

KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES



CITIZEN JOURNALISM PRACTICES IN TURKISH  
ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN DIGITAL ERA

N. GÜLİN KÜPELİOĞLU

September, 2015

CITIZEN JOURNALISM PRACTICES IN TURKISH  
ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN DIGITAL ERA

N. GÜLİN KÜPELİOĞLU

Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Communication Sciences

KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY

September, 2015

KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

CITIZEN JOURNALISM PRACTICES IN TURKISH  
ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN DIGITAL ERA

N. GÜLİN KÜPELİOĞLU

APPROVED BY:

Assist. Prof. İrem İnceođlu (Thesis Advisor)

  
Kadir Has University

Assist. Prof. Eylem Yanardađođlu

  
Kadir Has University

Assoc. Prof. Burak Özçetin

  
Akdeniz University

APPROVAL DATE: 10 September 2015

"I, N. Glin Kpeliđlu, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis."



---

N. GLİN KPELİĐLU

## ÖZET

### DİJİTAL ÇAĞDA TÜRK ALTERNATİF MEDYASINDA YURTTAŞ GAZETECİLİĞİ UYGULAMALARI

N. Gülin Küpelioglu

İletişim Bilimleri, Yüksek Lisans

Danışman: Yrd. Doç. Dr. İrem İnceoğlu

Eylül 2015

Türkiye’de alternatif medya üzerine yapılan araştırmalar çoğunlukla teorik bilgilerden ibaret kalmış, uygulamaya yönelik çalışmalar ise güncelliğini yitirmeye başlamıştır. Özellikle Gezi Parkı protestolarından sonra ana akım medyada yaşanan kırılmalar, ana akım medyaya duyulan güvenin sorgulanmasına neden olmuş; gelişen iletişim teknolojileriyle geleneksel gazetecilik anlayışının değişmesi alternatif medya türlerinin daha da önem kazanmasına neden olmuştur. Yurttaş, böyle güvensiz bir medya ortamında ana akım medyaya karşı alternatif medya mecralarına yönelerek haber üretim süreçlerine dahil olmaya başlamıştır. Her ne kadar yurttaş gazeteciliği yeni bir gazetecilik anlayışı olmasa da özellikle iletişim teknolojilerindeki dijitalleşme ile birlikte yurttaş gazeteciliği dijital platformlara taşınmıştır. Bugün yurttaşlar internetin sağladığı olanakları da arkasına alarak haber üretebilmekte, yaptıkları haberlerle dünyanın her yerinden insana anında ulaşabilmektedir. Yurttaş gazetecilerinin ürettiği haberler ana akım medya için de kimi zaman öncelikli haber kaynağı olmaya başlamıştır. Bu çalışma son yıllarda Türkiye’de yurttaş gazeteciliğinin önem kazanmasına bağlı olarak yurttaş gazeteciliği mecralarının kurulmasından yola çıkarak Türk alternatif medyasında iletişim teknolojilerindeki gelişmelerle yurttaş gazeteciliğinin geçirmekte olduğu değişimi gözlemlemekte, günümüz koşullarında yurttaş gazeteciliğini yeniden isimlendirerek dijital yurttaş gazeteciliği kavramını oluşturmakta ve mevcut uygulamalar üzerinden bir araştırma yaparak Türk alternatif medyasındaki yurttaş gazeteciliği uygulamalarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: alternatif medya, yurttaş gazeteciliği, dijitalleşme

