of the government. According to S., the reporters avoid making any kind of news “that can get a severe reaction from political power”. D. points out a reporter can not write about the business affiliations of the media group the news organization belongs to, or about the political forces they are affiliated with:

A reporter knows the issues s/he can and cannot write about when s/he comes to a newsroom. If you are a “good” reporter, you would know about the sectors your media group is active in, which groups it is affiliated with and which political groups it is close to. Hence, a reporter can not openly show

¹⁴⁹ S., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

¹⁵⁰ Y., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, April 8, 2010.

his own attitude, but acts upon generally acknowledged rules. We don't see a reporter who surprises the group s/he works for very often.¹⁵¹

A reporter recognizes what the news policy of the media organization s/he works in will allow in time. This recognition leads to a narrowing of the perspective of the reporter. Rather than the newsworthiness of the incident or the concern for relating the important points in the story, the reporter begins to focus on how to make the story printable. U. relates this process as follows:

As you work, you realize that you have to write news that will fit the frame that the policy of your paper sets. This gives rise to a concern: when you are working on a story, you start asking: how should I write it so that it gets printed?¹⁵²

The reporters learn to use auto-control through a number of ways. One is take the printed material as an example for their own work: the reporters say they get an idea of which kind of news will be accepted by reading the papers and observing which kind of news get printed in the paper. The printed stories provide examples of what kind of news are accepted. They also see which of the news made in their offices are printed. G. also points out that lately, the warnings from bureaucrats and politicians also serve as a reason to refrain from making news:

The stories you make yourself are not printed, you get a clue from that. Then you hear about other stories prepared by other reporters in the office, they don't get printed. And finally, there are reactions a story receives from bureaucrats or politicians, which are communicated all the way to the reporter in a very daring manner.¹⁵³

Another way of learning auto-control is by trial and error. As reporters submit more and more news reports that are not printed, s/he learns what kind of news is vain to submit. Hence, s/he does not even attempt to make the kind of news and devote

¹⁵¹ D., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, June 7, 2010.

¹⁵² U., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 7, 2011.

¹⁵³ G., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, May 1, 2010.

already limited time to stories that will get printed. The demands about the efficiency and productivity of the reporters also serve as a restriction. The reporters are expected to cover a number of areas and submit a number of stories on those areas, and how well the reporter works is evaluated by their superiors according to the number of news stories s/he submits. In that case, once again they refrain from spending their time on stories that will not be printed.

S. points out that the troubles other reporters are confronted with, such as dismissals or arrests, also serves as examples about what kind of news to make:

The trial and error process is not only limited to your own work. We observe what happens to the people who practice critical reporting no matter what. I don't mean that we all have to give up being critical and surrender just because of that.¹⁵⁴

It can be thought that the reporters retreat to self-censorship to avoid conflicts with the editorial staff and the owners. However, the reporters may also use it as a way of showing their objection and disapproval of the news policy of the news organization. M. says that it is possible for a reporter to show her/his attitude towards a specific story by declining to follow or write it. He refers to the phrase “journalism can be evaluated from the left-out parts of news” and argues that this period can also be described through the news that is not made rather than the news that are. However, declining to make certain news which is required by the news policy of the organization also has its price. In some cases, self-censorship itself brings about a conflict with the editors. U., as a reporter who works in a pro-government newspaper, provides an example:

I write about the misconduct of military all the time. But lately, I refrain from writing about Nedim Şener or Ahmet Şık, because I am not convinced of their connection to Ergenekon. That becomes a problem in the paper: why don't you write about them if you're interested in these issues? People begin to

¹⁵⁴ S., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

question your intentions and your credibility. In a polarized society such as Turkey, when you are associated with one side and you start voicing the arguments of the other side, you get into a personal distress.¹⁵⁵

The reporters still believe that their personal views and perspectives make a difference in the presentation of news, even if it is in the slightest amount. A. believes that the personal views of the reporter allow her/him to answer the question whether an event is newsworthy, and helps the reporter to make the decision whether to focus on it or not. So the reporter can act autonomously in the initial stage of news making in which s/he can make the decision of taking up or leaving aside the event. E., on the other hand, thinks that a reporter who is courageous enough to focus on the problematic issues in this society will act independent of the interests and restrictions of the ownership structure, even at the cost of being jailed.

T., on the other hand, thinks that his dissident views are a contribution and an advantage for the distribution of critical opinions in the media in Turkey. On issues that are an inevitable part of the agenda or too important to be ignored, he believes that it is an important difference that those stories are presented through his own perspective, rather than the lens of a more compliant reporter, as the way they constitute the event for the audience will be immensely different. For him, the opportunity to frame significant news according to his own perspective, even occasionally, also gives meaning to his activity as a reporter:

News is the re-constitution of reality; hence, if you can write about the same event with a different perspective, it gives you freedom. It gives me some sort of a power when the newspaper has to use my version of the story in an event that cannot be ignored. For example, another reporter who followed the Şemdinli case could have framed it through a more statist perspective, and the newspaper would have used it as such. But I wrote through a different perspective, that version was printed in the paper. This is the ideological struggle field here. I think that the newspapers specifically tolerate those reporters with alternative viewpoints, they enrich the paper. It is important;

¹⁵⁵ U., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 7, 2011.

for it answers the question ‘What can I do as a socialist in the bourgeois press?’¹⁵⁶

Language of News

The final step of the newsmaking process is writing the news story. There are standard rules that are followed by most reporters during news-writing, which provides the reporters with certain guidelines about what to include and what to omit or how to phrase the information they want to convey. Although these standards may be thought to give the news stories a similar frame, it is also possible for reporters to shape the tone and stance of the news story they write through the choice of words and the organization of information within the news article. Hence, the news-writing process also becomes a ground for struggle for determining the perspective of the news. Both the processes of editorial control and auto-control are attempts to make news-writing comply with the news policy.

As investigative stories usually involve people to be held accountable for misconduct, the style in which they are written becomes extremely important. It is crucial not to accuse without giving substantial information as to the nature of the wrongdoing. An investigative report should not be a tool for pointing fingers but an attempt to figure out the source of the problem it focuses on. To use a fair language that gives way neither to sensationalism nor apathy is essential in investigative reporting.

However, the reporters argue that they are not able to fully determine the language used in the news stories. During the editorial control of the stories, the words and phrases they used can be omitted or paraphrased. Although the reasons

¹⁵⁶ T., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 21, 2011.

given for these alterations are to simplify the story and make it understandable, or to attract more attention to the story, they can also operate to censor socially or politically problematic expressions from the news reports.

Reporters state that the alterations in the headline of a news story are the most frequent alteration of the editorial staff, though they do not consider such alterations as a serious interference. They state that the headline they use in a story is merely a suggestion and the editorial staff is free to disregard it. They argue that such alterations are most of the time necessary, as the layout of the page requires it, or as there is a better alternative. However, they also mention that in some instances it is possible that the alteration of the headline alters the impact of the news story as well and “interferes with the critical tone of the story”:

The headline is very important, it can make your story fly or make it sink. For example, a headline given by the editor may kill the story. Say, there is an explosion, there are many scandals involved; and the headline is “Explosion in Ankara”. That headline does not mean anything; but it kills all the meaning in the story.¹⁵⁷

Altering the news without the consent of the reporter sometimes leads to extra problems for them. A. mentions that in the central office in Istanbul, certain words or phrases may be added to the article in order to make it more attractive. However, those phrases that do not belong to the reporter give rise to problems between the reporter and the news source.

Reporters argue that in recent years, there has been a change in the expressions thought to be politically problematic, related to the change in the political power and society. The power of the government over the media, or the influence of religious communities leads the reporters to be extremely careful in the wording of the stories concerning them. M. points out that there are certain

¹⁵⁷ O., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 10, 2011.

expressions every reporter knows that will be unacceptable for these groups, and refraining from their use is a serious obstruction of the autonomy of the reporter:

This period has different and special circumstances. If you can not use the abbreviation AKP in the face of the political power that uses the name AK Party, if you feel obligated to call a religious order a community or call a community a movement, the pressure is not implicit anymore, but visible and obvious.¹⁵⁸

However, problems about certain expression persist, such as the Kurdish issue and PKK. Although the media claims to have reached a more democratic outlook concerning the Kurdish issue, R. states that there are reporters who are particularly warned by editors to write “terrorist” before “Abdullah Öcalan”, regardless of the reporters’ approach to the issue:

The person I see as a freedom fighter may be a terrorist for them. What I call terrorism might be considered as nationalist feelings for them. There is a policy that considers the public’s sensibilities. That influences the language particularly, if not the content.¹⁵⁹

F. claims that editorial interference with news-writing is a serious offence, an interference with the reporter’s intimacy. He reminds that it is not only the editors or the media owners that interfere with what the reporter writes in Turkey, but state forces such as the police also interferes as in the case of deleting Ahmet Şık’s book from the computer of his fellow reporter Ertuğrul Mavioğlu:

The monitor you write your news can be considered as your bedroom. Whatever you write there is private. Your monitor is your intimacy. But that is never respected in Turkey. All our lives are laid in front of the editor, the boss, the source, even the police, to the most intimate part. It has reached such an extent that the unpublished book of Ahmet Şık can be deleted from the computer of a reporter. No one has the right to interfere with your private. But in Turkey, the journalists play the victim: ‘They came and deleted it’. In order to be able to say ‘I will not have you check my computer’, the concept of editorial independence should be recognized.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ M., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 29, 2011.

¹⁵⁹ R., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

¹⁶⁰ F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

Still there are reporters who believe that the dominant language restrictions in the media can be transformed through people's actions. B. gives the example of the coverage of TEKEL workers by the media. B. believes that their lengthy protest in Ankara changed the way reporters perceived them and also the way they talked about them in their news reports. He feels that the persistence of TEKEL workers influenced both the media and the public in a positive manner. It altered the expressions the media used to define the actions of TEKEL workers. The reporters did not soften the form or the content of the workers' discourse:

For the first time in the coverage of such protests, the word used for the declarations of TEKEL workers was "said": 'they *said* they are *against* 4/C'. In any other time, it would be "they *claim* that workers *complain* of 4/C". It showed that our colleagues could have done better work if they were editorially more independent.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ B., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, April 28, 2010.

CHAPTER 8

ROUTINIZATION

Routine work may be considered as an inevitable part of journalistic practice.

Among the many events in a single day, the journalists are responsible for making decisions on the selection of newsworthy items: which ones should the public be informed about and which ones are fit to provide a publishable news item in their organization. In the age of corporate ownership of media, all efforts to make news is also considered as a liability on resources, therefore the journalists have to have a fair reason that the information they gather will be newsworthy before they spend time, effort and resources on an issue. Routine procedures employed both in the newsroom and outside in this process enable the journalists to deal with the numerous events they receive information on more easily and to assess their newsworthiness and usability without spending considerable time and effort on them.

From this perspective, routine procedures can be considered as helpful friends for the journalist. However, these procedures may also lead to a convergence of the news reports prepared by the journalists. The corporate news media directs its attention only to “big” stories, that is, stories which are obvious and visible enough to be classified as a news story by the daily routine practices of news organizations. The stories which are tougher to get via these practices inevitably stay out of the range of interest of the news organization. This news net can not cover all the events; however, the events neglected by the journalists generally correspond to the same issues.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Tuchman, 1978, p.23.

Hence, a curious conflicting mechanism is at work concerning the routine procedures of reporting: although they make it easier for journalists to cover the events of the day, they also can create problems both for the process of making and for the content of the news. Considering that they have a limited time for gathering information, the reporters are most likely to follow the patterns through which they can get most information in a short period of time. However, most reporters are bound to follow similar patterns, having similar concerns about time, resulting in a similarity between the issues covered by news organizations and the perspective in which these are framed for the sake of efficiency. As the reporters learn how to produce a satisfactory news report with the least time and effort possible, breaking free of that routine procedure becomes more difficult.

This routinization of reporting patterns and the resulting routinization of news content pose a more significant problem when we consider that this process takes place in a corporate media structure liable to shape news content according to its political and economic interests. Routinization, while simplifying the life of reporters, also makes it easier for the owners of the media to control and manipulate the activities of reporters. The methods of approaching the issues at hand and gathering information is shared by the reporters and also known by the editors and the representatives, it becomes easier to cross-cut the investigation of a reporter or to interfere with the perspective the reporter is going to take on. Routine reports involving fixed patterns of news-gathering are preferable from the perspective of corporate media, as any possible danger they pose for the political-economic agenda of the media structure can be thwarted easily.

The problem of routinization manifests itself as a very specific problem for investigative journalism. Investigative reporting is a form of journalism which

seems to involve completely non-routine work and content. However, the overriding importance attached to routine reporting undermines both the space that can be provided for investigative reports and the time the reporter can spare for them. According to the journalists, undermining investigative reporting serves a twofold purpose for the corporate media: first, any threat an investigative report can possibly pose to specific political and economic interests can be prevented beforehand; second, it suits to the general interests of the corporate media in Turkey not to print those stories that contextualize the events and provide the reader with a deeper understanding of them.

Time Restrictions

One issue that may hinder reporters from working on investigative stories is the time restrictions they are confronted with. The reporters complain that they have to cover a loaded routine agenda throughout the day. This routine agenda consists of prescheduled events due to take place that day, such as parliamentary meetings, press conferences, etc.; and the unexpected events that occur such as fires, bombings, etc. The reporters' main responsibility is to cover the events chosen by the news organization during the day. However, investigative stories are not included in this routine agenda. An investigative story is perceived as the individual work of a reporter, and the news organization does not include them in its initial planning. M. states that investigative stories are the ones that can break the superficiality of the routine and defines the investigative reporter as the journalist who can manage that:

Journalism is about informing the public about events immediately. The life of journalism consists of one day, not much can be passed on to the following day. Hence, the information a reporter gathers usually stays on a superficial level, it is not very possible to accumulate in-depth information in this chaos.

Thus, a journalist who is able to approach an issue in-depth can be called an investigative reporter.¹⁶³

The reporters say that this routine agenda takes up most of their time during a single day; hence they are left with a very limited time to focus on investigative stories.

They point out that although it is possible to get a lead for an investigative story while following the routines, they need extra time to develop the story. T. says that such an investigation takes a considerable amount of time, and it is not possible for the reporter to make that time herself:

The existence of a separate category as investigative journalism is not very possible in this media system. Reporters are under an immense work load, they have to follow the routines, or make the custom-ordered news they are expected to make. Under that workload, it is not possible for a reporter to conduct an in-depth, detailed investigation that may take months, even years.¹⁶⁴

Most reporters complain that they can not find that extra time; and that extra time is very rarely provided by them by their editors. For the reporters to be provided with extra time, either they have to ask for it particularly, or the editors must specifically demand a certain report from the reporter. However, the reporters state that both of these occasions are once again very rare. A. states that extra time is provided by the editors in case they request the reporter to look into a certain event. But this is also a very rare occasion, and also has its limits. Even if the reporter is also interested in the issue at hand –which may not always be the case- the amount of time s/he requires is still determined by the news organization. T. provides an example:

Sometimes a reporter can specifically focus on a single issue and determine it as a case for investigation. The Hrant Dink case was like that for me, one of the rare cases I worked as an investigative journalist. I had to work in Trabzon and İstanbul for that, but due to my loaded agenda at work, I couldn't go to Trabzon, and made very limited visits to İstanbul. Some flexibility was given by the newspaper, due to the fact that this story would

¹⁶³ M., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 29, 2011.

¹⁶⁴ T., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 21, 2011.

also be printed in the newspaper. The executives knew that when I spared time for that story, it would return as a first-page item, so they were more flexible.¹⁶⁵

It is understandable that the news organization makes time for demanded stories, as they are part of their pre-planned agenda and also the issue is chosen according to the news policy. The same latitude is not provided for the stories the reporter proposes. J. claims that an investigative reporter sets her/his own agenda rather than following a prescheduled one. However, H., a young reporter who has been working for two years, says that even when a reporter requests an extra time, s/he is still responsible for following the routine. Hence, the reporter is caught between a rock and a hard place, having no time for making the stories demanded by the editors:

I haven't found an opportunity to say, 'cut me some slack, I'm working on something else' yet. You don't have the luxury to abandon the routine. You are required to never miss it; still, exclusive reports are constantly demanded. If you asked them, they would not turn down a decent investigative report, but they don't provide you with the opportunity of making them.¹⁶⁶

However, that may be because the editors rarely get information about an investigative story beforehand from the reporters. The reporters do not choose to share information about the stories they work on as well, as they want to be as independent from editorial concerns as possible. Ç. states that he does not share the stories they work on with their editors before he finishes them:

If you tell about your story to the news editor before it is ready, which I don't, s/he would ask about it every day. That would create a psychological pressure. You have to give it time, so that you can understand the issue better, and you can tell it better.¹⁶⁷

Most reporters state that they do not share the process of their stories with the editors in order to avoid being taken-off from the investigation or applying auto-control on

¹⁶⁵ T., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 21, 2011.

¹⁶⁶ H., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, May 9, 2010.

¹⁶⁷ Ç., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 9, 2011.

themselves in the case of a negative comment from them. They also want to set the schedule in such stories themselves, rather than being subjected to a schedule decided upon by their superiors. Hence, a method the reporters use to avoid both editorial control and auto-control limit their chances of having more time to work on investigative stories.

The reporters also argue that because of the loaded routine agenda, they have to work very fast. They are required to gather the necessary information and put together their stories in the shortest amount time possible. R. stresses that the routine agenda moves very fast in Turkey, it changes constantly and do not give the reporters the opportunity to focus on a specific issue:

We don't have that kind of journalism: working on an issue for a few days to make a story out of it. We have to do all of that very fast. It is what both the working conditions and the form of journalism impose: Follow the politicians, follow the immediate incidents and the next day, the whole agenda changes, you forget all that and focus on something else.¹⁶⁸

However, investigative news reports are not stories that can be put together in a couple of hours. The reporters are required to spend extensive time on those stories to gather information, confirm it and write it. Some reporters mention that sometimes they have to spend weeks, even months to find a source that confirm a specific bit of information. Ç. calls investigative journalism “a marathon rather than a hundred-meter run”. Hence, investigative journalism is not very much compatible with the speed that the current practice of newsmaking demands. D. points out the caution investigative journalism requires does not fit in with that speed:

Investigative journalism is a more long-run job. In newsmaking, you want to act as fast as possible, but investigative journalism is most inappropriate for that speed. You have to check and confirm information by cautious work. It is not something to be done during the daily stress of the work.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ R., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

¹⁶⁹ D., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, June 7, 2010.

