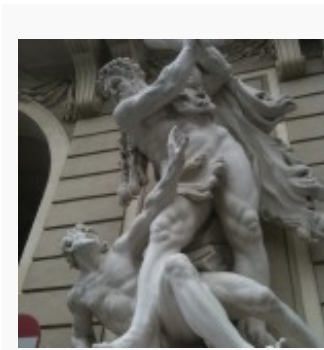


Media after democracy – Vienna III

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2010/11/20/media-after-democracy-vienna-iii/

2010-11-20



Under Attack

“The market is not a mixer and the Internet accentuates this”

[Ivan Krastev](#) is an expert on political change in Europe, rather than media, so his views on journalism and democracy give a fresh insight into [our debate about media and society](#).

He says that Classic liberal democracy is being replaced and so is the role of media. European political parties do not really represent serious ideological alternatives. So elections are now public executions of those in power, not a major policy choice. Traditional media is likewise seen as less relevant and less vital to the citizen, he implies.

[Alina Mungiu Pippidi](#) who [works on corruption](#) agreed that few of the new democracies in Europe were healthy governments with thriving free media. Instead, free elections led to a competition for the spoils of power, rather than alternative visions for society.

She used to be an investigative journalist in Romania but found that within the mainstream media there was too much opportunity for the authorities to clamp down on awkward hacks.

Pippidi found that the Internet was a better way to work. Putting information about MPs online was a more direct way to publish in an open and accountable way. The MPs were allowed to respond. She took the blacklist to the parties and asked them to drop them. Some were indeed dropped.

Then they published 2 million leaflets and distributed them. That did have significant impact on the election. It was classic direct action alternative media action.

But as Pippidi admits, it was difficult to play this trick as the parties simply replaced corrupt candidates with other corrupt candidates. The long-term effect of that persistent corruption is that both party membership and voter turnout declined. Media was simply unable to turn around deeper anti-democratic forces.

Was this a product of a dysfunctional society that never recovered from the damage of totalitarianism? And regardless of its cause, what's the solution?

Pippidi is a Twitter fan and thinks it did have an effect in the Moldovan elections. It's a great way to mobilise people in the short-term. But you can't build a sustainable, general public political community on a micro-blogging site, she says.

Now she is trying to turn more people into investigative reporters who will use online platforms to enhance transparency in a more long-term way.

Data is critical. There are laws that force politicians to disclose information. She has created a website that mixes citizen investigators with a space for journalists as well. The website is only one week old but already 50,000 people have connected and 8,000 have offered to do some editorial work (unpaid).

It's fascinating experiment that might not work, but it is a chink of light in a dark world and is only made possible by the Internet.

[These blogs were all in effect written live so I welcome any corrections – they do not pretend to be anything like a full record of the debates which were long and complex]

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