## **ABSTRACT**

### **CITIZEN JOURNALISM PRACTICES IN TURKISH ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN THE DIGITAL ERA**

N. Gülin Küpeliöglu

Master of Arts in Communication Sciences

Advisor: Assist. Prof. İrem İnceoöglu

September 2015

Alternative media studies in Turkey are mostly based on theoretical research; practice-oriented studies are deemed outdated. Especially after Gezi Park protests, a shift occurred in the mainstream media. Almost a complete destruction of confidence in the mainstream media and a change in traditional journalism with the evolving communication technologies have led to alternative media types gaining more importance. People in such an insecure environment have created their own alternative media and private citizens began to produce news. Although citizen journalism is not a new concept in journalism, especially with digitization as a result of recent changes in communication technologies, the form of citizen journalism has also changed and it has moved to digital platforms. Today, with the help of the Internet, citizens produce news and are able to reach people all over the world instantly. Citizen journalists have changed the traditional understanding of journalism; news produced by citizen journalists has become the primary news source for the mainstream media. This study, based on the establishment of a citizen journalism channel and the importance of citizen journalism in Turkey, observes the changes that are being undergone, the development of communication technologies about citizen journalism in Turkey and how the alternative media create the concept of digital citizen journalism and aims to examine current citizen journalism practices in Turkey by doing a research on alternative media.

Key Words: alternative media, citizen journalism, digitization

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to offer my first and largest gratitude to Dean of Kadir Has University Faculty of Communication Professor Sevda Alankuş. During my undergraduate and graduate education, she always supported and trusted me. When I had no idea what to write for my thesis, she led me to find a topic and made suggestions. Without her help and guidance, I could not write this thesis. I am forever grateful to her.

I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis advisor, Assistant Professor İrem İnceođlu, who always and always helped me, answered all my questions patiently and encouraged me to finish this thesis. Without her help and guidance, I could not show the courage to write this thesis. I am very happy to meet her and I am forever grateful for agreeing to be my advisor. I hope I will not frustrate her efforts.

Lastly, I would like to give special thanks to my family. My father, Necati K peliog lu, my mother Őukran K peliog lu and my sister G lfem G nen deserve the greatest of thanks. Without ever getting bored and wearisome, materially and spiritually, in all circumstances my family is with me. If they are not with me, I could not come today. Therefore, they deserve the biggest thank you.

İstanbul, September 2015

## Table of Contents

**Özet**

**Abstract**

**Acknowledgement**

**Table of Contents**

**List of Tables**

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Methodology .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Research Model and Context.....	6
<b>3. Alternative Media and Online Journalism in the Digital Era.....</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 Definitions and Concepts of Alternative Media.....	12
3.2 Features of Alternative Media.....	14
3.3 The Mainstream Media in Turkey.....	16
3.4 Online Journalism as an Alternative Media Type.....	22
<b>4. The Rise of Citizen Journalism in the Digital Era.....</b>	<b>26</b>
4.1 A Conceptual Approach to Citizen Journalism.....	27
4.2 Factors Affecting Emergence of Citizen Journalism.....	35
4.3 A New Journalism Concept: Digital Citizen Journalism .....	36
4.4 Examples of Citizen Journalism from Turkey.....	39
4.5 Critiques of the Citizen Journalism .....	45
<b>5. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Endnotes .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>58</b>

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1</b> Features of Participants.....	11
<b>Table 2</b> Mainstream Media Owners in Turkey.....	18

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

This thesis explores the citizen journalism practices in Turkish alternative media in the digital era. In Turkey, the mainstream media reports partial and biased news and prevents citizens' access to objective information. In many cases, such as Uludere and Reyhanlı bombings, Gezi Park protests, I realized that the government-hid information from its citizens by issuing publication bans or releasing false or distorted news reports. In such an environment, citizens couldn't access unbiased information and they have created their own media alternatives to the mainstream media. Private citizens produce their own news using the facilities of communication technologies and the Internet. Through the Internet, communication technologies have improved and access to information has become cheaper and faster. With all these negative conditions in the mainstream media and all these positive conditions in the communication technologies citizens become journalists and inform one another. In Turkey, people of different languages, religions, races and genders have been faced with the mainstream media's discrimination. As a result of this successful alternative media initiatives have emerged and they have been trying to draw attention to the mainstream media's discrimination for many years. Although citizen journalism is not a new journalism concept, with the developing communication technologies it has transformed into the digital environment and has become more functional. Therefore, in this thesis I will suggest that citizen journalism can be re-conceptualized as 'digital citizen journalism'.