The effort investigative reports require sometimes makes a reporter unable to follow the routine assignments. This may be interpreted as their superiors as the reporters' inability to fulfil the given duties. J. claims that in such a case, the news organization is not very tolerant to the reporter:

Sometimes you work on a single story for a month and still nothing comes out of it, and you can't work on anything else, because you have your hands full. This is not well-received by the organization you work for. You put time and effort in the story, you get nothing; for them it is a sign of low performance.¹⁷⁰

I., who currently works as a chief editor in a website, also admits that he experienced serious problems with time limitations while he was working as a reporter. He argues that although he felt the need and responsibility to focus on investigative leads he got through his routine duties, he could never find the time. Still, he argues that speed provided by the development of communication technologies equips the reporter with certain advantages in newsmaking. However, the reporter has to be qualified enough to benefit from them:

In the past, we used to go to the scene of the event, write the news, take the photos, print them and it would be published in the next day's paper. Now it is almost possible to practice real-time reporting. But you also have to maintain the professional standards. In real-time reporting, you have to have a substantial intellectual background to understand what the event you are confronted with means.¹⁷¹

F. emphasizes that the environment in which the reporter works should be suitable to her/his needs and allows her/him to make time for not only newsmaking but also studying the issue at hand. However, this would lead to even a lesser number of stories written by a reporter:

News cannot be written from a room in a plaza. If you have the luxury not to go to the office, then you have time to investigate, you have time to read. I

¹⁷⁰ J., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 7, 2011.

¹⁷¹ I., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 19, 2011.

support 90% of my news stories with books on the issue. If a reporter has to go work in the office every day, s/he will lack the motivation to do so. I don't write a story each day; but I write a really good one once a week, which should be enough. A reporter must write at most 10 exclusive stories in a month, which by itself is difficult.¹⁷²

The reporters are forced to make certain compromises about time when they want to focus on investigative stories. These compromises take place in a number of ways. First, there are the reporters who use their own time to work on investigative stories. They work extra hours, stay at the office after work or keep working when they get home. O. claims that this is indispensable if a reporter wants to make a difference in the news reports s/he writes:

You have to make an extra time and spend extra effort to deal with investigative stories. If your working hours ends at 6 pm., you may have to be sitting in front of a computer still at 11 pm. or midnight. If you don't do that, you won't be able to produce anything special for the next day, anything different from what every other news organization is doing. The reporter has to break the mentality of working between 9 am-6 pm.¹⁷³

E. is also optimistic about the opportunities a reporter will have if s/he has set her/his mind on focusing on an issue. For E., it is the willingness of the reporter that matters. If a reporter is determined to work on a specific issue, s/he will not allow considerations of time or demands from superiors can not thwart her/him; such problems will spontaneously be overcome eventually.

Some reporters also argue that it is possible to squeeze efforts for investigative reporting in certain slots within the daily work. Ç., who says that he does not bring work to home, claims that if a reporter organizes his time carefully, by paying attention to which time slots are more efficient for routines and which is more appropriate for investigative work:

¹⁷² F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

¹⁷³ O., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 10, 2011.

There is a certain daily work you have to do. You should be able to discipline that workload and use the time efficiently. The daily meeting ends at 10 am, I have to do what is required from me until 3 pm. After that there is a new time slot to use for other issues. You have to have your own agenda; otherwise you would be dragged with the routine.¹⁷⁴

R. associates investigative reporting with the ability of a reporter to keep certain events in her/his memory within this routine work. According to R., if a reporter keeps the details s/he wants to investigate on his mind; even a little time during the day can be enough to follow them:

In countries like ours, you can only perform investigative journalism by refusing to forget. Let's say there was an explosion. There is a process of investigation on it by public authorities. If you don't forget about it, you call and ask how it is going, then you have performed the first step of investigative journalism. I think it is possible to take a note of such things and make calls during your spare time within the daily routine flow.¹⁷⁵

M., on the other hand, says that he benefited from the fact that the issues he was routinely following was at the same time issues that he wanted to conduct in-depth investigations of. Being a legal beat reporter, he could reconcile the investigation he wanted to make with his routine duties:

The issues I write routine news on and the issues I investigate are more or less the same. I focus on human rights, freedom of speech, etc., which involves certain legal processes. I conducted investigations on the same cases I was already following and I had mastered. The deeper investigation came along with the news story. Hence, I did not put extra time in it; I deepened the investigation simultaneously with my routine duties.¹⁷⁶

However, this does not mean that this kind of reconciliation is possible for other reporters as well. The reporters state that they have to cover a variety of routine duties, not all compatible with the areas they want to investigate. Hence, as Y. says, it is the news organization responsible with providing the time and resources for the

¹⁷⁴ Ç., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 9, 2011.

¹⁷⁵ R., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

¹⁷⁶ M., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 29, 2011.

reporters if it wants to produce investigative stories. However, Y. adds that they do not seem enthusiastic about it, although they have better resources to spare than they did at the times they made more “striking” news.

Considerations of Cost

The sheer size of routine workload the reporters are confronted with is also related to the decrease in the number of staff employed by the news organizations. The reporters state that there has been a constant decrease in the number of reporters working in newspaper offices. However, although the number of reporters decrease, the news organization is still responsible for following the same schedule. Hence, the reporters have to do the same amount of news with a reduced number of staff. The responsibilities of the reporters increase, thinning their chances to make time for investigative stories even more. T. states that it has become a common practice for news organizations to work with a small number of reporters. R. says that the dismissals of reporters are an open message for those reporters who want to make time for investigative stories when they have to work with a constantly reducing staff:

Theoretically, you are provided with the time you need to investigate by your editor. When you tell them, ‘I’m after such a story, I have to visit these cities and do a reading of these documents’, and they tell you to do it. However, in Turkey, there is a media structure in which you are forced to do the most you can with a small number of people. Three times more people used to work in my office, but we have to do the same amount of work. When you work with smaller staff, you have to work more. Then you can not investigate further than what is evident due to time constraints. Considering this, you start postponing such investigations; you have practical difficulties.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ R., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

The reporters recognize the need for smaller staff in small-scale news organizations that have a limited budget; however, they argue that the news organizations that are able to employ a more extensive budget must direct it towards investigative reporting. That includes both hiring more reporters and building mechanisms through which reporter can make more efficient investigations. However, they also recognize that investigative reporting has costs specific to it. They argue that those costs are another reason why news organizations shy away from investigative stories. As there is a strong chance the expenditures made for investigative stories will not return as profits, the news organizations refrain from making the expenditure in the first place. F. states that these costs lead news organizations to prefer columns to investigative stories:

Investigative reporting is a costly business for newspapers. There is an economy of it, when a reporter goes and investigates a story and writes it. You have to take a flight; you have to sleep in a hotel. And sometimes even though you go and investigate, you come up with empty hands, and you can't print the story. So newspapers prefer a commentary by a columnist rather than an investigation.¹⁷⁸

D. defines investigative journalism as a “laborious work of reporting that is burdensome to finance” for the news organization in all around the world; however these financial burdens are born as those stories supplies the news organization with prestige in the media. However, in Turkey, the costs provide sufficient reason to convince the news organizations to give up investigative reporting. D. states that most of the time it is a very ordinary story that makes up the front page of a newspaper.

¹⁷⁸ F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

The reporters have little hope that the resources for newsmaking will be increased in a near future. The concept of “expense for news” has already become an item of joke for reporters. L. shares an anecdote:

The other day I found an expense slip on my desk. When you go out for a story, say, if you take a cab or if you buy someone coffee, you had to get an expense slip for it. I saw the expense slip, and I said out loud, does anyone here still make expenses for news? And then I said, does anyone still make news here, who is that? Everybody laughed. But there was truth in that joke.¹⁷⁹

Still, not all reporters have lost their belief more resources will be allocated to investigative stories. İ. argues that the technological developments such as internet will decrease the costs of distribution of news, and those resources can be transferred to investigative stories:

The biggest cost of the newspaper now is printing and distribution. There is not much resources provided for the newsmaking process and newsmakers. Maybe with online journalism, when the costs of printing and distribution are cancelled, there will be more resources for newsmaking.¹⁸⁰

Routinization of Content

Along with the limited time and the reduction of resources provided for investigative journalism, there are also problems with the content of investigative reports. There is a convergence in the patterns through which the reporters collect information: certain methods of attaining information are preferred by the news organization as they are less costly and yield immediate results that can be used in the paper. The reporters complain that gathering information through the same methods leads to the repeated use of certain channels, and in time, the news acquired through such channels converge as well, if not in the immediate content, in the form of information given.

¹⁷⁹ L., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 6, 2011.

¹⁸⁰ İ., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 18, 2011.

G. states that as the reporting activity diminishes, newspapers have begun to print news exactly the same as each other. B. says that certain news reports read as if they are written by the same hand.

One reporting pattern the reporters are very critical of is what they call announcement or statement reporting. It is a form of reporting in which the reporter gathers the information s/he is going to use in the news story merely from the reactions of public figures concerning a particular event. F., who has been working outside the mainstream media for most of his career, directly criticizes this kind of reporting:

The journalism we criticize in Turkey is this: A reporter calls a parliament member and asks: ‘Mr. Ahmet, this person said this and this, any comments?’ Then he calls Mehmet, and Ayşe and Fatih, takes their comments, and puts together a story. I don’t know why, but in Turkey every word politicians say is treated as news. This is not news by itself, it cannot be.¹⁸¹

The news organizations also demand that the public figures a reporter speaks to gather information are leading officials rather than lower ranked ones. Speaking to a government member or a prominent party leader guarantees that the story will be published. However, S. states that such stories are only confined to relating what the official said, rather than digging into the context or accuracy of what is said. H. points out that even the exclusive stories demanded by the editors are confined to news that come from such channels, and they do not include time-consuming work:

What the editors demand as exclusive reports is not reports that require careful work or immense effort. Even a letter written by a deputy to the Prime Minister can be an exclusive report.¹⁸²

The reporters contrast this kind of reporting with investigative journalism and argue that they are opposites. R. distinguishes between two kinds of journalism: the kind

¹⁸¹ F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

¹⁸² H., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, May 9, 2010.

of journalism that merely communicates the successes of a certain institution, and the kind of journalism that is more critical and tries to investigate behind apparent reality. H. argues that the former kind of reporting is not even journalism, but a form of announcement. However, reporters claim that the latter kind of journalism is not on the agenda of news organization as they carry the potential to damage the interests of the news organization or of the groups they are affiliated with:

As newspapers do not want to disturb the power groups they are affiliated with, hence we practice statement reporting or fireplace reporting. When there is a fire somewhere, we follow it and write about it, there is nothing else except that.¹⁸³

The reporters argue that the performance of more critical, investigative journalism develops a sense of respect and integrity in reporters, which motivated them for putting forth better examples of reporting. C. relates that an exclusive story used to provide the reporter with a feeling of elation:

You felt like the king, maybe for one day only, but it was worth it. Now there is no such thing, everybody puts out their tapes for the same thing.¹⁸⁴

Reporters also believe that it is a degradation for reporters to merely communicate the information that comes from official channels. They argue that it mechanizes the activity of reporting and renders them unable to exercise journalism as they believe it should be practiced. F. claims that this tendency to overvalue routine official channels renders reporters to the state of “tape recorders”:

Investigative reporting has become an instrument of distinguishing between journalists and “tape recorders”. That’s why those who perform true journalism seem like they are doing a wonderful job. But that is what should be done by all journalists: to write a news story on an issue by thorough investigation, talking to all concerned sides and accessing relevant information and documents.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ İ., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 18, 2011.

¹⁸⁴ C., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, June 11, 2010.

¹⁸⁵ F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

The criteria used in evaluating investigative stories may also function as to standardize them. Reporters also believe that certain criteria used in the editorial control mechanisms weaken the impressiveness of the stories and undermine the effect they can have on the public. The two mechanisms they mention are the requirements that news should be: first, simple, and second, brief. News should be simple so that the readers should be able to understand what is told. The assumption here is that the readers are incapable of understanding the account of too complicated processes. However, investigative stories are most of the time detailed analyses of complicated processes. The reporters argue that simplification of stories also injures their significance in the eyes of the reader. F. believes that trivialization is encouraged under the name of simplification:

Simplistic reporting is very much encouraged. It is called ‘understandable’; the editor tells you to make your stories understandable. What they mean by understandable is in fact triviality.¹⁸⁶

Another criterion in newswriting is briefness. Especially in newspapers, as the space reserved for a news story is limited, the reporters are always warned to express the incident they are relating as concise as possible. However, investigative stories require a longer space to be told adequately and comprehensibly. F. says the pressure to write short takes away the “words” from the reporter:

You write a whole story, but they squeeze it into a short paragraph. And they put in the most absurd, the most grotesque part of the story. Another thing they tell you: ‘What’s the epic for? Cut it short,’ they say. But the only weapon an investigative journalist has is words. They snatch the words away from the reporter; tell her to write “just a paragraph”. No investigative story can be summarized in a paragraph, because you have to show every event has a cause and effect. That’s a reason I preferred to work in magazines, because you get more space for a news story.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

Soft vs. Hard Investigative Journalism

Another problem the reporters point out concern the nature of the information gathered for investigative reports. Some reporters find the quality of the content of investigative stories that are printed problematic, arguing that hard news is ignored while soft news are accepted. The distinction between hard and soft news is a practical one. Hard news contain information that is important for the public to know, while soft news are those stories people are interested in but they would not fall short of being informed citizens by not knowing. Hard news are concerned with matters that require further explanation and analysis to be completely grasped by the audience, while the soft news can be read and understood in an instance.¹⁸⁸ A draft legislative bill makes hard news, while a funny billboard advertisement is soft news. The reporters argue that also in investigative stories, the human element is stressed and the critical parts are left out.

S. points out that the investigative stories that find space in newspapers are those with less significant political content or those that do not challenge the political power directly. He argues that such news stories do not criticize the political power, but instead alert it to potential problems by revealing the “commonplace defects in the system”. He also points out that the publishing of investigative stories that do not directly concern the political power even contribute to the illusion of a democratic media structure:

You may wonder why I complain about auto-control when my stories about socialist municipalities and their protests against dams are being published. I don't classify those news as critical of the government. The political power will not be disturbed by the news of municipalities that pose no whatsoever threat to it. On the contrary, through such news, the political power gets

¹⁸⁸ Gaye Tuchman, “Making News By Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected”, *The American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 79, No. 1., p.114.

credit as if there is a very democratic media, as if everyone can express their opinions freely.¹⁸⁹

Conversely, some reporters criticize the limitations on the content of investigative stories. They argue that there are certain issues reserved for investigative reporting, such as corruption or malpractice; and investigative reporting on different issues are excluded from the papers. T. argues that both the number of investigative reporters and the number of issues considered worthy of investigation are limited in Turkey:

In Turkey, there are a handful of investigative journalists and the issues investigated are very limited. Investigative reporting in Turkey is confined to corruption or state crimes. In theory, a case about environment is also subject for investigative reporting but there is no such practice in Turkey.¹⁹⁰

Other reporters also point out investigative stories with lighter content impair the in-depth character of investigative stories. They argue that even stories that carry a potential for further investigation and analysis are trivialized or transformed into human element stories, which focus on the personal tragedies involved rather than the causes or effects of an incident. İ. calls such newsmaking as “sit-com journalism”: it is practiced through employing certain methods of investigative reporting, but their content is directed towards entertainment rather than revelation or analysis. T. argues that such stories are preferred as they are easy-to-consume and easily forgotten. Hence, even if the content of the story is immensely important, it is forgotten in a very short time due to its trivial presentation; even the events “you’d think as momentous, as a part of history, lose their importance in a couple of years”. N. states that in the stories that can involve revelation or analysis, a more superficial outlook is preferred:

Investigative journalism has become a dirty concept; it has become sloppy by repetition. It is not an investigation to go to small shops and record the anti-

¹⁸⁹ S., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

¹⁹⁰ T., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 21, 2011.

hygienic conditions, when there are the corporate firms to investigate. There is a sensational side to investigative journalism. It is not only the method, the content is also important. You have to expose the reasons behind some wrongdoing as well, to make people think about it. When in Bursa, the women workers died in a fire in their workplace because they were locked up, the reporters went there to investigate. They came back with children's photos, the stories of their families, but nobody asked why those women were locked up.¹⁹¹

F. argues that even when the reporters are sent to the scene of the event, they are required to gather the most direct and available information and come back as soon as possible. However, in certain issues, a few days are not enough to even begin to understand the incident or to get people to talk to you. F. gives the example of the massacre of Bilge village, where 44 people were killed by members of a related family:

When we went to Mardin, for the massacre in Bilge village, where 44 people died, the reporters there were all after clichés, yet rightfully, because it's what the editor demands from them. For example, the editor asks, 'Is there a women business involved? Look into it,' and the reporter goes and asks a few people. No one there is in their right minds at the time, someone says: 'This man's wife was with that woman's husband, etc.' There it is, the story is printed, first-page item. But it is not the truth. Yet the reporter is not the only one to blame here, the one who requests this information is also guilty.¹⁹²

Hence, this tendency to prefer softer investigative stories is not only the individual prerogative of reporters, but a choice made through calculating how the reporter can contribute to the news organization as much as possible. As the reporters' contribution is calculated by the number of stories in the paper, the reporters prefer to focus on stories with human element or entertainment content, which has the higher chance of getting printed. However, as R. states, this leads them to "pull back from certain channels, certain areas" through which they could produce more substantial stories.

¹⁹¹ N., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, April 28, 2010.

¹⁹² F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

The reporters keep looking for methods that can help them to improve the standardized content. Some argue that if the reporters are allowed to spend more time on a single issue, and diversify their sources, their reports will be more comprehensive and enlightening, as they will be able to look at the issue from different perspectives rather than a single lens. This will also improve the audience's perception of the event and allow them to make up their own minds by assessing the different perspectives presented, rather than being persuaded about a single outlook. However, they are pessimistic that this will happen, as it is adverse to the interests of news organizations:

In Turkey, editors are motivated not to present choices to the reader. They want to present absolute indubitable information. But some social incidents can not have indubitable reasons.¹⁹³

M. points out that one cannot expect too much from a newspaper, as it is an instrument that can only relate a certain daily agenda. Hence, it is limited in the manner of not having too much space to include details, but only presents general information on issues. M. suggests that if the news turns into a series that will be published in a few consequent days, it may be possible to give a more complete and satisfactory account of events. İ., on the other hand, offers a method that used to be employed in the past, which would supplement both the perspective and the reliability of a story. However, he points out it is not done anymore:

We used to put together a temporary investigation desk in the process of exposing a scandal. Say, a police reporter, an economy reporter, and a political reporter would sit down and evaluate the information they received, coordinate it and write the stories.¹⁹⁴

Some reporters believe that the newspaper is not an appropriate and sufficient channel for investigative stories anymore. Most of them carry out their investigative

¹⁹³ F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

¹⁹⁴ İ., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 18, 2011.

work to present it in the form of books rather than newspaper articles. They call attention to the increase in the number of books written by journalists in the recent years. E. underlines that this can be a deliberate decision of a reporter rather than a forced option, as a book is a more extensive channel than a newspaper:

I speak of a book when I'm talking about investigative journalism. There are so many different issues in a paper, very limited space, and the agenda changes so fast; a journalist might say 'If I write it in the paper it will be forgotten in a short while, or I want it to be published in an expanded manner'. Thus s/he chooses to write a book.¹⁹⁵

Although a more expansive channel, it is evident that a book reaches an extremely smaller number of readers than a newspaper article. A newspaper article may be read by every person that purchases the paper without intentionally demanding to learn about a specific issue; where as a book is only bought by those who are already interested and want to learn more about it. Hence, although the investigated incidents or processes are recounted in a more comprehensive manner, they reach a smaller number of readers.

