

Alternative Media Is An Alternative (guest blog)

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How do you define Alternative Media in an age when the Internet provides so many alternatives? Hyper-local blog expert Will Perrin came to Polis Summer School to join in a day of debate on that subject. This was the response from Summer School student Fatymatou Dia:

Since the beginning of the course, I have been struggling with definitions for journalism in the digital age: What is media? What is new media? What is alternative media? What is journalism in the first place?

As categories become more diverse, roles inverted and frontiers blurred, I realized that there are answers to my questions, a lot of them, but the ones I am looking for are somewhere in this mix of concepts and theories.

Will Perrin, our guest speaker, truly gives to alternative media its “alternative” meaning. With no training in professional journalism, in 2006 he set up kingscrossenvironment.com, a site where members of the community could share news, views, events and grumbles regarding their neighbourhood.

This made me think about another dimension of “alternative”. After “how?” and “to what?” alternative media is an alternative, comes the question “for whom?”

Is it for the journalist, interested in topics and issues that mainstream does not find relevant, who thus finds in this form of media a place to voice his opinions?

Or is it for the members of a community who are simply looking for a way to improve their neighbourhood?

Or is it for both, as producers and audience become blurred notions in alternative media...

To finish, I would like to politely disagree with Mr Perrin and say that he is a journalist: gathering, with his audience, the news that matter and sharing it. Inspiring! Also a nice reminder for us in this profession or aspiring to it, that journalism has first a responsibility towards a community of readers, viewers and listeners.

This post by Fatymatou Dia, a student at Yale University and the [Polis Summer School](#)

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