21st century is marked as the technology and information era. Political, economic, social, cultural fields have changed and transformed all over the world. The media has

also been affected by these changes. The main function of media is to inform the public. Today, however, the mainstream media follows the basic principles of supply and demand of the industry, market and government to make more profit. It is under the control of the ruling power because of its financial and political concerns. It is possible to say that the mainstream media as a private institution has become the voice of the government and it remains under the pressure of these factors.

In recent history, one can observe some breaking points in the Turkish mainstream media. During the 13 years (2002-2015) of AKP's government, governments and private sector entities have interfered with the mainstream media in Turkey. Especially after Gezi Park protests government and private sector interventions have become more visible. During the Gezi Park protests, the mainstream media has sided with the government and has lost its reliability more than ever. Some Turkish and international researches have proven the lack of confidence in the Turkish mainstream media. According to Kadir Has University Turkey Social-Political Trends Survey 2015, in 2014, 55.8 percent of the participants of the survey do not trust the Turkish mainstream media.<sup>1</sup> Also, according to international researches, it cannot be said that the Turkish mainstream media is independent. According to the World Press Freedom Index 2014, Turkey ranks at 154<sup>th</sup> place between 180 countries.<sup>2</sup> Freedom House's survey which is an annual global report on political rights and civil liberties, reports that the Turkish mainstream media is considered 'partially free' and Turkey's freedom rating is 3.5 out of 7.<sup>3</sup>

Instead of social, political, economic and cultural context established by the mainstream media and its dominant discourse, Alternative media have paved the way

for a new medium that replaced the practice of journalism. And since it cannot be heard, it cannot be incorrectly represented among groups in terms of social, political, economic, cultural contexts.

The Internet has emerged at the end of the 20th century and it is the most significant technological development, which has affected the entire world. With the Internet, people access to information easily, information spreads more quickly followed by rapid effects and feedbacks. Media convergence transforms established industries, services, work practices and enables entirely new forms of content to emerge (Morgan 2013). Also, traditional media tools have become digitized. The term 'new media' is emerged and the Internet is a new medium for journalism. According to Ümit Atabek, with the form of the Internet, radio, television, newspapers, magazines, letters, text message, land lines and even videophone, etc. incorporate all types of communication and its tools (2005: 68). Through the Internet, newspapers contribute to readers with a new type of journalism called online journalism that is performed interactively which has brought a new approach to the profession in terms of allowing them to do voluntary journalism (Mora 2008). Also, online journalism is a very effective and useful platform for alternative media. Compared with traditional media, online journalism provides independence, immediacy, transparency, speediness and participation. The 'participation' is a key word for alternative media.

Journalism problems are associated with the establishment of large media groups according to their economic needs that has prepared the ground for the discussion of a new journalism (Uzun 2006). This is 'citizen journalism.' With the citizen journalism the audiences can participate in every step of the news. They are not simply

audiences, also participants. As Jay Rosen said, "The people formerly known as the audience" (2006). Now the audience is the media itself. "Journalism that is produced not by professionals but by those outside mainstream media organizations" (Atton 2009: 265). There are some channels for alternative media, but with the developing digital media technologies and the spreading use of the Internet, mobile devices have emerged. Citizens can be named as 'digital citizen journalism' within this frame; in fact citizen journalism is not a new concept in general. In 1960s, alternative voices in the society announced their ideologies through fanzines and zines (Atton 2002: 1) but these methods were both expensive and difficult to spread all over the world. But with the developing communication technologies, citizen journalism has transformed and become digitized. This digital era creates effective space for journalism. With the Internet, every citizen can have access to information more easily and it allows creating citizen's own media. Citizens start to participate in journalism by sharing news, pictures and videos through their mobile devices and with the help of the Internet. This practice of digital citizen journalism by use of online platforms creates diversity and this leads to a more democratic and participatory form of journalism.

This thesis starts from the point of the intersection of alternative media, online journalism and digital citizen journalism; it examines the citizen journalism practices selected. With the representatives of these participants face-to-face interviews were made to analyze and discuss citizen journalism practices in Turkish alternative media. Methodology and approach of the research for selecting the participants will be explained in Chapter Two. The responses from face-to-face interviews will be analyzed in each chapter depending on the content of the questions.