¹⁹⁵ E., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 4, 2011.

CHAPTER 9

DESKILIZATION

In this system of producing news, journalists do not find much opportunity to exercise the professional skills they acquired either during their occupational education or through their experience. Due to the simplification and routinization of their tasks, they become unable to use their professional skills, and also through editorial control, they lose the incentive and motivation to use them in news making.

Work Satisfaction of the Reporter

As journalism does not provide most reporters with the financial means to compensate for the problems in work, the satisfaction they get from their work is very important to them. However, most reporters express their unhappiness and dissatisfaction from their current practice of journalism. Although they claim to love and respect their occupation despite all odds, they feel exhausted and fed up with their work. S. says that as the conditions for practicing journalism freely and satisfactorily is eradicated; he would quit his job the second he secures the rest of his life economically.

The reporters give a number of reasons for this dissatisfaction with their work, not unrelated to the conditions analyzed in the previous chapters. These reasons are usually interwoven with each other, that is, it is not only the existence of one or the other that makes a reporter weary, but the existence of all at once. First, the lack of quality in current news that are made disturbs them. R., on the other hand, complains of the mediocrity of the work he has to do:

I love my job, but I'm also tired of it. I haven't been working the way I wanted to for a long time. After a while, you want to do more qualified, sophisticated work, and you want to have time of your own. You want to stop working until 1 am. But you have to.¹⁹⁶

As can be seen in R.'s complaint as well, the routine workload is another problem for reporters. They argue that the load of routine agenda they have to cover leaves them with no strength or enthusiasm to work on anything else. F. defines this requirement as according to H., the choice of coverage made by the editors leaves no time to work on things the reporters find meaningful:

A reporter can only perform journalism to the extent the chief editor allows. There is no room for you to work on anything else. One is so overwhelmed within the daily routine, within all the nonsense they demand from you, you have no energy to work on anything else.¹⁹⁷

A. also states that exclusion of his stories due to editorial control is a huge factor for his dissatisfaction from work. The constant downplay of their assessments on newsworthiness discourages the reporters, however, they do not quit as most reporters lack alternative means of earning their living. Especially reporters with medium level and high level experience in the sector claim that quitting their jobs is not an option for them, as they are not qualified in any other sector or line of work to carry on their lives as they are. F. argues that people believe in an illusory form of journalism, in which one becomes a celebrity and lead a very interesting life, and their belief in this form keeps them working as reporters. However, the current system is based on exploiting the abilities of people to the last extent:

There is this illusion in young reporters: when you are a journalist, you become famous, everybody knows you, you have a great life.... So they abide with it. After a while, you are left with no other qualities to use, and you are confronted with a system that has captured everything you have, you are left with no qualifications.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ R., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

¹⁹⁷ H., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, May 9, 2010.

¹⁹⁸ F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

S. also believes that young reporters are demoralized in a short time; however, he associates this demoralization with the decline in the quality of journalism. He argues that the impossibility to practice investigative journalism like the esteemed journalists they know of disappoints the young reporters. Hence, the idealization of the profession leads to a severe disillusionment and distress for the young reporter:

There are certain journalists that every reporter takes as a role model, such as Uğur Mumcu, Çetin Emeç. Their courage to dig into the defective sides of the system should be an example for all journalists. Every reporter aims to work like them when they first start; but whether they can depends on the period they work in and on the people they work with. Today, I see that young reporters who start with the desire to be like those journalists one day are demoralized in a short time. They see that there are no tracks leading to investigative journalism in this period and they are disappointed.¹⁹⁹

Some reporters point out that the environment they work in also matter a lot for them. The transformation of newspaper buildings into plazas denotes a significant change in the work environment for a reporter. As the reporters argue, currently, news are made inside the office rather than outside, the place in which the reporter has to spend his time becomes an important aspect of work satisfaction. C. argues that newsmaking in plazas has killed reporting; because it disconnected the reporter from the people, as the reporter is less able to spend time on the streets. F. argues that it was a source of distress for him to think of his workplace as a plaza:

When I used to work in the [X] magazine, I used to fly from Ankara to İstanbul every week. They would pick me up from the airport and the driver asked me ‘Are we going to the *firm*?’ And I would say, ‘Yes, to the *firm*’. We would enter the building with fingerprint scans. All that is enough to make a reporter unhappy. You can not make news in such a place, you can not perform journalism.²⁰⁰

Although they are not content with the way journalism is practiced, and the way they can practice journalism, very few reporters with a certain amount of

¹⁹⁹ S., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

²⁰⁰ F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

experience choose to quit. Aside from economic reasons for not quitting, the reporters also state that they strongly love their profession and desire to keep doing it properly. G., a reporter with 30 years of experience, says that journalism is a “passionate and idealist” profession, which is difficult to let go of. Although he admits that he also feels disappointed in the current state of journalism; he also says that even that disappointment stimulates him to make better news that can not be ignored or undermined. E., on the other hand, believes that the power of the reporter is being able to ask questions to a particular person in a particular time; and states that she will not quit as long as she is able to ask those questions. H., a reporter with two years of experience, draws an interesting parallel between his political views and journalism:

We don't give up being socialists just because we won't see a revolution. Just like that, even if journalism can not be properly practiced, if I can get it one bit closer to what it should be, I will feel content.²⁰¹

Qualification of the Reporter

The reporters believe that there is a gradual decline in the qualifications of the people who work in the sector. By qualification, the reporters do not indicate the level of education or the popularity of the reporter; but the ability of the reporter to carry on in-depth, critical practice of newsmaking. They associate this decline with two reasons: the demands of news organizations from the reporters and the exclusion of qualified reporters from the media.

G. states that a factor that contributes to this decline is the convergence of news. He argues that news organizations look for variety in columns, not in news;

²⁰¹ H., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, May 9, 2010.

and as the young reporters are directed to following the routine rather than investigating, they can not develop the necessary journalistic abilities. Similarly, T. argues that “the newspapers are content with the mediocre”. He states that a reporter does not have to push his limits to be recognized as a good reporter; therefore, the reporters do not attempt to put extra effort in what they do, and abstain from employing their journalistic skills, which leads to a “professional deformation”. F. also points out that routinization of methods of gathering information and lack of resources provided to newsmaking prevents the reporters from using investigative skills and turns them into “tape recorders”:

They don’t provide money for it; if I have to go to Batman, they tell me: ‘It’s not necessary, handle it over the phone, talk to the Mayor’, which is not news. And gradually the investigative journalist turns into a tape recorder. When s/he handles everything over the phone, the reporter becomes more unqualified.²⁰²

R. emphasizes that this form of practicing journalism is part of the general attitude of corporate media that wants to take advantage of those who work for them as much as possible. This attitude takes the positive sides of journalism that made it a more autonomous occupation, and inverts them into a repressive model of work:

People choose journalism to be a little more free compared to other professions. There was a positive connotation of not having definite working hours. But corporate media now says, ‘the ways of making news has changed. I don’t employ 40 people; one reporter can cover three beats, no need to write anything in-depth. You have to practice journalism within the time limits I determine, the way I determine it, so that I don’t get into trouble with certain channels’. That’s the standard job description.²⁰³

The reporters also emphasize that certain reporters who are more qualified and able to produce more in-depth and dissident news are gradually excluded from the media, either by dismissal or by deterioration of their working conditions. L. argues that the

²⁰² F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

²⁰³ R., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

good reporters are not part of the media in Turkey anymore while distinguishing between the good reporter and the renowned reporter:

There is a very thin line between good reporter and renowned reporter in Turkey. The reporters that the public recognizes the name, even though they don't like her/him, are creations of the effort of news organizations. Then there is the good reporter. Not many people know who s/he is, but s/he tries to get somewhere through her/his own effort. I think those good reporters have turned their backs to this system.²⁰⁴

Reporters also believe that there has been a change in the class origins of people who begin to work as reporters; because the money earned from reporting is not sufficient to support people who come from lower-class families and lack the alternative sources of income to "subsidize" them, in the words of P. This change in class origins may be leading to a change in the overall perspective of the reporters to social problems in Turkey as well:

Until recently, the children of middle class and lower class families could work in this sector. But they can't anymore, because one works without a permanent job or salary for a long time. Hence, journalism turned into the profession of upper class kids. Their families subsidize them, in capitalist terms.²⁰⁵

Job Security

The reporters have a very low sense of job security. They believe, and some of them know, that they can lose their jobs any second; and there is no protective mechanism through which they can demand their rights. In that case, what provides the job security for them is their position and relations with the news organizations and their superiors. Hence, as U. points out, the idea that a reporter who follows his own conscience will have job security is ridiculous for them:

²⁰⁴ L., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 6, 2011.

²⁰⁵ P., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 18, 2011.

If you stay out of trouble, just do your job, you earn your living. But it has to do with your conscience and self-questioning. The reporters who are not fully engaged in the system can never have job security, it is irrational. It is absurd to feel secure.²⁰⁶

Some reporters associate the lack of job security with the fact that their organizations are part of the private sector. Hence, they believe that even though they lose their jobs, finding a new job will not be too much of a problem. Z. admits that she can lose her job any second, but she does not believe she will be unemployed for a long time, as she thinks people know her quality as a reporter. Although she has no job security, she is not afraid of being unemployed. However, other reporters who feel secure in their qualifications as reporters are not so confident. Some reporters believe that the current problematic situation of the media with respect to the political power may lead to a disadvantage for their employment conditions. M. states that despite his belief that he is a good reporter, there is the chance that he may be unemployed; but he believes that he will be able to find another job, unless the media is “monopolized in such a way that it is closed up for all except those who agree with the dominant political view”. S. states that he is not afraid to lose his current job, as he believes he is an active contributor to the management of his paper; however, he believes that exactly his quality as a reporter makes him unwelcome:

If I happen to lose this job, will I find another? As to that I’m doubtful. There is no ground for the employment of a reporter who is not willing to make concessions from objective journalism. I don’t think I would be able to find another job easily, even though I am fully equipped, experienced, successful.²⁰⁷

F. points out that the rival media groups that antagonize one another in any other issue unify when it comes to the dismissed reporters who demanded their rights, regardless of the quality of the reporter. He argues that when a reporter demands

²⁰⁶ U., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 7, 2011.

²⁰⁷ S., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

his/her rights, all news organizations curiously agree upon that particular reporter is no good and they will be unable to work with him/her. He gives the example of Ahmet Şık, who was dismissed because he demanded unionization rights and was unemployed afterwards:

Even the best reporter in Turkey could be fired, because in Turkey good reporting is not a requirement. Ahmet Şık is an example: why did they fire Ahmet? Because he had demanded his unionization rights. And then Ahmet couldn't get a job in any of the newspapers. Even the rival media groups would not employ him. There is such a thing as a *gentleman's agreement*: once you are fired from one newspaper, it is very difficult for you to be employed elsewhere.²⁰⁸

T. stresses that a reporter curiously loses her/his eligibility as s/he get more experienced. A reporter is either given editorial duties as s/he gets experienced or is given a column, as I. states. However, there are very few reporters who keep working as experienced investigative reporters. I. believes that this is a chance for those reporters to show themselves. However, not all reporters have that chance. Hence, the reporters who should be in the most efficient and fruitful years of their career, with respect to the journalistic skills, contacts and sources begin to have the fear of unemployment. T. points out that there is a gradually rising unemployment trend among reporters who have worked more than 20 years; and the most eligible reporters have 10-11 years of experience:

A reporter in his 40s, if s/he did not become an editor or columnist, begins to have a fear of unemployment. S/he has greater financial expectations, and also can not accept everything that is said without questioning. But the eligible reporter is young, underpaid and accepts everything without objection.²⁰⁹

Reporters believe that the dismissals are unrelated to the assessment of their qualifications or skills. They think that a reporter runs even a further risk of being

²⁰⁸ F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

²⁰⁹ T., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 21, 2011.

dismissed when s/he is more qualified. F. argues this is associated with the lack of demand for quality reporting in news organizations. In such a structure, the reporter has no bargaining power, as the skills s/he can put forward are not demanded:

Nobody looks out for a good reporter in Turkey. Nobody says ‘this is a good reporter, let’s not fire him, let’s tolerate his caprices’. It’s because he does not care for good news, but only for filling the pages. Most of the unemployed reporters are among the best reporters in Turkey.²¹⁰

Curiously, reporters argue that the most common excuse given for dismissals is low performance. When a reporter refuses to produce news as the news organization demands them, low performance becomes an easy excuse to blame them, as the news the reporter produces is not usable for the news organization. J. describes this situation of the reporters as “modern slavery”:

Reporters are turned into modern slaves. When the reporter does not write the daily routine stories, take statements and comments and write them in quotations, they call it low performance.²¹¹

A. who is a reporter who managed to find employment despite being fired numerous times, also states that voicing or standing against the problems inherent to the news organization is also cause for dismissal. If the reporters take issue with the injustices and defects within the organization of the newsroom, they run into problems with their superiors:

I have been working for 20 years; this is the 10th office I worked in. Mostly I was fired. If you question the internal mechanisms as well as external, you protest against certain things inside, you end up being fired after a while.²¹²

²¹⁰ F., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, March 30, 2011.

²¹¹ J., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 7, 2011.

²¹² A., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 5, 2011.

Columnist as Investigative Reporter

An important part of the reporters' dissatisfaction with their work is their belief that they are the least valued agent in the newsmaking process. Although the reporters see themselves as the main agent that supplies the news material, they argue that they do not have a corresponding status both within the editorial hierarchy and the monetary returns. The chief agent they perceive as counterpoised to their own position is the columnist. They argue that the columnists are taking over the status of the reporter within the newsmaking process, which is problematic because the columnists do not produce news but comment on them. As L. points out, if the reporters do not make the news, the columnist will not be able to write. However, reporters feel that the news organizations stand by their columnists rather than their reporters. L. feels that this process has led to a decline in the quality of columns as well:

People read columns but not the news. We have an inflation of columnists. If an editor-in-chief advertises a columnist from the front page for three days, of course s/he is recognized. But the heart of news and the newspaper is the reporter. But we are at a point where the value of the reporter is at the lowest. The journalism performed now has intentionally emptied out the concepts of reporter and columnist, because there was a huge wealth there. The columnist is also important when they are people with knowledge, experience and background. When they speak, the people will get wiser, will acquire true consciousness. But now, a columnist passes opinions on every issue, whether s/he knows it or not.²¹³

The reporters also argue that the columnists are provided with more flexibility and opportunity to practice investigative journalism regarding both time and editorial restrictions. A columnist has more time than a reporter does to focus on a single issue and investigate, as their time is not scheduled by the news organization. Also,

²¹³ L., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 6, 2011.

the news organizations tend to keep the editorial interference with the columns in a minimum degree, as opposed to the news stories. Hence, the columnists find more opportunity to deal with investigative issues. However, reporters believe that as investigation is directed to columns, the quality of reporting declines further. T. describes this as a “fall from grace”:

Reporting, which has to be the most valued part of this job, has fallen from grace. The columnists are trying to practice reporting instead. A columnist can write about Balyoz charges in his column for days, but a reporter is never given that opportunity. Hence, the quality of reporting declines. Yet, success is not a criterion in becoming a columnist, the criteria is being part of a team, having acquaintances. The reporter’s success is not heeded.²¹⁴

Still, other reporters believe that in most of the columns there is no trace of investigation, but they are confined to giving opinions. They associate this with news policy: S. believes that there is only “investigative opposition” in the columns, rather than reporting.

The papers can not oppose through their news policy; that is left to columnists. There are no examples of journalists who write columns and perform investigative reporting anymore.²¹⁵

The news organizations attempt at increasing the circulation of their news via the columnists they employ and advertise. However, the reporters believe that this strategy does not always pay. They believe that the columnists repeat similar opinions and alienate the reader from the news after a while. K. suggests that the circulation rate would more effectively increase if there was more opportunity to conduct investigative journalism:

I wish that we had 10 good reporters in the office instead of 100 columnists. We would be able to increase circulation with investigative stories rather than columns.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ T., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, February 21, 2011.

²¹⁵ S., interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, March 6, 2011.

²¹⁶ K., interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, April 8, 2011.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I aimed to look at the concept of investigative journalism from a political perspective and analyze its practice as a political instrument during the recent political developments in Turkey. Recently, investigative news reports and their credibility have been a focal point in political discussions in Turkey. The political discussions do not only concentrate on the content of these investigative stories, but also on the methods employed by the reporters to attain information and write the stories. Hence, the process of newsmaking itself has become the subject of political discussion. In order to give meaning to this discussion, it is necessary to understand what is acceptable and what is not by journalistic standards in newsmaking. Hence, I focused on how the main agents in the newsmaking process, the reporters, assess the practice of investigative journalism in Turkey and the problems they perceive in investigative newsmaking.

What is discussed is not merely the ethical or professional behavior of individual reporters, but the political and economic stances of the news organizations are also part of the current political discussion. Hence, I thought it will be more fruitful to make the connection between the newsmaking activities of the reporters and the policies the news organizations implement. I tried to analyze the issue from an organizational perspective, focusing on the mechanisms employed by news organizations and understand how the reporters experience the influence of these mechanisms on their work. By looking at organizational mechanisms, I aimed at understanding whether there is a connection between the way investigative news are made by reporters and the demands and restrictions of organizational practices.

In order to understand the conditions and mechanisms that operate in the process of newsmaking, I conducted interviews with 28 reporters who currently work for the news organizations in Turkey, or veteran reporters who have retired from these organizations. I selected the reporters to be interviewed among those who currently work or have worked as a reporter for a considerable amount of time in their careers. I preferred speaking to reporters as I wanted to maintain the focus of the study on the people at the initial level of newsmaking mechanisms, as they are the ones who are most affected by organizational mechanisms.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the reporters. The main themes the questions were organized around were the definition of investigative journalism, the effect of news policies on the reporter, the extent of the journalistic autonomy the reporter can enjoy, the routinization of time and content of newsmaking and the deskilization of reporters due to these organizational mechanisms.

My analysis of the interviews indicates that the reporters are also aware of the recent politicization of investigative journalism. Although investigative journalism has a very high status in their eyes and is one of the main characteristics definitive of their profession, the reporters do not believe that investigative journalism is practiced adequately or satisfactorily in Turkey. They think that there is a decline both in the number and the quality of investigative stories published. They believe that the public also has become unresponsive to investigative reports, and there is no public demand for investigative journalism, although most of the reporters believe that the public seriously needs investigative reporting in the current period because of the political environment that persists.