The theoretical background of alternative media and online journalism will be explained in Chapter Three, which includes discussions about the definitions of alternative media and online journalism in terms of terminology; gives information about Turkish mainstream media and also will analyze the interviewee's responses.

In chapter Four, citizen journalism, which is the main subject of this thesis, will be explained in detail. The conceptual approach, the main factors affecting the emergence of citizen journalism, the pioneer examples and practices from all over the world and Turkey, the critiques of citizen journalism will be explained and interviewee's answers will be analyzed. In this thesis, I suggest that citizen journalism can be re-conceptualized as 'digital citizen journalism' in this era. Theorists classify citizen journalism into different categories. I will make comparisons about citizen journalism in accordance with the perspective of this thesis. And lastly, I will illustrate the distinct characteristic of citizen journalism, which makes it a necessity.

In conclusion, consideration for both theoretical and practical perspectives of citizen journalism will be made by some critiques; according to the interviews that will make some predictions about the future of the Turkish citizen media. Regarding this impact, this thesis aims to indicate the implementation of citizen journalism practices in Turkish alternative media in the digital era and this study will help for further research on the subject.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Methodology**

#### **2.1 Research Model and Context**

Due to the government pressure on the Turkish mainstream media, especially in the last 13 years, public's right to information supplied by the alternative media, mobile devices and social media play a major role in news production. Therefore I decided to do conduct a research on citizen journalism practices in Turkish alternative media. I worked as a program editor and producer in Habertürk TV between 2012 and 2015. During my time at Habertürk TV, I noticed the effects of major political and economic developments and I had a chance to observe and question the Turkish mainstream media. Based on these, this thesis argues that alternative media practices are needed for using the opportunities provided by new communication technologies, which can be digital citizen journalism. Therefore, in this research, three different Turkish alternative media examples broadcasted in digital platforms are selected in order to understand the possibility and necessity of another type of journalism and analyze how citizen journalism is implemented in Turkish alternative media in the digital era.

For the purposes of this research, Bianet, which is an alternative media outlet, is one of the participants. The other two participants are Dokuz8 Haber Agency and Ötekilerin Postası, both of which use citizen journalism as one of their sources. Firstly, the participants were contacted by phone and agreed on the interview day and then are interviewed face-to-face. I made interviews with 5 different alternative media and citizen journalists. Face-to-face in-depth interviews are made with chief editor Haluk Kalafat from Bianet, editor Çiçek Tahaoğlu and reporter Elif Akgül as well as

one of the founders of Dokuz8 Haber Agency Gökhan Biçici and the founder of Ötekilerin Postası, Emrah Uçar.

Although Bianet is not an example of citizen journalism as discussed and refined in this study, it is selected as a good practice of alternative media in Turkey, which applies professional journalism codes and yet provides an alternative outlet for different approaches. In other words, it provides a checklist for the consideration of journalism ethics and right to information as well as digital alternative media practices. With their motto, 'Another communication is possible', Bianet aims to be visible for everyone and everything (2008: 21-22) and "To go beyond what mainstream media represent and also is politically and ethically responsible and makes independent journalism" (2009: 10). Dokuz8 Haber Agency with their motto, 'We carry the news of the rhythm of life', aims to establish a citizen journalism news agency. Dokuz8 Haber Agency is planning to start broadcasting this semester and currently testing broadcasts and training citizens in various cities in Turkey. Dokuz8 Haber Agency accommodates the dynamism of citizen journalism, the accumulation of professional journalism and journalism ethics. The agency recognizes citizen journalists as a new hope for the future of journalism. With their motto, 'We eliminate censorship with citizen journalism', the principle of Ötekilerin Postası is being sensitive to social events and calling the necessity of the mainstream media into question. Ötekilerin Postası aims to create awareness of the voice of "the other" with volunteer reporters. Dokuz8 Haber Agency and Ötekilerin Postası are selected because they are initiatives, which are implemented in citizen journalism. For this thesis, these participants are the pioneers to understand and analyze citizen journalism better.