The reporters argue that the historical context, i.e. the recent shift in mainstream media towards the influence zone of the government, the polarization

between news organizations that belong to politically and financially rival groups and the affiliation of journalists with the legal processes on plans of overthrowing the government and staging military coups are important political developments that influence the way they make news. They believe that the adversary discourse of the AKP government towards media has created a pressure on reporters via the newsmaking mechanisms employed by their organizations. They argue that the political and financial relations of the media groups they work in are very influential in determining the news policy of the news organizations. As it is not in line with the interests of those media groups to offend or contradict a politically dominant government, the investigative stories concerning the actions of the government continually fall off the agenda of news organizations.

However, the reporters also believe that the shift in media ownership in Turkey has also created groups that both politically and economically oppose one another. There is a perception in reporters that this polarization between media groups has brought about an instrumentalization of investigative journalism. Although journalism has always been instrumentalised for a variety of reasons, what reporters complain about is that instrumentalization has become a part of the policy the news organizations follow. Hence, it has become more difficult for the reporter to evade the attempts to manipulate the news. Personal ethical behavior is not sufficient anymore, but the reporter also has to take a stand against his own news organization and to chance conflicting with the editors and at times, owners.

With the instrumentalization of investigative journalism, using leaked information as a source has become an important problem for the reporters. Most reporters harshly criticize the current use of leaks for investigative stories. However, what they problematise is not the fact that leaks are used, but the way they are used.

The reporters argue that the current use of leaks excludes the practices of reconfirming the leaked information by other channels and do not involve the personal efforts of the reporters for acquiring information. According to the reporters, the current practice renders the reporters and news organizations open to manipulation by the sources that provide the leaks; and consequently providing the public with unreliable and at times inaccurate information about important events in the political agenda of Turkey.

Another important problem for the reporters is the lack of the journalistic autonomy in the current media structure in Turkey. The reporters feel disabled to employ their own values and standards of newsworthiness in the process of making news. The ability of the reporters to act autonomously is a contributing factor to the politicization of investigative journalism: as the reporters are rendered unable to use their own values and judgments in newsmaking, the perspectives reflected in the news that are made are limited to only those found compatible with the political-financial standing of the news organization. Lately, those perspectives represent the stance of the government more often than not according to the reporters.

There are three factors that impede the autonomy of reporters in the process of making news: their relations with sources, editorial control and auto-control. Reporters state that the sources of investigative stories are discreet and hard to contact. They also state that a reporter always runs the risk of being manipulated in her/his relations with the sources; and if the reporter is too critical of the source, the source may stop passing information on to the reporter.

Editorial control is another factor that impedes journalistic autonomy. The control of reporters' news stories by the editors is organized in a manner that entirely excludes the reporter. After submitting the news story for editorial control, the

reporter has no say on whether it will be printed or not, or on the alterations the story is subjected to. The reporters complain that they are not even given adequate explanations for the fate of their stories.

Auto-control is probably the most problematic aspect for journalistic autonomy. In the case of editorial control, what impedes the autonomy of the reporters is not another agent in the process of newsmaking but themselves. Reporters refrain from turning particular events into news, as they believe those stories will not be printed or will lead to a contradiction between themselves and the editorial staff. This takes place through the reporters' internalization or tacit acceptance of the values and perspectives implemented by the news policy of the organization.

The mechanisms of source dependence, editorial control and auto-control have a negative influence in the making of investigative stories. As reporters define investigative stories as inherently critical of power sources, these stories are risky for both the news sources and the news organizations. Hence, the reporters are held back from making investigative stories by editorial-control and its internalized form, auto-control. The sources, on the other hand, along with holding back the reporters from certain stories, also feed them information about certain other stories that may work to their advantage, which is another form of instrumentalization of investigative journalism.

Routinization is another mechanism that is functional in restricting investigative stories. The reporters are limited both in the time and resources they can employ on an issue they want to investigate, due to the cost and efficiency considerations of the news organizations. These restrictions on time and resources

keep the reporters from in-depth and continuous investigation or analysis of an issue, which are the indispensable qualities of an investigative story.

Due to all these organizational restrictions on the way they practice reporting, the reporters undergo an increasing feeling of dissatisfaction and demoralization regarding their work. They also feel as the most undervalued agent in the current media structure, and have substantial doubts about their status and future. None of the reporters feels secure of their current positions, and they have a significant fear of long-time unemployment.

Hence, these organizational mechanisms impede an independent practice of investigative journalism and render it subservient to political and financial interests of those groups who are able to exert influence on the newsmaking process. This lack of independency makes investigative journalism more subject to being instrumentalised by the sides of political confrontation. As long as investigative journalism can not impose its own independent agenda over the political agenda of the powerful, it will not be able to escape being reduced to a mere political tool.

The politicization of investigative journalism has significant implications for the quality of democracy in Turkey as well. Despite the claims that the democracy is advancing in Turkey, reporters' evaluations of the level and manner of instrumentalization suggest that journalism is currently not practiced in a way that would enhance the dissemination of information in a way that is constructive of democracy. It is subject for further research to understand how a practice of journalism that is constructive to democracy can be established in the media system and the conditions it entails in Turkey. However, for a democratic media structure, it is imperative that the problems of journalistic practice mentioned in this study must be dealt with as a first step.

APPENDIX A
TABLE OF CHARACTERISTICS OF REPORTERS

Reporters	Experience (years)	Journalism Education	Beats	Administrative / Editorial Duty	Political Affiliation of the Reporter	Political Affiliation of the News Organization	Compatibility of Political Attitudes of the Reporter and the News Organization
Y.	24	Graduate of different faculty, educated through experience	Not defined	None	Leftist - Socialist	Social democrat	Quite Compatible – 2
Ö.	20	Faculty of Communication	Working life, Prime Ministry, Parliament	Bureau representative	Leftist - Socialist	Left - Socialist	Completely Compatible – 1
B.	2,5	No university education, educated through experience	Not defined	None	Socialist	Socialist	Completely Compatible – 1
N.	7	Graduate of different faculty, educated through experience	Not defined	None	Socialist	Socialist	Completely Compatible – 1
G.	30	Graduate of different faculty, educated through experience	Police and court	None	Leftist	Liberal	Quite Incompatible – 4
H.	2	Journalism course	Local, Political party	None	Socialist	Social democrat	Neutral – 3
D.	15	Graduate of different faculty, educated through experience	Freedom of expression and press	Unit coordinator	Socialist	Left - Socialist	Quite Compatible – 2
C.	30	No university education, educated through experience	Not defined	None	Socialist	Left - Social democrat	Not defined
Ş.	36	Faculty of Communication	Not defined	Bureau editor	Leftist – Nationalist/ Patriot (Ulusalcı)	Left – Nationalist / Patriot (Ulusalcı)	Completely Compatible – 1
Ç.	16	Faculty of Communication	Prime Ministry, working life, police, courts	Night editor	Socialist	Nationalist / Patriot (Ulusalcı)	Neutral – 3

Reporters	Experience (years)	Journalism Education	Field of Duty	Administrative / Editorial Duty	Political Affiliation of the Reporter	Political Affiliation of the News Organization	Compatibility of Political Attitudes of the Reporter and the News Organization
O.	9	Faculty of Communication	Education, Prime Ministry, Presidency	None	Leftist - Social democrat	Left - Social democrat	Completely Compatible – 1
K.	17	Faculty of Communication	Not defined	Bureau editor	Left – Social democrat – Patriot (Yurtsever)	Left – Social democrat	Quite Compatible – 2
I.	31	Faculty of Communication	Education, politics, Prime Ministry	Bureau editor, assistant representative, ombudsman	Socialist (utopic)	Liberal – Social democrat – Nationalist / Patriot (Ulusalcı)	Neutral – 3
P.	10	Journalism course	Political party	None	Socialist	All except Left – Socialist	Completely Incompatible – 5
T.	11	Journalism course	Courts and high courts	None	Socialist	Liberal – Nationalist / Patriot (Ulusalcı) (prone to change)	Completely Incompatible – 5
Z.	13	Journalism course	Municipality, political party, Presidency	Assistant bureau editor	Socialist	Liberal - Conservative – Islamist	Completely Incompatible – 5
E.	25	Graduate of different faculty, educated through experience	Courts, parliament, economy	Bureau representative	Social democrat	Not defined	Quite Compatible – 2
S.	25	Faculty of Communication	High courts	Bureau editor	Leftist	Liberal	Quite Incompatible – 4

Reporters	Experience (years)	Journalism Education	Field of Duty	Administrative / Editorial Duty	Political Affiliation of the Reporter	Political Affiliation of the News Organization	Compatibility of Political Attitudes of the Reporter and the News Organization
A.	20	Faculty of Communication	Ministry of Interior Affairs, police	None	Leftist	Liberal	Quite Incompatible – 4
R.	15	Faculty of Communication	Courts and high courts	Assistant bureau editor	Socialist	Liberal - Social democrat	Quite Incompatible – 4
L.	21	Graduate of different faculty, educated through experience	Human rights, law	Chief of police and courts beat, assistant ombudsman	Leftist	Nationalist - Social democrat	Neutral – 3
J.	19	Graduate of different faculty, educated through experience	Not defined	Bureau editor	Socialist	Liberal - Left	Quite Incompatible – 4
V.	20	Graduate of different faculty, educated through experience	Not defined	Department chief, bureau editor/coordinator	Leftist	Liberal - Social democrat - Islamist	Quite Compatible – 2
M.	11	Faculty of Communication	Not defined	None	Socialist	Liberal	Neutral – 3
F.	10	Faculty of Communication	Kurdish issue, human rights, working life	None	Socialist	Socialist	Completely Compatible – 1
U.	6	Graduate of different faculty, educated through experience	Kurdish issue, terrorism, Ergenekon	None	Liberal	Conservative	Quite Incompatible – 2
I.	23	Graduate of different faculty, educated through experience	Local news, Prime Ministry	Bureau editor, editor-in-chief	Liberal - Social democrat	Conservative	Neutral – 3
Ü.	23	Faculty of Communication	Political parties	Editor-in-chief	Socialist	Not defined	Neutral – 3

Table 1. Characteristics of interviewed reporters

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Classification Questions

- 1) For how many years have you been working as a journalist?
- 2) Which beats have you covered in the news organizations you worked in? Did you have administrative/editorial duties?
- 3) Where did you get your journalism education?
 - a) Faculty of Communication
 - b) Graduate of different faculty, educated through experience
 - c) No university education, education through experience
 - d) Journalism course
- 4) Do you believe that there is a difference between your political attitude and the political attitude of your news organization?

Political attitude of your news organization:

- a) Liberal
- b) Conservative
- c) Nationalist
- d) Leftist
- e) Social democrat
- f) Nationalist / Patriot
- g) Islamist
- h) Socialist

Your political attitude:

- a) Liberal
- b) Conservative
- c) Nationalist
- d) Leftist
- e) Social democrat
- f) Nationalist / Patriot
- g) Islamist
- h) Socialist

- 5) If so, at which level do you think this difference is? Please mark on the scale.

Compatible

Incompatible

political attitude

political attitude

1

2

3

4

5

Interview Questions

- 1) How do you define investigative journalism?
- 2) What is your evaluation of current practice of investigative journalism in Turkey? Does it comply with your definition?
- 3) Where does investigative news belong to in the newspaper: columns or news stories? Who should practice investigative journalism: columnists or reporters?
- 4) In your opinion, what are the reasons behind the current situation of investigative journalism?
 - a) Do you believe that you can practice journalism autonomously? What kind of interventions / restrictions are you confronted with?
 - i. How do you begin to investigate an event? Does your editor assign them, or do you suggest them yourself?
 - ii. How often do you suggest stories? How do your editors approach your suggestions?
 - iii. What kind of control is exercised on your news stories, to what extent are they altered?
 - iv. Are you informed about the changes made in your stories, by whom? Is your approval/opinion sought prior to change?
 - v. Do you believe that you are able to control the news you made?
 - b) Are you able to plan your daily schedule yourself, or are you dependent on the routine agenda prepared in the bureau?
 - i. Is a daily routine agenda prepared in the bureau?

- ii. Do you have daily news meetings?
 - iii. How often do you go out for news?
 - iv. Does the routine distribution of daily duties allow you time to focus on stories of your own interest?
 - v. How do you arrange your time schedule between routine duties and stories you want to investigate?
- c) How does the news policy of the organization you work for affect your newsmaking process?
- i. Are the sources of investigative news different from the sources of routine stories?
 - ii. Does the difference between your political attitude and attitude of your news organization influence the way you write stories?
 - iii. Do you think that the content and presentation of news stories change according to the political agenda of the day and political-economic affiliations of your news organization?
 - iv. How does compliance with news policy affect the printing of the story? How would your superiors respond to an accurate and important story with a dependable source?
 - v. Is news policy frankly given as a reason for not printing your stories?
 - vi. Is it possible to get a story dissident with news policy printed?

- vii. Do you have problems with your superiors when you make dissident stories?
 - d) Do you believe that you are able to use the journalistic skills and experience you have acquired until now in your current job?
 - i. Are you able to get in touch with the sources that have the most extensive information on an issue? What are the problems you encounter in your relations with sources?
 - ii. How does your current practice of journalism differ from your journalism education? Did you benefit from your education during the course of your work?
 - iii. Are you professionally satisfied with the quality of work you perform?
- 5) Do you think that investigative journalism is still needed? Why/why not?
- 6) Why did you choose journalism as a profession at the first place?
- 7) Do you believe you have job security?
- 8) Would you quit journalism as a profession if you had other means of earning your living?

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW QUOTATIONS

Interview Quotations

Interview with I.

Gazetecilik de aslında araştırmaya dayanır dediğiniz zaman bütün gazetecilerin fiiliyatta araştırmaya dayanan bir meslek icra ettiklerini var saymış oluruz ki bu, gerçeklikle bağdaşmıyor. Dediğim gibi belli bir uzmanlık kazanmış, uğraştığı işlerde katma değeri diğer meslektaşlarından daha fazla olmuş insanların aslında araştırmak için boş bırakıldığını, onlara vakit tanındığını, çeşitli olanaklar tanındığını görüyoruz. (p.52-53)

Eskiden bir olay yerine gidip haber yazdırıp fotoğraf çekip fotoğrafları karanlık odalarda tab edip sonra da merkeze gidip geçmemiz, ondan sonra ertesi gün gazetelerde yayınlanması gerekirdi. Ama şu anda neredeyse gerçek zamanlı bir habercilik yapıldığı için geçmişle mukayese edemeyecek üstünlükleri var bugünün. Ama profesyonel standartların da aynı şekilde yüksek olması gerekir. Siz neredeyse gerçek zamanlı bir habercilik yapıyorsanız karşı karşıya kaldığınız olayın ne olduğunu anlamak için çok ciddi bir birikime sahip olmanız lazım. (p.121)

Interview with S.

Gazetecilik, yasama, yürütme, yargı organlarının aksayan yönlerini ve demokrasi dışındaki birtakım gidişleri, kamuoyu oluşturma gücüyle görsel ya da sözlü olarak topluma sunan yayın organlarıdır. Ve bu sayede de oluşturdukları kamuoyuyla sözünü ettiğim ilk yasama, yürütme ve yargı erklerinin üzerinde bir baskı oluşturur.

Ama bu baskının da temel amacı biraz önce söylediğim gibi bu 4 kuvvetin aksayan, toplumun, halkın aleyhine adımlar atan girişimleri tekrar rayına sokmaktır. Ben gazeteciliği sadece haber, olup biteni vatandaşa duyuran organlar olarak görmüyorum. Yoksa zaten ne olup bittiğini... Bir gazetecinin, bir makineden, bir cihazdan, bir motordan bir farkı kalmazdı. (p.53)

Kesinlikle, hiç tartışılmaz, toplumun araştırmacı gazeteciliğe yönelik aktif bir talebi var. Ama bu talebi bile medya organları yansıtmıyorlar. Talep var ama arz yok. Sonuç itibariyle de bir tekel var medyada. Tekelle kastettiğim şu: Aynı kulvarda, aynı anlayışta, aynı standartlarda gazetecilik yapmak. Mevcut gazetelerin de hepsi hemen hemen basmakalıp yapıda oldukları için de araştırmacı gazeteciliğe zemin yok. (p.65)

Muhalif haber sayısına bakarsanız, Türkiye'nin güllük gülistanlık olması gerekir. Bunda bir terslik var. Bu terslik de iktidarın muhalif, kendisini sıkıntıya sokacak haberlere tahammül etmemesinden kaynaklanıyor. Bunlara tahammül etmediği için de medyayı kontrol altında tutmak istiyor. Ya kimi sermaye gruplarının, kendisine yakın düşünceye sahip sermaye gruplarının medyada yapılanmasına zemin hazırlıyor, ya da mevcut gazete patronlarının bir şekilde aba altından sopa göstererek kendilerine muhalif haber yapmalarının önünü kesmeye çalışıyor. (p.70)

İktidar partileri, ileri demokrasilerde olduğu gibi medyanın eleştiri ve denetleme görevlerine hoşgörüle bakmıyorlar. Medya organları da onlarla endeksli giderek bir yapıya dönüşüyor. Bunun sonucunda kolluk gücünü elinde tutan, devleti yöneten ve

yeri geldiğinde yargıyı yönlendiren bir iktidar yapısının, kendilerini sorgulayan, eleştiren gazeteci tiplemesine tahammülü yok. (p.71)

Zaten bir gazeteci durup dururken kendi kendine bir şey ortaya atmaz. Bir işaret alacak, bir ipucu yakalayacak ki onun üstüne gitsin. Yıllarını bu alana vermiş bir insanın devletin her kademesinde her kurumunda birilerini tanıyor olması çok fevkalade bir şey değil. Karşılıklı güven ilişkisine dayanan bu müessese de size güvenen insanları size kimi belgeleri sızdırması da gayet doğaldır. (p.84)

Benim gazetemde ve gazetenin hiyerarşik yönetim yapısında ‘Şu haberi yapım, şu haberi yapmayın’ diye bir baskıyla karşı karşıya değiliz. Etik kurallara aykırı ve bizi rahatsız edecek bir taleple karşılaşmadık. Ama sonuç itibariyle böyle bir taleple karşılaşmasak bile gazetelerin bir çizgisi var. Çizgisine baktığınızda iktidarla daha iyi geçinmeye gayret eden, iktidara çok fazla muhalif haber yapmama özeni gösteren bir su yatağına girmiş durumda. Bu da neyi getiriyor biliyor musunuz; kaçınılmaz olarak size kendi kendinize otokontrol getiriyor. Yani yaptığınız bir haberi kimse size niye yaptınız demiyor ama o haberin kullanılma şansı çok düşük oluyor. Otokontrol refleksin oluşuyor. Hatta ‘boşa emek harcamayayım, nasıl olsa çıkmaz’ gibi bir güdü var. (p.106-107)

Deneme yanılma derken illa kendi işinizde olması gerekmiyor. Muhalif, her şeye rağmen bildiğini okumaya devam eden insanların başına neler geldiğini görüyoruz. Bu, şu demek değil: birilerinin başına şunlar geldi, ben artık muhalif olmayayım, teslim olayım; bu o değil. (p.109)

İçinizden şunu düşünebilirsiniz; hem istediğimizi yapamıyoruz, otokontrol oluşturuyoruz kendi kendimize deyip sonra da sosyalist belediyelerin ve onların barajlara karşı protestolarının haberlerini yapıp girmesini nasıl sağlıyor diye merak edebilirsiniz. Bu haberler bana göre iktidara muhalif değil. Kendisi için hiçbir risk teşkil etmeyen belediyelerin tepkisinin haber yapılması iktidarı rahatsız etmez. Aksine iktidar bu tür haberlerde çıkarak sözüm ona Türkiye’de demokratik bir ortam, her kesimin kendisini özgürce ifade edebildiği bir zemin, bir medya platformu varmış gibi bunun primini de yapar. (p.130-131)

Bir kere insanların, muhabirlerin kendilerine model aldığı isimler vardır. İşte Uğur Mumcu bunlardan biridir. Çetin Emeç bunlardan biridir. Şimdi bunların yaptığı çalışmalar, ortaya çıkarttığı yolsuzluklar, usulsüzlükler, sistemin aksayan yönlerine cesaretle gitme her genç gazeteci için heyecan verici, bir model alınması gereken davranış olmalı. Doğal olarak bir gazeteci mesleğe başladığında da kendisine eğer bir hedef, bir model seçecekse ağırlıklı olarak bu insanlara yöneliyor. Mesleğe başlayan bir gazeteci bunu hedefler ama biraz önce söylediğim gibi bu hangi dönemde ve kimlerle çalıştığıyla biraz ilintilidir. Bu dönemde araştırmacı gazetecilik aşkıyla, ruhuyla gün gelir böyle olur muyum diye gelen genç gazetecilerin kısa sürede demoralize olup aslında her iktidarda o araştırmacı gazeteciliğe açan kulvarların olmadığını görüp hayal kırıklığı yaşadıklarına tanık oluyorum. (p.137)

Buradaki işimi kaybedersem iş bulur muyum? O konuda çok emin değilim, büyük ihtimalle bulamam. Objektif gazeteciliğinden asla taviz vermeyen bir insanla, onun çalışmasına pek zemin hazırlamazlar. Onun için burada işimi kaybedersem rahatlıkla

iş bulabileceğimi sanmıyorum. İş bulmanın, iş bulmayı gerektirecek donanımlara, koşula, tecrübeye ve başarıya sahip olmama rağmen bunu söylüyorum. (p.141)

Gazeteler yayın politikalarıyla çok aktif muhalefet yapamadıkları için iş köşe yazarlarına kalmış durumda. Hem köşe yazarlığı yapıp hem de araştırmacı gazetecilik yapan isim yok artık. (p.145)

Interview with U.

Bize gösterilmek istenen bir fotoğraf vardır. Devlet olabilir, başka kurum ve kuruluşlar olabilir. O fotoğrafla yetinmeyip bu işin acaba arkasında nasıl bir fotoğraf var deyip bir merakla yola çıkıp o asıl projeksiyonu o fotoğrafa yöneltmeye çalışmak. Bazen devletin âli menfaatleri için çoğu zaman kamuoyundan bilgiler gizlenir. Siz o bilgilerin peşine düşüp o âli menfaatleri de çok fazla umursamadan bir şey yapabiliyorsanız, o hadisenin perde arkasıyla ilgili kısmıdır araştırmacı gazetecilik. (p.53-54)

Türkiye şartları içinde gazetecilik yapıyoruz. Böyle çok üst perdeden sallamanın manası yok. Bu ülkede ya cemaat gazeteleri var, ya da holding gazeteleri var. İki tarafın da sırtında yumurta küfeleri var. Çok özgürlükçü, bağımsız bir gazetecilik anlayışı zaten mümkün değil. Son yıllarda bir de kamplaşma var gazetecilerin arasında. Bir taraf bir tarafı hiç görmüyor, öbürü öbür tarafı görmüyor. (p.72)

İlk dönemlerde çok daha serttim bu konularda. Çok keskin tavrım vardı, bende bir önyargı vardı. Fakat zaman içerisinde ortaya çıkan hukuki boşluklar ve hukuki

hatalarla birlikte bende bir kırılma noktası oldu. Şimdi çok daha soğukkanlı bakıyorum, kesinlikle her önüme gelen belgeyi, iddianamede dahi olsa yazmıyorum, ikna olmuyorum. İddianame ve eklerindeki bilgileri dahi kendi adıma teyit ederek yazmaya çalışıyorum. Çok daha ince eleyip sık dokuyorum ama dediğim gibi bütün bu süreci yaşamadan olmuyor. İdeolojik kamplaşmanın çok keskin olduğu bir ülkede, en fazla da bu gazeteciler her konuda müthiş bir kamplaşma içindedir ve o refleksle hareket ediyorlar. (p.83)

Gazetemde çıkan haberi de toplantılarda eleştiriyorum. Bu süreç ister istemez sizi belli bir süre içerisinde sorun haline dönüştürüyor. Yani siz sorun olmak için bunu söylemiyorsunuz, çok iyi niyetle söylüyorsunuz, ama karşı durduğunuz şey genel bir kanaat olduğu zaman çok affedersiniz ama rüzgâra karşı tükürmek diye bir şey vardır ya, rüzgâr oradan esiyor şu anda. Belki siz haklı bir yerdesiniz ama çok önemli değil nerede olduğunuz o anda. [...] Siz bir taraftan işe dokunmuşsunuz, o netlikte görüyorsunuz. Ve size belli bir süre sonra sadece güncel üzerinden giden, toplumun genel, hemen ikna olduğu konularda sizin de ikna olmanız bekleniyor. (p.104)

Siz çalıştıkça belirli bir süre içerisinde kendi kurumunuzun belli bir yayın politikası olduğunun farkına varıyorsunuz. Ve o kalıp içerisinde haberler yazmak zorunda hissediyorsunuz kendinizi. Ve şöyle bir kaygınız oluşuyor: Bir haber konusu önünüze geldiği zaman ben bunu nasıl yazarsam gazeteye girer? (p.108)

Ben sürekli asker konularında yazan bir muhabirim. Ama ben son dönemde Ahmet Şık ve Nedim Şener olayıyla ilgili yazmıyorum gazetede kolay kolay, Ergenekon bağlantısından çok emin olmadığım için. Ama mesela burada sıkıntı oluyor, bireysel

olarak bu sorunu yaşıyorum. Sen bu alanlarda yazan bir muhabir olarak niye şimdi yazmıyorsun? Ve insanlar sizin niyetinizi, sizin güvenilirliğinizi filan sorgulamaya başlıyorlar. Türkiye gibi kamplaşmış bir yerde siz bir taraf içerisindeyken karşı tarafın argümanı olan bir tutum içerisine girdiğiniz anda bireysel anlamda sıkıntı yaşıyorsunuz. (p.109-110)

Çok suya sabuna dokunmazsınız, bir problem de yaşamazsınız, işinizi yaparsınız, evinize ekmeğinizi götürürsünüz. Ama burada da vicdan muhasebesi giriyor işin içine, kendini sorgulama mekanizması giriyor. Dolayısıyla bence çok da sisteme angaje olmamış gazetecilerin hiçbir zaman iş güvencesi olmaz, mantıksızdır da. Çok böyle kendinizi güvende hissederseniz bu da biraz saçma olur. (p.141)

Interview with M.

Benim için bu iş, bitmeyen sorular sormak. Sürekli merak olgusunu zinde tutmak, değişik açılardan sormak, peşin bir doğruyla hareket etmemek ve verilecek her cevabın da eksik bir cevap olduğunu, mutlaka bir başka soruyla, bir başka doğruyla, bir başka kaynakla teyit edilmeye muhtaç olduğunu görmek demek. (p.54)

Uğur Mumcu unutulmuyor, Abdi İpekçi'nin adı unutulmuyor. Mustafa Ekmekçi unutulmuyor, Hrant Dink unutulmuyor. Onları, yazdıklarından ötürü suçlayanlar unutuluyor, onlar hakkında kirli kampanyalar ve provokasyonlar yürütenler unutuluyor. Ama o provokasyon sahipleri ve soruşturma sahipleri ve yargılama sahipleri hatırlanıyorsa da kötü bir anı olarak hatırlanıyor. Dolayısıyla soru sorma edimi, bu insani edim belki bir süre susturulabilir, belki cevap alamayacak bir süreç

ona yařatılabilir ama ilelebet birinin susturulması mümkün olmuyor. Dolayısıyla toplum buna gemiřte de ihtiya duydu, bugn de muhta, yarın da ihtiya duyacak. (p.67)

Her dnem iktidarları destekleyen, iktidarların desteklediėi medya kuruluřları vardı. Ama o dnem iktidarlar byle si tek partili ve uzun sreli bir biim kazanmadıėı, koalisyonlu yapılardan oluřtuėu ve medya sahipleriyle kısmi ittifaklar kurdukları iin byle si bir medya organizasyonunu ellerinde tutamadılar. (p.74)

Maniplatif, sansasyonel ve ekonomik, politik kaygıları nemseyen bir gazetecilik tarzı ve o ynde rn verme abası gerekleřti, gerekleřiyor, gerekleřecek de. Ama okur nezdinde gereėi arama ve ėrenme abası, halkın bilgi edinme hakkı olgusu nnde bunun ok da bir karřılıėı olduėunu dřnmyorum. (p.80)

Birincisi, iktidara yakın medya kuruluřlarında alıřıp kendisine bu ismi veren gazeteciler; adına cemaat dediėimiz kimi oluřumlar kaynaklarıyla onların hazırladıėı, onların paylařtıėı belgeler doėrultusunda arařtırma kitapları hazırlayan gazetecilik. Bir de bunun dıřında sadece tek yanlı bilgi akıřına deėil, ok kaynaklı bilgi akıřına dayalı, kaynakların her birine dair diėeri dolayımıyla soru sorabilen ve bilgiyi her bir kaynaėın bilgisiyle teyit eden bir bakıř aısıyla hazırlanmıř Uėur Mumcu geleneėinden bir tr gazetecilik var. Ben bu ikincisine kendimi yakın gryorum ve baki olanın ve sonunda kazanacak olan gazeteciliėin bu tr olduėunu dřnmyorum. (p.87)

Bu dönemin farklı ve öznel koşulları var. En hafif deyişle iktidarın kendisini AK Parti diye tanıtmaya karşılık siz AKP kelimesini kolay kolay kullanamıyorsanız, bir tarıkata cemaat, bir cemaate hareket demek zorunda hissediyorsanız kendinizi, bu baskı artık görünür ve su yüzüne çıkmış demektir. (p.113)

Gazetecilik özellikle bilginin çabuk halka ulaştırılması ve dolayısıyla aslında gazeteciliğin ömrünün aslında bir günden ibaret oluşu, yani yarına pek bir şeyin devredilemeyişi nedeniyle çoğunlukla gazetecinin bilgisi yüzeysel kalıyor. Birçok konuya dair yüzeysel bilgilerden ibaret kalıyor. Bir konuya dair derinlikli bilgi biriktirebilmesi mümkün olamıyor. Dolayısıyla bu hengâmede bir konuya derinlikli ve yoğunlaşan ölçüde yönelmiş bir gazetecinin adı da araştırmacı gazeteci olabiliyor. (p.117-118)

Zaten benim haber yaptığım konuyla üzerinde araştırma yaptığım konu hemen hemen aynı. İnsan hakları, düşünceyi ifade hürriyeti ve benzeri konularla ilgileniyorum. Dolayısıyla yargısal süreçleri de içeriyor bu durum. Zaten takip ettiğim ve hâkim olduğum bir davayla ilgili bir araştırma yapmıştım. Dolayısıyla derinleşme, haberi yaptıktan sonra meydana geldi. Dolayısıyla fazladan bir zaman ayırma değil, rutinle ilgilendiğim sırada derinleşme diyebiliriz buna. (p.123)

Interview with Ç.

Karmakarışık bir dosya düşünün, her bir parçası bir yerde... Bütün onlardan hareketle ilmek ilmek örerek bir bütünü bir fotoğrafı netleştiriyorsunuz. Ama günümüzde var mıdır, yok denecek kadar az bu türlü çalışmalar. [...] Her şeyden

önce bir işaret fişğine ihtiyacınız var. Bu bazen bir belgeyle gelir, bazen tek bir sözcükten hareketle gelir. Tıkandığı yer olmaz mı, tabii ki tıkanır, onu da not alırsınız. Dönersiniz, dolaşırsınız, sonra tekrar o konuya çalışırsınız. Belki de şuraya dönüyoruz; gazetecilikte aslında temel olan şey bir meraktır. Kuşkusu, merakı yoksa hiçbir zaman yapamaz. (p.55-56)

Türkiye’de son dönemde daha çok ihtiyaç var araştırmacı gazeteciliğe. Çünkü bizde devlet yetkilisi olsun, bakanlar olsun, başbakan olsun insanların gözünün içine bakarak doğruyu çarpıtabilir, gerçeği söylemeyebilirler. Bizim de işimiz gerçeğe ulaşmak. (p.64)

Son 5 yıldır yolsuzluk konusu çok kanıksandı toplumda. Siyasetçiyle iş adamının çıkar ilişkisi çok olağan karşılanıyor. Çok basit bir şey söyleyeyim, bu hükümet döneminde 2005 yılında bir şey yazmıştım, 5 tane bakan özel olarak bir araya geldi ve bunun böyle olmadığını anlattılar. İsimleri geçtiği için rahatsız oldular. 2010’da yine bir başka haberde yine bakanların ismi geçti, inanır mısınız, yazılı açıklama bile yapmadılar. (p.66)

Araştırmacı haber kaynağı dediğimiz kaynak seçicidir. Herkesle görüşmez. Ama bir ilişki yerli yerine oturmuşsa asla seni yanıltmıyor. (p.94)

Mesleğe ilk başladığımda Uğur Mumcu’nun bir devlet görevlisi olduğuna inanmıştım. Diyordum ki bir insanın bunları öğrenmesine imkân yok, demek ki bu devletin adamı, devlet buna veriyormuş dedim. Oysa bugün dönüp baktığımda

diyorum ki asla değildi. Çünkü bir gazetecinin ulaşamayacağı, öğrenemeyeceği hiçbir bilgi belge yoktur. Yeter ki kurduğu ilişkiler sağlam olsun. (p.94)

Bir şey anlatmıştı, çok önemli bir olaydı, dedi ki resmi gazetede şu tarihte yayınlanmıştı. Ben de biraz pımpirikli bir tip olmuşum, bir bakayım dedim, nasıl yazmışlar, baktım o gün resmi gazete çıkmamış. Haberi kullanmadım. Bu aslında çok psikopatça bir bakış, kaynak açısından söylüyorum. Ama çok ilginç bir yere götürdü bizi. Kaynak sordu neden yazmadınız diye, o gün gazete çıkmamış dedim, yok böyle bir olay. Hah dedi olay budur. ‘Ben öyle armut piş ağzıma düş gazeteci istemem’ dedi. (p.96)

Siz dersiniz şu konuyla ilgili bir şey var, ben demem mesela, her gün onu sorar. Psikolojik olarak sizde bir baskı yaratır bu. Çünkü siz zamana yayarak dört başı mamur bir şey olsun ki hem olayı iyi anlatabilesiniz yazarken, hem de siz iyi anlayabilesiniz, çünkü bir stres ortamından uzaklaşırsınız. (p.119)

Günlük çalışma temposu belli zaten. Yani biraz zamanı verimli kullanmanızla ilgili bir şey. Önemli olan zaten bu yoğunluğu bir disipline edip zaman disipliniyle çalışmaktır. Mesela baktığınız zaman benim açımdan baktığınızda saat 10.00’da bir toplantıdan çıkıyorum, 3’e kadarki aralıkta gazete için yapmam gerekeni yapmam gerekiyor benim. Yani 5 saat. Ne yapacaksam yapmam gerekiyor, bana verilen süre bu. 3’ten sonra yeni bir süre başlıyor, o süreyi değerlendiriyorsunuz. Kendi gündeminizin olması gerek, Öbür türlü de şöyle bir risk var, rutinin peşinde rüzgâr olur gidersiniz, yaprak gibi savrulursunuz. (p.123)

Interview with F.

Araştırmacı haber aslında bir tür puzzle gibidir. Çünkü ben birçok haberde işe başlarken nasıl bir sonuca ulaşacağımı bilemem, kestiremem. Parçalar bir araya geldiğinde bir şema ortaya çıkıyor, o zaman anlıyorsun. Mesela ‘İzmir faşisttir’ diye bir şey yapıldı. Bunun üzerine İzmir’e gittim ve orada bütün siyasi partilerle görüştüm, bütün akademisyenlerle görüştüm, sivil toplumcularla görüştüm ve sıradan insanlarla görüştüm. Hakikaten ben de pekâlâ ‘İzmir faşisttir’ denebilir diye düşünüyordum. Fakat döndüğümde aslında öyle olmadığını gördüm. Bir sürü şey var, her şehirde olduğu gibi İzmir’de de farklı dinamikler var. Faşisti de var, solcusu da var, feministi de var, muhafazakârı da var, eşcinseli de var, homofobiği de var filan. (p.56)

Türkiye’de hakikatler pazarı var. Bu pazarda herkes kendine göre hakikat satıyor. Siyasi malzeme olarak hakikat satıcılığı var. Bütün bunları bir kenara bırakıp ben hakikati yazarım, kime yarıyorsa umurumda değil diyen gazeteciler de barındırılmıyor. AKP için bazıları araştırmacı gazetecilik yapıyor, CHP için bazıları yapıyor, belgeler onlara göre yayınlanıyor. (p.80)

Doğuda bir belediye başkanıyla ilgili haber yapmıştım. İlginçti adamın uygulamaları. Fakat yayınlamadı benim yayın yönetmenim. Ve bana şunu söyledi; ben yayınlarım ama sonra patron beni mahvedecek, bunu ister misin? Burada şöyle bir şey oluyor; yayın yönetmeni engel olmuyor sana ama bir şeyi hatırlatıyor sana. O öyle deyince elbette tabii ki senin başına iş açılacağına yayınlanmasın daha iyi diyorsun.

Dolayısıyla editoryal bağımsızlığa kimin halel getirdiğini de kestiremiyorsun.

(p.101-102)

Haberi yazdığın ekranın tam olarak yatak odandır. Orada senin yaptığın her şey en mahrem şeydir. Ekranın, senin mahremiyetindir. Ama Türkiye’de buna saygı duyulmuyor. Bütün bizim hayatımız editörün gözü önünde. Editörün, patronun, şuyun, buyun ya da haber kaynağının, ya da polisin. Öyle bir noktaya varıldı ki saygı duyulmadığı için Ahmet Şık’ın basılmamış kitabı silinebiliyor. Birinin, senin yatak odana girme hakkı olamaz. Ama Türkiye’de gazeteciler mağduru oynuyor; ‘Ah, geldiler ve sildiler.’ Mesela ‘ben bilgisayarıma baktırtmam’ diyebilmen için Türkiye’de editoryal bağımsızlık lafının biliniyor olması lazım. (p.113)

Plazada haber yazılmaz. Aslında eğer senin böyle bir ofise gitmeme lüksün doğarsa, bunu sağlarsan zamanın çok, çünkü benim önümde kitaplar vardı, ben pek çok haberlerimin yüzde 90’ını kitaplarla da destekliyorum. Ama her gün büroya gidip gelenin böyle bir motivasyonu olmaz. Evet, bunu yaptığım için her gün bir haber yazmıyorum, yazamam. Ama haftada bir tane doğru düzgün haber yazıyorum. Bence bu yeter zaten. Bir muhabir zaten ayda en fazla 10 tane özel haber yapmalı ki bu da çok zordur. (p.121-122)

Muhabirin bir haberi gidip araştırıp yazması bir kere maliyetli bir şey. Bunun bir ekonomisi var. Uçağa biniyorsun, otelde kalıyorsun. Bazen önem verdiğin halde gidip istediğin sonucu alamadığın için yayınlamayadığın haberler oluyor. O yüzden gazeteler tabii ki bunu yapmak yerine köşe yazarına yorum yazdırıyor. (p.125)

Türkiye’de bizim eleştirdiğimiz habercilik şu: Telefon açıyor milletvekiline, ‘Ahmet bey, bugün şu şunu söyledi, siz ne diyorsunuz?’ O anlatıyor. Bir de Mehmet’i arıyorsun, bir de Fatih’i ve Ayşe’yi, al sana haber. Böyle bir haber yok ki, bu haber değil. Ama Türkiye’de siyasilerin her sözü haber. Niye böyle, bilmiyorum. (p.127)

Şöyle bir şey oldu Türkiye’de; giderek muhabirler, ses kayıt cihazı gibi kullanılmaya başlandı. O yüzden de esas gazetecilik yapanlar, sanki çok şahane iş yapıyormuş gibi göründü. Hâlbuki zaten yapılması gereken şey, bir konuyu araştırarak yazmak.

Bunun etraflica araştırılıp taraflara sorarak, tarafların da olmadığı belge ve bilgilere ulaşarak herhangi bir haber metni yazmaktır. (p.128)

Mümkünse, bu çok teşvik edilir, basit gazetecilik yapacaksın. Anlaşılır denir buna, ‘anlaşılır haber yaz’ der editör. Anlaşıldan kastı suya sabuna dokunmamak aslında. (p.129)

Yazıyorsun koca bir hikâyeyi, küçük bir paragrafa sıkıştırıyorlar. Ve işin en saçma, en iğrenç yanını kullanıyorlar. İkincisi de ‘Destan mı yazıyorsun?’ diyor, ‘Kısa kes’ diyor. Hâlbuki araştırmacı gazetecinin elindeki tek silah kelimelerdir. Sen bir kere adamın elinden kelimeleri alıyorsun, diyorsun ki ‘bir paragraf yaz.’ Hiçbir araştırmaya dayalı haber bir paragrafta özetlenemez, çünkü her şeyin sebep-sonucu vardır. Ben o yüzden de biraz, hep dergilerde çalıştım. Çünkü sana daha fazla yer ayrılıyor. (p.129)

Mardin’de 44 kişinin öldürüldüğü Bilge köyüne gitmiştik mesela. Biz bir grup gazeteci, klişeler peşindeler, haklı olarak. Çünkü gazeteler bunu istiyor. Mesela

editör diyor ki ‘Orada bir kadın mevzuu var mı bu katliam işinde?’ Muhabir de soruyor bir iki kişiye. Zaten orada hiç kimsenin kafası yerinde değil. Biri diyor ki ‘Evet, işte o onun karısıyla bilmem ne yapmıştı, öbürü de...’ Hemen gidiyor, manşet. Ama aslında hakikat bu değil. Pekiyi burada tek suçlu muhabir mi, değil aslında. Ondan bu bilgiyi isteyen de suçlu. (p.132)

Türkiye’de editörler okura seçenek vermemek üzere motive oluyorlar. Yani ‘Kesin bilgi şudur.’ Ama bazı toplumsal olayların kesin şeyi olamaz. (p.133)

Yeni gazetecilerde, gençlerde şöyle bir yanılsama var; zannediyorlar ki gazetecilik yapınca insanlar seni tanıyor, şöhret oluyorsun, hayatın çok güzel oluyor filan... O yüzden katlanıyorlar sürekli. Bir süre sonra artık yönelebileceğin başka bir vasfın da yok. Hep katlanarak gittiği için, sonra her şeyini ele geçirmiş bir sistemle karşılaşıyorsun, başka hiçbir vasıf kalmıyor sende. (p.136)

Ben [X] dergisinde çalışırken, geliyordum uçakla Ankara’dan İstanbul’a her hafta. Beni havaalanından alıyorlardı ve ‘Şirkete mi gidiyoruz?’ diye sorardı şoför. Ben de ‘evet, şirkete’ derdim. Parmak iziyle filan giriyorsun. Bu, bir muhabirin mutsuz olması için yeterli bir sebep. Öyle bir yerde haber de yazılamaz, o binada benim anladığım anlamda gazetecilik yapılamaz. (p.137)

Buna para da ayırmıyor gazeteler. Mesela Batman’a gideceğim, ‘Gerek yok’ diyor, ‘Telefonda hallet. Belediye Başkanı ile görüş’ diyor. O haber değil ki. Ve giderek araştırmacı gazeteciler ses kayıt cihazına dönüşüyor. Sürekli telefondan al, telefondan al deyip deyip onu niteliksiz hale getiriyorsun. (p.139)

Türkiye’de en iyi muhabir bile işsiz kalabilir. Çünkü Türkiye’de iyi bir muhabire çoğunlukla ihtiyaç duyulmaz. Ahmet Şık örnektir. Ahmet’i niçin işten attılar? Aslında sendikal haklarını talep ettiği için attılar. Sonra ne oldu biliyor musun, Ahmet hiçbir yerde iş bulamadı. Çünkü karşı grup da onu işe almadı. Centilmenlik anlaşması diye bir şey var. Bir yerden atılınca başka yerde iş bulmak çok zor. (p.142)

Türkiye’de kimse iyi gazeteci aramıyor. Kimse şunu söyleyemez; ‘İyi muhabirdir, biz onu atmayalım, komplekslerine katlanalım, sonuçta iyi haber yapıyor’ demez. Çünkü adamın iyi haber umurunda değil. Sayfa dolsun yeter. Türkiye’deki en işsiz gazeteciler, en iyi gazetecilerdir. (p.143)

Interview with G.

Aslında haberlerde ideolojinin aranmamasının taraftarıyım ben. Haberlerde ideoloji olmaz. Çünkü haber, var olan bir gerçeğin halka iletilmesidir, halkın bilgilendirilmesini getirir. Zaten bir haberin ideolojik olması zorunluluğu yoktur. Fakat onu siz ideolojik anlamda şekillendirir ve iletmeye çalışırsanız böyle bir kaygıyı taşırsınız. (p.56)

Bütün gazeteler zarar ediyor. Ölçüp biçtiğinizde bunların çıkmaması, yayınlanmaması gerekiyor. Fakat buna rağmen çıkıyor ve yayınlanıyor. Çünkü o gazetenin o holding sahibine kazancı başka alanlarda oluyor. İşte asıl tehlike de burada başlıyor. Çünkü holding, o yayın organını bir silaha da dönüştürebiliyor. Bir

silaha dönüştürmesi, o holdingin aynı zamanda siyasi iktidarla olan ilişkilerini düzenleme aracı olarak algılanıyor, ele alınıyor. (p.77)

Alınan haber her zaman verilen habere daha önemlidir. Her zaman daha doğrudur, gerçekçidir. Çünkü size verilen bir haberde manipülasyon olma ihtimali çok daha fazladır. Ve size verilen bir haber devamlı olarak o veren kişinin çalıştığı kurumun lehine olan bir şey olduğu göz ardı edilmeyecek şekilde bilinir. Alınan haber ise en azından o olayın eksikliklerini, çelişkilerini ortaya koyan haberlerdir. (p.86)

En başta basında gazetecilerin birebir yaptığı haberler vardır. O gazetecilerin yaptığı haberlerin yayınlanmaması zaten en büyük belirtisi. Daha sonra eğer haber bir anlamda yayınlanmamışsa veyahut da bir başkasının yaptığı haberi aynı ofis içerisinde duyup yayınlanmamışsa bunu hissediyorsunuz, bunu görüyorsunuz. Bir de haber yayınlandıktan sonra birtakım bürokratlardan, siyasilerden gelen tepkiler vardır. Eğer olumsuz bir haberse bu ta muhabire kadar, niçin böyle yazıldı, ya da, bu haber gerçekten doğru mudur, değil midir, diye size de artık son derece cüretkâr bir şekilde iletiliyor. (p.108)

Interview with V.

Herkesin bir bakış açısı var. Biri bu tarafından bakar, biri bu tarafından bakar.

Herkesin gerçeği biraz kendisine. Ama ortada bir gerçek varsa, ben gerçekten yana taraf olmak isterim. (p.57)

Interview with B.

Her haberin iki tarafı oluyor ister istemez. Genelde iki taraf açısından nesnel olarak yansıtmak diye genel bir kabul vardır, öyle tarif edilir tarafsızlık. Ama ben çok öyle olduğuna inanmıyorum. İster istemez bir taraf olunuyor birçok şeyde. Genel olarak bir gerçeği ortaya koyacaksa, o gerçekten etkilenecek taraflar nasıl etkileniyor, yani bir tarafın çıkarı mı var, diğer tarafın yararına mı, zararına mı, bunlarla birlikte ortaya konmalı. (p.57)

Türkiye için konuşursak çok tepeden bir siyaset yürütülüyor, bunlar doğrudan insanların günlük yaşamına da bir şekilde yansıyor. Fakat onlar hep edilgen durumdadır. Edilgen durumda olanların harekete geçebilmeleri için belli gerçekleri görmeleri gerekiyor. Burada da gazetecilere bir sorumluluk düşüyor, gerçekleri yansıtma bakımından. Gerçekten halk da bilecek ki bir şekilde daha rahat ne yapacağını bilecek, dostunu düşmanını, nasıl hareket etmesi gerektiğini bilecek, tepki vermesini bilecek. Ama dediğim gibi ben bu işte belli kırılmalar olduğunu düşünüyorum. O kadar da korkunç boyutlarda olmayabiliyor belli şeyler. (p.66-67)

Bugün çatışan belli kesimlerin birbirine karşı sürdürdüğü politik manevraların bir aleti haline getiriliyor aslında arkadaşlarımız. Aslında medya uzun yıllardır böyle bir amaçla kullanılıyor. Halkı belli bir fikre ikna etmek, kanalize etmek için kullanılıyor. Bu haberler de bunun bir parçası aslında. Ki bu yeni bir şey değil, öteden beri yapılan bir şey. (p.79)

Tekel eyleminde ilk defa ‘söylediler’ onlar, söyledi fiili kullanıldı. 4/C’yi kabul etmiyorlar değil de 4/C’nin kölelik sistemi olduğunu iddia ettiler diye yansırdı başka zaman olsaydı bu iş. Editoryal anlamda da belki arkadaşlarımızın eli rahatlatılsa onlar da aslında çok daha farklı, güzel işler yapabileceklerini gösterdiler. (p.114)

Interview with R.

Diyelim bir gecekondu yıkımı, benim elime geçen belgeye göre bunların hepsi kaçak ve hakikaten kanunen yıkılması gerekiyor. Ben onu yazmam. Oradaki insani ölçüt, bana göre herkesin konut hakkıdır. Orada tarafım, kendimi taraf hissederim. Objektif haber diye bir şey yoktur aslında, herkes dünya görüşüne uygun haber yapar. (p.57)

Birisi hakkında kasıtlı olarak belge edinmeye çalışıyorsanız sorunludur. Ya da o belge geldiyse haber yapmıyorsanız sorunludur. (p.80)

Araştırmacı gazeteciliğin özünde devletin gizlediği bir şeye ulaşmaksa amaç, bence gelinen noktada devletin verdiği şeye araştırmacı gazetecilik denmeye başladı. Onu niye verdikleri gibi bir sorgulamaya gidilmemeye başladı. (p.87)

Benim özgürlük kahramanı olarak nitelendirdiğim birisi onlara göre terörist olabilir. Benim terör olarak tanımladığım şeye onlar tamamen milli hassasiyetlerle yaklaşabilir. En azından toplumun duyarlılığını gözetken bir çizgi var diyelim. O da yaptığım haberin niteliğini değil ama özellikle dilini etkiliyor. (p.113)

Bizde şöyle bir şey yok; olayları bir hikâye tarzına döküp, üstünde 3-5 gün çalışıp bir şeyi ortaya koymak yok, biz bunların hepsini çok hızlı yapmak zorundayız bu medyada. Çünkü hem çalışma koşulları, hem gazetecilik biçimi Türkiye’deki şunu dayatıyor: Siyasileri takip et, o gün bir patlama olmuşsa onu izle ve ertesi gün, Türkiye gibi ülkelerde gündem de çok hızlı değiştiği için, onu unut, hemen başka bir şeye bak. (p.120)

Şimdi bizim gibi memleketlerde araştırmacı gazeteciliği de ancak unutmayarak yapabilirsiniz. O da nasıl olabilir; hani patlama dedik, o patlamanın bir soruşturma süreci, bir araştırma süreci kamusal güçler tarafından mutlaka yapılıyor. Onu siz diğerleri gibi unutmayıp bir tarafa not alıp bir vakitte telefonla ‘Abi böyle bir şey vardı, ne oldu?’ dersiniz aslında o, araştırmacı gazetecilik dediğimiz şeyin ABC’sini yapmış oluyorsunuz. Onu not alıp mutlaka günlük akış içinde boş vaktiniz olduğunda bunu sorarak yapabilirsiniz bana kalırsa. (p.123)

Teorik olarak şunu idareye söylediğinizde; ‘çok büyük bir işin peşindeyim ama şu şehirlere gitmem gerekiyor ve şu belgeleri alıp okuma yapmam gerekiyor’ dediğinde evet mutlaka yap deniyor ama Türkiye’de giderek az kişiyle çalışan ama çok iş yaptırılmaya çalışılan bir medya yapısı var. En basiti benim çalıştığım kurum için, ben burada mesleğe başladığımda şu ankinin üç katı insan çalışıyordu burada, ama aynı işi yapıyoruz. O teori şöyle bir şeye dönüşüyor: Ben bugün gideyim, yarın gideyim dediğinizde o esnada bir rejim krizi, bir bilmem ne şeyi patladığında ‘Ha, tamam o biraz daha beklesin, bunu yapayım’a dönüşüyor. Pratikte, fiili imkânsızlıklar yaşıyabılıyorsunuz. (p.124)

Mesleğimi de seviyorum ama çok bıkkınım. Öyle bir şey de var. O bıkkınlık da istediğim tarzda uzun süredir çalışmıyor olmaktan kaynaklı. Bir süre sonra şunu arzuluyorsunuz; daha sofistike, daha nitelikli işler yapmak istiyorsunuz ve daha fazla kendinize ait zamanınız olsun istiyorsunuz. Artık ben de gece 1'e kadar çalışmayayım diyorsunuz, bıkkınlık oradan kaynaklanıyor. Çünkü çalışmak zorunda kalıyorsunuz. (p.136)

Normalde gazeteciliği seçme sebebi belki biraz daha özgür olabilmektir diğer mesleklere oranla. İşte mesai mevhumu olmaması derken aslında hep negatif anlamda söylemiyoruz bunu. Pozitif bir anlamı vardı. Ama sermaye diyor ki 'Hayır, artık habere ulaşma biçimleri, şunlar, bunlar değişti. Ben 40 kişiyle çalışmam, 1 kişi aynı anda 3 tane alana bakabilir, çok derin de yazmaya gerek yok. Doğal olarak sen benim söylediğim vakitler içerisinde benim söylediğim biçimde benim söylediğim tipte bir gazetecilik yapmalısın ki benim de bazı kanallarla başımı belaya sokma. Yani beklenen şey aslında bir standart iş tarifinin karşılığı, tezahürü. Ayrık bir şey de istemiyor. (p.139)

Interview with D.

Araştırmacı gazetecilik sadece toplumsal çarpıklıkları ortaya çıkaran bir şey olmayabilir, araştırmacı gazetecilik bir toplum alanında profesyonel çalışma da olabilir; farklı kaynaklardan güvenilir verileri toplarsınız, harmanlarsınız, uzman görüşleri alırsınız, bu da bir araştırmacı gazetecilik. (p.55)

Araştırmacı gazeteci pek sevilmebilir. Yolsuzluk yapan kişi araştırmacı gazeteciyi sevmeyebilir. Ama araştırmacı gazeteci her zaman toplumun ihtiyaç duyduğu anlamda her zaman kötü olarak kalmalıdır. (p.58)

Hiçbir zaman gazeteciliğin temsil ettiği kamu yararı, halk adına, toplumun yararına falan gibi kavramlarla büyümedi gazetecilik. Biz bunu şimdi muazzam şekilde gelişmiş sermaye yapısının içerisine infiltre etmeye çalışıyoruz. Bu yapılanmanın bir parçası dahi olsan senin öncelikli kılman gereken şey, halkın kamu yararadır, halkın öğrenme hakkıdır. [...] Sermaye devlet, kendi yaptıkları o kadar bir hareket biçimine alışmış ki dışarıdan bir gazeteciyi kendi çalışması içine sokmak çok garip geliyor onlara. (p.61)

Toplumu itibarlaştırmanın yolu gazeteciliğin itibarlaştırılması ama tabii tersi de geçerli. İtibarlı bir medya ortamı arıyorsak o toplumun dönüşmesi gerekiyor. (p.65)

Hem araştırmacı gazeteci olarak öne çıkan ve varlık gösteren insan yok, hem de bu varlık gösterme çok fazla konjonktürel ve çıkar ilişkilerine bağlı. Böyle yapıldı diye reddedecek değilim, ne kadarı yapılsa araştırmacı gazetecilik, bir şeylerin ortaya çıkması iyidir, ama bunların sürekli belirli şartlarda ve belirli frekanslarda ortaya çıkması bir kazanım değil aslında meslek açısından. (p.79)

Bu biraz da o muhabirin bunu içselleştirip içselleştirmemesiyle ilgili. Muhabirin tutumu çok önemli orda. Muhabir onu fark eder, böyle bir tetikçilik rolü kendisine biçilmiş mi biçilmemiş mi. O yolda devam edebilir, onun nimetlerinden de faydalanır

devam ederse. Ama buna karşı tutum da geliştirirsin, kimse de bir şey yapamaz ona.

(p.81)

Gazeteci o işyerine geldiği zaman kimlerle ilgili haber yapılıp yapılmayacağını bilir. “İyi” bir gazeteciyseniz, medya grubunun hangi sektörlerde varlık gösterdiği, hangi gruplarla yakın ilişkileri olduğu, hangi işletmelerden reklam aldığı veyahut politik çevrelerle iyi geçindiğini az çok bilirsiniz. Ve dolayısıyla Türkiye’de gazetecilik her bir gazetecinin işe başvurduğu zaman kendi duruşunu ortaya koyduğu bir medya ortamı değil. Geldiği zaman genel kabulleri görerek ona göre hareket etme eğilimi gösteren bir meslek ne yazık ki, genellemek durumunda kalıyoruz tabii, çünkü hangi sermaye çevresine giderseniz gidin bu hareket tarzı var. Kendi grubunu şaşırtan gazeteciyi biz ne yazık ki fazla göremiyoruz. (p.108)

Araştırmacı gazetecilik sanki daha uzun soluklu bir iş. Haberciliğin elbette kendi içerisinde bir şeyi var, çabuk hareket etmek istersiniz ama bu hıza en uyumsuz gelen bir çalışma tarzı araştırmacı gazetecilik. Verilerin doğruluğu ve birbiriyle uyumluluğu, bilgilerin teyit edilmişliği çok daha itinalı bir çalışmanın parçası. O yüzden çok fazla editör arkadaşların günlük stresi içinde gitmesi gereken bir çalışma değil. (p.120)

Interview with T.

Bugünkü koşullarda hak haberciliği yapan, insan hakları ihlalleriyle ilgilenen, sınıfsal bir tutumu olan bir gazeteci aklıma geliyor. (p.60)

Son 8 yılda merkez medyanın kaymasıyla ilgili de bir durum var. Daha önce çok tek tip olan gazetelerde bir çeşitlilik oldu ama bu çeşitlilik, biraz da iktidar mücadelelerinin yansıması basına. Hükümet’e çok yakın sermaye gruplarının gazetecilik tarzı ile daha önce merkezde oturan, merkezi temsil eden gazetelerin konumlanması ve bir çatışması var. Bu çatışmanın içerisinde yeni tür de bir gazetecilik ortaya çıkmaya başlıyor gibi ama bunun net tanımlarını şu anda yapamıyoruz. Bir anda Hükümet’e yakın gazetelerin resmi ideolojiyle, devletle olan hesaplaşmaları çerçevesinde gerçekten de bugüne kadar konuşulmayan, konuşulması cesaret isteyen konular giderek oralarda da yer buldu ve oralarda çok etkili bir biçimde yer alınca merkez medya da buna kayıtsız kalamadı. Ama tıpkı ülkenin gidişatıyla ilgili konularda tartıştığımız ‘Nereye gidiyoruz, olumlu bir yöne mi olumsuz bir yöne mi gidiyoruz?’ sorusunun yanıtı basın için de böyle. Hani olumlu bir yöne mi gidiyoruz, bazı tabular yıkıldı, Kürt sorununda olsun, devletin işlediği suçlarda olsun bazı tabular yıkıldı ama yerine bambaşka tabular yerleşmeye başlıyor. Din meselesi çok yeni bir tabu mesela. Bugün birçok olgu, olay bu zeminde, bu çerçevede tartışılmaya başlıyor. Beri yandan bazı cemaatler artık dokunulmazlığa kavuşuyor, onlara ilişkin haberler çok büyük sıkıntılar var, kimse onlara bulaşmak istemiyor. Yani taşlar yerinden oynadı ve henüz oturmadı yerine.

Resmi ideolojinin çizdiği çerçevede çok büyük aşınmalar oldu ama yerine gelende de yine belli tabular ve yeni bir “resmi ideoloji” oluşuyor. (p.72-73)

Araştırma yaptıkça önünüze yeni sorular çıkacaktır, yeni kaynaklara ulaşmanız mümkün olacaktır. O olayı bütün yönleriyle derinlemesine ortaya çıkarmaya çalışıyorsanız zaten bir kaynaktan başkasına doğru hızlıca akmanız gerekir ve onun da sonu olmaz. (p.95)

Şemdinli davasında Yaşar Büyükanıt’a dava açıldığına ilişkin benim haberim 100-200 vuruşluk bir haber şeklinde girmişti. Ama diğer gazetelerde bu haber manşetti. Bu mesela çok ciddi bir engelleme aslında. Çünkü o gün gazete daha ulusalcı bir pozisyonda durduğu için bu haberi yok da sayamadı ama çok küçük gördü. (p.103)

Genelde bunlar haber müdürüyle muhabir arasında bir iç boşaltma şeklinde geçer. Bu, sadece bir of demektir, o kadar. Bizim başlığa, spota, yayın politikasına, ya da o haberin nasıl gireceğine dair çok spesifik durumlar hariç olmak üzere belirleyici olmamız mümkün değil. Muhabir haberini yazıp atar, ondan sonra kendi malı değildir artık o haber, gazete yönetiminin malıdır, istediği biçime sokma hürriyeti vardır. (p.105)

Haber bir inşa sürecidir, gerçekliğin yeniden kurulmasıdır, dolayısıyla aynı olayı başka bir türlü de yazabilmeniz size büyük bir özgürlük sağlar. Bu tabii çok güçlü, her şeyi belirleyen bir şey değil ama yine de sunduğum haberlerin gazete tarafından kayıtsız kalınamayacak bir olayda değerlendirilmek zorunda olması bana da bir güç veriyor. Yani Şemdinli olayını takip eden başka birisi daha devletçi bir bakış açısıyla olayları yazabilir ve gazete de onu böyle kullanabilirdi. Ama ben bunu farklı bir yönüyle yazdığım için gazete de o haberlere ihtiyaç duyduğu için onları öyle kullanmak durumundaydı. Böyle bir mücadele ne ile ne arasında dersiniz, buna ideolojik mücadele diyebiliriz. Ve gazetelerde de şuna özen gösterildiğini de düşünüyorum ve fark ediyorum; gerek köşe yazarı gerekse muhabir bakımından farklı dünya görüşleri olan muhabirlere bir tolerans olduğunu görüyorum, onun da gazeteye zenginlik kattığını düşünüyorlar. Bu da önemli bir şey aslında. Ben bir

sosyalist olarak burjuva basında neler yapabilirime verilen yanıt bakımından önemli.
(p.110-111)

Araştırmacı gazetecilik gibi ayrı bir kategorinin olabilmesi bu medya sisteminde pek mümkün değil. Çünkü muhabirler çok yoğun bir iş yükü altında çalışıyorlar, rutinleri takip etmek durumundalar, ya da kendilerinden istenen ısmarlama haberleri yapmak durumundadırlar. Bunun dışında bir konuya ilişkin derinlemesine, ayrıntılı, belki aylar, yıllar sürebilecek bir araştırmacı gazetecilik faaliyetini yürütmeleri bu çalışma koşulları içerisinde pek mümkün değil. (p.118)

Bazen bir muhabir ayrıksı olarak bir konuya çok yoğunlaşır, bu çalışma temposu içerisinde de bu tip konuları kendisi için bir araştırmacı gazetecilik alanı belirler ve onunla yoğunlaşabilir. Benim için mesela Hrant Dink dosyası böyle bir şeydi. Ve araştırmacı gazetecilik anlamında çalışabildiğim nadir konulardan biri oydu. Mesela bunun için Trabzon ve İstanbul'da ağırlıklı olarak çalışmak gerekir, ama benim yoğun gündemim nedeniyle bu iki şehre de, Trabzon'a hiç gidemedim, İstanbul'a da çok sınırlı olarak gittim bu haberle ilgili olarak. Daha çok bu haberin aynı zamanda gazetede yer bulabilmesi nedeniyle bir esneklik gösterildi. Buna zaman ayırdığımda bunun gazetede bir manşet haber olarak konuşulacağı yöneticiler tarafından bilindiği için bu konuda bir esneklik gösterildiğini söyleyebilirim. (p.118-119)

Bugün Türkiye'de araştırmacı gazeteci bir elin parmağını geçmez ve araştırma yapılan konular da çok sınırlıdır. Daha çok Türkiye'de araştırmacı gazetecilik biraz da yolsuzluklar, derin devlet gibi konularla ilgili. Esasen çevreyle ilgili bir konu da

araştırmacı gazeteciliğe konu olabilir ama Türkiye’de bugün böyle bir pratik yok.

(p.131)

Belli bir yaşın üstüne gelen gazeteci açısından, 40’lı yaşları aşan bir gazeteci açısından, yönetici olamıyorsa ve köşe yazarı olamıyorsa ciddi bir işsizlik korkusu başlıyor. Çünkü hem gazeteden maddi anlamda beklentisi yükseliyor, hem o yaştaki bir gazetecinin söylenen her şeyi itirazsız kabul etmesi daha zor oluyor. Gençler giriyorlar bir yere ve çok düşük ücretlere çalışıyorlar. İşlere koşturabilecek, denileni yapabilecek, beklentisi çok olmayan bir çalışan tipi daha çok tercih ediliyor. (p.142)

Aslında gazeteciliğin en temel birimi olması gereken ve en değerli, en üzerine titrenilesi olması gereken muhabirlik, çok gözden düşmüş durumda. Asıl muhabirliği, araştırmacı gazetecilik bağlamında olsun, başka gazetecilik pratikleri açısından asıl muhabirliği bugün köşe yazarları yapmaya çalışıyor. Yani bugün bir köşe yazarı oturuyor, Balyoz davasında neler olup bittiğini uzun uzun yazı dizisi yapabiliyor köşesinde. Bu, muhabirliktir aslında. Ama Balyoz davasını takip eden bir muhabire bu şans kesinlikle verilmez. Verilmediği için de muhabirliğin seviyesi düşmüş oluyor. Medya sisteminde yönetici olmak ya da köşe yazarı olmak diyoruz ya, başarılı muhabirler olmuyor onlar. Kriter başarı değil, kesinlikle değil. Kriter, bir ekip içerisinde yer alma meselesi, tanındıklık meselesi. Yani kimsenin muhabirin başarısını önemseydiği yok. (p.145)

Interview with Ş.

Hiç olmadı ki altın çağı araştırmacı gazeteciliğin. Parlak, altın çocukları var ama altın çağı yok. Bunu bir yaşam biçimi olarak algılamış bir iki kişi, örnek var. (p.61)

Toplum açısından; ben görevimi yapıyorum, ama toplum okumuyor. Ben ne kadar sabırla, iğneyle kuyu kazarsam kazayım, yazayım, çizeyim, çabuk unutuyor bizim toplumumuz. [...] Tarihe biz not düşüyoruz sonuç olarak. Bizden sonraki araştırmacılar tarihi yazacaklar, bak bunlar bunlar olmuş diyecekler. Benim için önemli olan o. (p.63)

Doğan grubu azıcık muhalefet yapmaya kalktı, ne oldu, bindirdi vergiyi. Ha, işin başka tarafı da var tabii. Yapmayacaksın, vergi kaçırmayacaksın kardeşim, bir de o tarafı var. Vergi kaçırmayacaksın. Alışmış çünkü, iktidarlarla iyi geçinirsem vergi kaçırabilirim diye düşünmüş, kötüye kullandılar işte. (p.75)

Gazeteci, haber kaynağını kullanandır. Haber kaynağı tarafından kullanılana gazeteci değil muhbir denir. [...] Her gazeteci mesleğe yeni başladığında kendini haber kaynağına kullandırır. [...] Haber kaynağını her gazeteci kollar. Dolayısıyla gazetecilikte böyle çok bağımsızlık, nesnellik filan pek yoktur. Yalnız iyi bir gazeteci haber kaynağıyla her zaman mesafelidir, mesafeli olmak zorundadır. (p.93)

Interview with A.

Yıllarca bize gizli kamerayı araştırmacı gazetecilik diye yutturdular bu ülkede. Oraya buraya gizli kamera yerleştirip elde ettikleri görüntüleri ‘Araştırmacı gazetecilik yaptık’ diye gazetelerde, televizyonlarda yayınladılar, biz de bayıla bayıla izledik onları. Ama bugün geldiğimiz noktada gizli kameranın aslında başka bir şey olduğunu fark ettik. Hatta ceza kanununa fılan girdi, artık suç gizli kamerayla bir şey yapmak. (p.62)

Herkes kendi meşrebine uygun şeyleri okumak istiyor. Bence kamuoyu onun için ihtiyaç duyuyor. Atıyorum, bugün için Hükümet’e yakın birileri, Hükümet’in işine gelecek araştırmacı gazetecilik haberlerini okuyunca mutlu oluyorlar. Karşı tarafta da onun aleyhine yazılan şeyleri okuyunca mutlu oluyorlar. (p.64)

Rejimin, sistemin, adına ne dersiniz onun uzantılarına ulaşarak araştırıyorsunuz. Gazetecinin araştırırken ulaştığı, bulduğu şey aslında sistemin, devletin, rejimin, adına ne dersiniz deyin onun yazılmasına müsaade ettiği kadarla sınırlı kalıyor genellikle. Karşıdaki adam yazılmasını istediği kadarını sizinle paylaşıyor. Bu durum 10 yıl önce de aynıydı, 40 yıl önce de aynıydı. (p.84)

Editör muhabir ile konuştu; birtakım eksiklikler ya da fazlalıklar görmüş, ya da başka bir açıdan bakılması gerektiğini düşünmüş, açıp muhabire sorardı, ‘Şunu şöyle yazsak’ diye, sizinle tartışarak yapardı. Mesela öyle bir üretim sürecinde ortaya çıkan ürünler daha nitelikli oluyor. Ama şimdi hiçbir gazetede yok. İstanbul’daki adam

açıp da Ankara'daki ya da İstanbul'daki muhabire açıp da 'Şunu şöyle yapsak mı, böyle yapabilir miyiz?' diye sormuyor. (p.104-105)

Ben 20 yıldır filan çalışıyorum, sanıyorum burası 10. işyerim filan. Bunun büyük bir kısmı işten atılmadır. Hele biraz da itiraz ediyorsanız, dışarıyı olduğu kadar içeriği de sorguluyorsanız, içerideki bazı şeylere itiraz ediyorsanız, onun sonucu zaten bir süre sonra atılmak oluyor. (p.143)

Interview with E.

Ben, kamuoyunun araştırmacı gazeteciliğe ihtiyaç duyduğundan emin değilim. Böyle bir kamuoyu da yok. Kamuoyu dediğimiz şey, bu ülke için kederlenen, dertlenen az sayıdaki belli hassasiyetlere sahip insanlardan oluşuyor. Toplumun büyük bir kesimi kendi iâşe ve ibateleriyle meşgul. Dolayısıyla halk ve kamuoyu böyle yüksek kaliteli, müthiş, ortalığı yıkacak araştırmalar bence beklemiyor. (p.63)

Ben araştırmacı gazetecilik derken daha çok bir mesai harcayarak ortaya çıkarılan bir kitabı kastediyorum. Gazetede o kadar çok farklı konu işleniyor ki, sayfa sayısı o kadar az ki, ilan o kadar çok ki ya da gündem o kadar hızlı değişiyor ki 'Ben şimdi bunu yazsam unutulur gider ya da gazetem bana bir sayfa açamaz, 3 gün üst üste bunu veremez, hâlbuki ben bunun daha geniş yayınlanmasını istiyorum, ben bunu bir kitap yapayım.' Yani bu, gazetecinin de tercihi olabilir. (p.134)

Interview with Ü.

Otoriteler, kamuoyundan her zaman bilgi belge saklarlar. Ve gazetenin, gazetecinin faaliyet alanı da orada başlar. Bu saklanan bilgiyi, belgeyi bulup kamuoyuna iletme, kamuoyuyla paylaşmaktır bu belgeyi, bilgiyi. (p.54)

[Halk]hayallerle kendisine yarattığı bir fantazik dünya içinde hiçbir şeye dokunmadan yaşayayım telaşında. Bu da anlaşılabilir bir kaygıdır, şekillendirilmiş toplum açısından söylüyorum. Medya bunu bozabilir mi, bozabilir ama bozmak gibi bir niyeti yok. Çünkü medya da bu düzenden yararlanıyor. Bilinçli bir haber tüketicisi lazım, bu bir talep de içerir aynı zamanda, talep etmezlerse bu olmaz. (p.65)

İktidarı mutlak destekleyen yayın organları var. Bu çok normaldir ama bunlar yayın organıdır, gazete değildir. Aldığınız zaman o gazeteden zaten bir haber beklentiniz olmaz. Sadece o siyasi yapının olaylara nasıl baktığına ilişkin bilgi sahibi olursunuz. (p.74)

Interview with H.

Her iktidar az ya da çok araştırmacı gazetecilikten rahatsız olur. Önemli olan o rahatsızlığın sonucunda verilecek olan tepkidir. Türkiye’de hükümet, bu tepkisini “bertaraf etme” olarak kullandığı için kendi yanında olmayan medyayı sindirmek için her türlü yöntemi kullandı. (p.71)

Bir gazete bir haber yaptığında acaba bize vergi cezası gelir mi korkusu yaşıyorsa o, hiçbir şey yapamaz ki. Hiçbir araştırmacı gazetecilik ürünü de yansımaz gazeteye. Sansür bu. (p.75)

Haber yapmaya değil, zarar vermeye çalışıyorlar. Ama işte zarar verme kaygısı bu sefer ellerine geçen belgenin gerçekliğini sorgulamalarını engelliyor. Söylediklerinin gerçekliğini gösteren somut deliller olmasa dahi haberlerini yapıyorlar. (p.78)

‘Şöyle bir şey var elimde, şununla uğraşıyorum, bana izin verir misin’ gibi bir şey deme imkânı bulamadım. Çünkü rutinden feragat gibi bir lüksün yok. Rutini hiç kaçırmaman isteniyor senden, ama bunun yanında özel haber talep ediliyor. Düzgün, iyi bir araştırmacı gazetecilik ürününe hayır demezler sorarsan onlara. Ama bunu yapmaya imkân sağlamıyorlar sana. (p.119)

Özel haber diye istedikleri çok da üzerinde çalışılması, çaba sarf edilmesi gereken bir şey olmayabiliyor. Bu çok da özel bir şey olmayabilir, bir milletvekilinin Başbakan’a yazdığı mektup dahi özel haber olabilir onlar için. (p.127)

Bir muhabir, haber müdürünün istediği kadar gazetecilik yapabiliyor şu anda. Çünkü onun istediğinin dışında bir şey yapmana imkân kalmıyor zaten. O rutinin içinde ya da o istenilen saçma sapan işlerin içinde o kadar boğuluyorsun ki zaten başka bir şey yapmaya halin kalmıyor. (p.136)

Madem devrimi göremeyeceğiz, sosyalist olmayalım demiyorsak gerçek gazetecilik de belki yapılamıyor ama en azından şu anda yapılan gazeteciliği bir nebze olsun, bir

nokta kadar yapılması gereken gazeteciliğe yaklaştırabilirsem bunu başarı sayarak kendimi avutacağım. (p.138)

Interview with L.

İki türlü gazetecilik Ergenekon'da ortaya çıktı. Biri gözü kapalı bir biçimde davayı reddediyor, sanıklar lehine bir sürü şey yapmaya çalışıyor; bir kısmı da hiçbir eleştiri kabul etmiyor. Gazeteciler taraf oldu. Eğer bir şeye taraf olup hizmet etmeye başlarsanız bu devlet değil de başka bir derin devlete hizmet ediyor olabilirsiniz. O yüzden ben mesela kendimi hayatımın hiçbir döneminde hissetmediğim kadar çok öteki gibi hissediyorum bu dönemde. Çünkü kimseye yaranamıyorsun. Yani ben hükümet yanlısı bir gazetede de çalışamam, merkez medyada da çalışamam aslında. Çünkü bu kadar çatışmacı, bu kadar bölünmeye müsait, bu kadar kamplaşan bir toplum daha önce hiç bu kadar olmamıştı. Onun için gazeteciler de bazen araştırmacılıklarını başka amaçlara, başka şeylere hizmet etmek için kullanabiliyorlar. (p.82)

Ben bir röportaj götürdüm, [ünlü bir işadamıyla]. AKP hükümetine bir işadaminin gözüyle yaklaşımı son derece olumluydu, olumlu değerlendirdi. Ergenekon davasını çok olumlu değerlendiriyordu. Ama o kullanılmıyor. 1 hafta sonra bakıyorum ki bambaşka bir [özel hayatla ilgili] konuyu haber yapmışlar. Mesele, benim yaptığım haberin çok siyasi bir tartışma yaratan boyut taşıması ama özel hayatını anlatan işadaminin kimseye zarar vermemesi. (p.99-100)

Muhabiri muhatap almak, muhabirin yaptığı haberi niye kullanılıp kullanılmadığını ona anlatmak zorundalar. Ama bunu yapmıyorlar. Sanki sen bir devlet memurusun, ast-üst ilişkisi kurmuşlar. Yani seni aşağılıyorlar, yok sayıyorlar. Gazeteciliğin kariyeri olmaz. Gazeteciliğin idareciliği, üst düzeyi olmaz. Ama bizde bunu sınıflandırdılar. (p.102)

Yani ben geçen gazeteye gittiğimde dedim ki; masamda bir masraf fişi vardı. Yani habere gittiğimiz zaman işte taksiyle gittim, adama kahve ısmarladım, yok bilmem ne yaptım filan diyorduk eskiden bir haber kaynağımızla buluşunca. Onun masraf fişleri vardır. Şimdi masraf fişini görünce masamda dedim ki Allah Allah, siz hala masraf mı yapıyorsunuz dedim. Sonra bu gazetede hala haber mi yapılıyor ve kim yapıyor dedim. Çok güldüler. Ama bu mizahta gerçek vardı. (p.126)

Türkiye’de iyi gazeteciyle şöhretli gazeteci arasında çok ince bir çizgi vardır. Yani kamuoyunun tanıdığı, bildiği, sevdiği ya da sevmediği ama adını duyar duymaz ne olduğunu hemen anladığı bir kişi yaratmışsanız bu, genellikle gazetelerin kendi tasarrufuyla yarattığı tiplerdir. Ama bir de iyi gazeteci vardır. Kendi emeğiyle, kendi çabasıyla bir şey olmaya çalışır. Onu çok az kişi bilir. Bu iyi gazetecilerin artık ben sisteme, mevcut yapıya küstüğünü düşünüyorum. (p.140)

İnsanlar köşe yazarlarını okuyor, haberleri okumuyor. Şimdi bizde köşe yazarı enflasyonu var. Şimdi bunu bir genel yayın yönetmeni 3 gün bir köşe yazarını manşetten verirse, reklamını yaparsa, tanıtırса o zaman siz de tanınırsınız gayet rahat. Haberin, gazetenin kalbi muhabirdir ve haberdir. Ama muhabirin öneminin en aza atıldığı noktadayız. Yani ona değer biçilmiyor bile artık. Dolayısıyla muhabir ve

köşe yazarı kavramlarının içini boşaltan bir gazetecilikle karşı karşıyayız biz şu an. Köşe yazarı da hakikaten çok önemliydi, backgroundu, bilgisi, tecrübesi olan adamlar çıkıp konuşuyordu. Orada hakikaten bu işin ehli adam konuşursa senin halkın gerçek bilince ulaşır, daha tecrübeli, daha akıllı olur. Bilmediğin konu üzerine niye görüş bildiriyorsun? Bir yazar her gün hiç bilmediği alanlarda fikir üretebilir mi? Bizde üretiliyor ama. (p.144)

Interview with P.

Bir muhabir İstanbul gibi bir yerde 1500 liraya çalışıp nasıl yaşayabilir, diye düşünebilirsin. Bu meslekte, gazeteciliği başka halleri yiyebilmek için yapıyorlar. Beleş geziler, para karşılığı yapılan haberler, maddi ya da manevi birtakım karşılıklarla yapılan haberler... (p.92)

İyi haber kötü haberi kovar gibi beylik bir laf vardır ve palavradır. Hiçbir zaman Türkiye’de çok uzun süredir iyi haber kötü haberi kovmaz. (p.99)

Kimse bu gazetenin yayın politikası benim dünya görüşümle uymuyor, ben gidiyorum diyemez, Senin yaptığın şeyin yeri nedir, mevziiyi korumaktır. Burada durduğumuz müddetçe her gün biz onlara bakışlarımızla, sözlerimizle, davranışlarımızla siz kral çıplak diyoruz. Dedikçe de onların yaptıklarının aslında kötü bir şey olduğunu unutmalarına fırsat vermiyoruz. Biz de gitsek, oh, yataklarına rahat yatarlar. (p.103)

Mesela kontr bir soru geliyor. Sen ak yazmışsın ya, öyle bir soru geliyor ki, ulan bunu karaya çevirecekler galiba diyorsun. Öyle bir şey olursa çekiyorum haberi. Biraz da senin mesleki konumun böyle bir tartışma yürütmeye etken oluyor. Herkes yürütemez. (p.104)

Yakın bir zamana kadar orta ve alt sınıflara ait ailelerin çocukları bu meslekte tutunabiliyorlardı. Ama artık orta ve alt sınıfa ait ailelerin çocukları bu meslekte tutunamıyorlar. Çünkü çok uzun süre kadrosuz, parasız çalıştırıyorlar. Ne oluyor, zengin çocuklarının mesleğine dönüştü. Babası ve ailesi resmen kapitalist terminolojiyle sübvansede ediyor çocuklarını. (p.140)

Interview with K.

Kaynak da haberin burada giremeyeceğini tahmin ediyor, başka yere servis ediyor büyük girmesi için. Siz kaynağın istediği gibi yazarsanız haberi, haberin üstündeki imzaya gerek yok zaten. O zaman gelsin kaynak yazsın haberi, çıkarsın. [...]

Kaynaklar gazeteciyi kullanırlar, açık ve net. Ancak işte o ne kadar kullanılır, ne kadar kullanılmaz, ona gazeteci karar verir. (p.85)

Belli bir süre sonra sadece bir kaynaktan size bilgi gelmeye başlar, onun dışında başka hiçbir kaynaktan size bilgi gelmez. O yüzden bundan sonra çok tartışmalı, çok manipülatif haberlere imza atacaktır. Bunu da aşabilmesi çok zor. (p.88)

Gazetede çok daha fazla iyi muhabir olmasını isterim. 100 tane yazar olacağına 10 tane iyi muhabir olsun. Köşe yazısıyla değil haberle tirajın artacağına inanıyorum. Araştırmacı gazetecilerle tirajı artırabiliriz yani. (p.145)

Interview with İ.

Tekelleşme öyle bir hale getirdi ki iş, salt gazetecilik olmaktan çıktı. Salt gazetecilik olmaktan çıkınca insanları bilgilendirme işi, gerçeğe karşı sorumluluk, okura karşı sorumluluktan daha öteye geçti, şirketin kar edip etmemesi konusu. Şirketin kar edip etmeme konusu öne geçince siyasetçilerle, iktidarla ilişki de problemli bir hale geldi. Bu kadar iç içe girince de siyasetle ilişkisi yönlendiren ve yönlendirilen ilişki haline geldi. (p.73-74)

Eskiden Simavi'yle Özal kavga ettiğinde Özal'ın Simavi'ye karşı yapabileceği tek şey, gazetenin fonu, mürekkebin fiyatıydı en fazla. Onları yükseltti, ne olacak, o da onu karşıladı. Başka silahı yoktu siyasi iktidarın elinde. Ama şu anda Aydın Doğan'ın yaşadığı örnekten hareket edecek olursak, nedir başına gelen şey; vergi cezaları. Neden geldi, Hürriyet'in vergi borçlarından mı, hayır, Petrol Ofisi'nin ve diğer şirketlerin. Hürriyet'ten de var ama asıl olarak diğerlerinin. Bu örnek de şunu gösteriyor; tekelleştikçe ve kartel haline geldikçe patronun yumuşak karnı büyüyor, siyasi iktidara ve diğer güç odaklarına karşı. Yumuşak karın büyüdükçe de o da kendini savunmak için gazeteciliğe dönüyor, onların iyi niyetinden, kötü niyetinden bağımsız olarak. (p.74-75)

Türkiye’de araştırmacı gazetecilik değil de bavul gazeteciliği öne geçmeye başladı. Siyasi iktidara yakınsanız ya da başka birtakım birimlere, onlar size zarflar verirler zaman zaman. Siz onları okur, tık tık yazarsınız haberi. Dışarıdan bakıldığında bu, bir araştırma haberi gibi görünür. Ama aslında araştırma haberi değildir, birileri zaten hazırlamış vermiştir, siz yazarsınız. Bir şeyi araştırarak, gazetecilik faaliyeti olarak takip ederek bulmak başka bir şey; birilerinin size hazır dosya verip onu yazdırması başka bir şey. Birinde kullanılmak var, birinde araştırıp bir olguyu, bilgiyi ortaya çıkarmak var. Oysa birisi sizi kullanıyorsa, sizin üzerinizden kamuoyuna bilgi pazarlamak istiyorsa ve bunu yapıyorsa istediğiniz biçimde, demek ki oradaki amacı gerçeği kamuoyuna duyurmak değil, o gerçek üzerinden bir şey elde etmek. Size zarf içinde bir şey gelir, oturur onu gerçekten araştırırsınız ve onu kamuoyuna sunarsınız, o başka bir şey. (p.86)

Basılı gazetenin şu anda en büyük maliyeti dağıtım ve baskı. Haber üreten insanlara, haber üretme işine o kadar para ayrılmıyor. Belki işte internet gazeteciliği çıktığı zaman bu tarafa biraz daha fazla kaynak ayrılırsa haberciliğin gelişmesine de katkısı olur diye umuyorum. (p.126)

Zaten gazeteler güç odaklarıyla çok içli dışlı olmaya başladılar, onları rahatsız etmek istemiyorlar, doğal olarak da daha çok demeç, söyleşi gazeteciliğine ya da yangın yeri gazeteciliğine dönmüş durumda. Bir yerden yangın çıkınca dönüyoruz, bakıyoruz, yazıyoruz, ondan sonra çekip gidiyoruz. Ama onun dışında bir şey zaten yok. (p.128)

Bir skandal olay olduğunda, hemen bir masa oluşturulurdu, araştırma masası.

Diyelim işte bir polis-adliye muhabiri, bir ekonomi muhabiri bir de konunun siyasi yanını bilen üç kişi oturur, gelen her şey onlara aktarılır, onlar değerlendirir, onlardan çıkardı haberler. Onlar hem koordinasyonu yapar, hem de haberleri yazarlardı.

(p.133)

Interview with O.

Karşınızdaki güç eğer bu konuda sağduyuluysa, bu konuda otomatikleşmiş refleksleriyle değil de sağduyusuyla hareket ediyorsa ve sizin yazdığınız şeyin de doğru olduğunu görüyorsa buna yönelik adımlar atıyor. (p.66)

Mesela bir tane muhabir var, diyor ki ‘Ben siyasi iktidarla ilgili şöyle bir haber yapacağım, şunu eleştireceğim, bunu eleştireceğim.’ O zaman medya patronu da diyor ki ‘Ne gerek var buna.’ Bir tarafta milyonlarca dolarlık işler var, bir tarafta da bu muhabirin hırsı, gazetecilik yapma hevesi var. Bunu tartıya koyduğu zaman sonuç belli. (p.100)

Başlık çok çok önemli. Bir haberi vezir de eder, rezil de eder. Bir başlık atılıyor mesela sayfaya girerken, haber tamamen öldürülmüş oluyor. Atıyorum, Ankara’da bir patlama oldu mesela, 7 kişi ölüyor, içinde bir sürü skandallar var filan... Ama siz bunu Ankara’da patlama diye hiçbir anlam ifade etmeyen bir başlık attığınız zaman haberin içindeki bütün şeyler ölüyor. (p.112)

Bunlarla uğraşmak için ayrıca bir zamanınızın olması gerekir, ekstra bir efor sarf etmeniz gerekir. İşte saat 6'da işiniz bitiyor ama gece saat 11, 12'de kendinizi bilgisayar başında bir şeylerle uğraşırken bulabiliyorsunuz. Bunu yapmadığınız zaman ertesi güne özel, farklı, işte Türkiye'de onlarca medya kurumunun yaptığıının dışında bir şeyler üretemezsiniz, bunu koyamazsınız. Gazeteci, kendisini ben 8'de, 9'da gazeteye gitmeliyim, 6'da çıkmalıyım modundan çıkartması lazım. (p.122)

Interview with C.

Basının kendi mesleki sorumluluklarını hatırlatabilecek bir dokunun oluşabilmesi için her zamankinden daha fazla araştırmacı gazeteciliğe ihtiyaç vardır. Çünkü araştırmacı gazetecilik olmazsa mesleğin değeri kalmaz, o zaman meslek borazan olmaktan kendini kurtaramaz. (p.66)

Sizin hükümdarlığınız bir gün sürüyordu ama o bir gün bazen bir ömre bedeldi. Şimdi böyle bir şey yok, herkes aynı şeye mikrofon uzatıyor. (p.128)

Interview with N.

Araştırmacı gazetecilik de öyle çirkin bir kelime haline geldi ki söylene söylene laçkalaştı. Araştırma yapıyorum adına büyük holdingler dururken küçücük küçücük pastaneleri basıp oradaki böcekleri çekmek değil yani. Yani araştırmacılığın bir de böyle magazinsel yanıyla ilgilenmek gibi bir şey var, o yüzden cıvıdı belki de. Sadece yöntem değil içeriği de önemli haberin. Altındaki nedenleri ortaya çıkarırsanız insanların kafasında bir soru işareti olur, belki üzerinde düşünmeye

başlarlar. Mesela Bursa’da kadın işçiler yanarak öldüler. Bir yanıyla araştırma yapıyoruz diye gidildiğinde şunu yaptı gazeteciler; eski nişan fotoğraflarını buldular, çocuklarının fotoğraflarını buldular. Ama hiç kimsenin aklına bu kadınlar niye bu fabrikada kilitli diye sormadı. (p.132)

Interview with Y.

Eskiden gazeteciler medya dışı işleri olmadığı için tirajı yükseltmek için müşterinin hem kalbine hem beynine hitap edecek haberler üretmek zorundaydılar. Dolayısıyla tiraj önemliydi. Ne kadar çok satarsan o kadar çok kar ederdin. Ama şimdi gazetecilik dışı işlerden asıl olarak birikim sağlanıyor. (p.75)

Gazeteler, radyolar, televizyonlar, işletme sahibinin savunma harcamasıdır. Yani medya sahibinin hem kılıcı, hem kalkanıdır. Hem rakiplerine üstünlük sağlamak için kullandığı; hem de rakiplerinden gelebilecek saldırılara karşı kendini koruyacak. İktisadi açıdan birikim kanallarını elde etmek için medyayı hem savunma hem de saldırı silahı olarak kullanmaktadırlar. (p.77)

Haber kaynağı-gazeteci ilişkisinin karşılıklı bağımlılık çerçevesinde kurulması, araştırmacı gazeteciliğin önünde en önemli engellerden birisidir. Haber kaynağı kendisini kamuoyunda temsil edecek, haberleştirecek gazeteciyle ihtiyaç duyar. Gazeteci de kendisine her an enformasyon akışı sağlayabilecek haber kaynağına ihtiyaç duyar. Peki, elde ettiğin enformasyonlar sana, o güne kadar çok yakın ilişki içersinde olduğun haber kaynağı aleyhine bir şey yazmaya zorlarsa ne olacak? Yazdın diyelim, ondan sonra o haber kaynağından enformasyon gelmez. (p.96)

Gazeteci, bir uyarıya kalmadan o engelleri içselleştirir. Gazeteci, patronunu içinde taşır. Kendisi, hiyerarşideki yerine göre bir patron tekrarıdır, kopyasıdır. Patronunu içselleştirmiştir, içinde taşımaktadır. Aydın Doğan övünür, ben hiçbir gazetecime müdahale etmiyorum diye. Müdahale etmiyor olmaları onlar için övünülecek bir şey değildir. Müdahale etmelerine gerek yoktur çünkü. Her çalışan patronunu içinde taşır ve onun bağlantılarını bir sansür gereksinmesi olarak kendi içinde içselleştirir. (p.107)

Interview with J.

Bir gazeteci bir politikacının uçağıyla, onun parasıyla bir yere gittiği zaman o adam orada gördüğü herhangi olumsuz bir şeyi yazmaz. Varsa parası, gazete kendi parasıyla gönderir seni. (p.92)

Benim işim gelip toplantıyı izlemektir, niye kahvaltılı yapıyorsun ki? Ben kahvaltımı yapıp geliyorum zaten işe. Bunu yapmayın dedim. Biz bildiri yayınladık, gitmeyin bu toplantılara diye. Bize bir kalem verilir, ajanda verilir, bunun dışında bize başka bir şey vermeyin dedik. (p.92)

Medyanın tepesinde oturanlar bu tür haberleri yapan insanları meslekte fazla barındırmıyorlar. Artık soru da veriyorlar ellerine yazı işlerinin, yarın şunu şunu sor, haber başka birinin imzasıyla çıkıyor ama yönlendiren başka bir isim, o haber manşet oluyor. Haberin kendi içindeki kurgusuna baktığınız zaman aslında o haberin ne kadar saçma sapan, ne kadar tutarsız olduğunu çok net görebiliyorsunuz. (p.101)

Bir haberle bazen bir ay uğraşırsın, hiçbir şey yapamazsın, her gün onunla uğraşıyorsun. Bir kurum için bu çok önemli değildir, hoş karşılanmaz. Çünkü sen zaman ayırıyorsun ona, bir ay, bir hafta, on gün hep o haberle uğraşıyorsun, haberin değerine göre. Kurum bunu performans düşüklüğü olarak görüyor. (p.121)

Gazeteciler bir anlamda köleleştirildi, modern köle. Performans düşüklüğü dedikleri, onlar güncel dedi dedik haberlerini, yani ajans haberlerini yapmadıkları için. Basın toplantılarında aç parantez kapa parantez haberlerini yapmadıkları için. (p.143)

Interview with Ö.

Bir köşe yazarı tüm ekonomi muhabirlerini zan altında bırakarak aslında ekonomi gazetecilerinin borsadan para kazandığına, haksız kazanç elde ettiğine dair bir köşe yazmıştı. Bu, tüm muhabirleri zan altında bırakıyordu ve biz dernek olarak bir açıklama yayınlayıp bu isimlerin kimler olduğunun açıklanmasını istedik. (p.93)

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