In order to get better results, I used face-to-face interview method in this study. The face-to-face interview model is a communication process based on interaction. I preferred face-to-face in depth interviews because of the possibility of a close visual and verbal interaction and understanding those reactions, gestures and mimics of each interviewee during the interview. Questions are structured and open-ended questions are used to provide much more detailed information about this study. 11 questions were prepared for this research to analyze citizen journalism practices in Turkish alternative media in the digital era. Interview questions included in this thesis:

1. Bianet'i/Dokuz8 Haber'i/Ötekilerin Postası'nı kurma fikri nasıl ve neden doğdu?

How and why did the idea of establishing Bianet/Dokuz8 Haber/Ötekilerin Postası emerge?

2. Yurttaş gazeteciliğini nasıl tanımlarsınız?

How would you describe the citizen journalism?

3. Yurttaş gazeteciliği alternatif medya için ne ifade ediyor?

What does citizen journalism mean for the alternative media?

4. Yayın politikanız nedir, sizin için 'haber değeri' ne ifade ediyor?

What is your editorial policy, how do you describe 'newsworthy'?

5. Muhabirlerinizin statüsü nedir?

What is the status of your correspondents?

6. Haber kaynaklarınızı nasıl ve neye göre seçiyorsunuz, kriterleriniz nedir?

How do you choose your news sources, what are the criteria?

7. Haberlerin doğruluğunu ve güvenilirliğini nasıl takip ediyorsunuz, test etmek için neler yapıyorsunuz?

How do you check the accuracy and reliability of the news?

8. Haberleriniz editoryal bir kontrol aşamasından geçiyor mu? (Cevabınız evet ise

bunun gerekçelerini ve nasıl bir süreç olduğunu anlatır mısınız?)

Do you apply editorial control to the news? (If yes, can you tell the reasons and processes)

9. Gönüllü muhabirlerinizin zaman zaman belli eğitimlerden geçmesi gerektiğini düşünüyor musunuz? (Cevabınız evet ise nedenini açıklar mısınız?)

Do you think that volunteer correspondents should take journalism training? (If yes, can you explain the reason?)

10. Yurttaş gazeteciliğine yöneltilen etik meseleler hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

What do you think about the ethical issues raised by citizen journalism?

11. Yurttaş gazeteciliğinin Türkiye'deki uygulamaları hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz ve geleceğini nasıl görüyorsunuz?

What do you think about the examples and future of citizen journalism in Turkey?

Firstly, the interviewees were asked one by one to better interpret the selected participants' ideologies, and on how the idea of Bianet, Dokuz8 Haber Agency and Ötekilerin Postası was established. Secondly, since our primary concept is citizen journalism, interviewees explained how they define the concept of citizen journalism. Then I asked what citizen journalism meant for alternative media according to the participants. These first three questions aim to understand the concepts and definitions. This thesis presents a certain theoretical knowledge about alternative media and citizen journalism. But, on the other hand, the definitions given by the interviewees are necessary to perform an analysis and make better comparisons. This research also aims to understand and analyze how alternative media and citizen journalism apply in a practical sense; the other six questions are asked in order to understand this. The concept of newsworthy, editorial policy, the status of the

reporters, selection of news sources, control of the accuracy and reliability of news and the training of volunteer reporters were also examined throughout the interviews. The last two questions are about the ethical issues raised by citizen journalism, practices and the future of citizen journalism in Turkey. Haluk Kalafat, Gökhan Biçici and Emrah Uçar answered 11 questions, and Çiçek Tahaoğlu and Elif Akgül answered 8 questions. The questions about the establishment and the functioning of Bianet were asked only to Haluk Kalafat. Çiçek Tahaoğlu and Elif Akgül answered the other questions about citizen journalism. In this thesis, interviews will not be analyzed as a separate chapter. These questions will be analyzed in each chapter according to the scope and content.

Citizen journalism practices in Turkish alternative media in the digital era will be analyzed with reference both to face-to-face in-depth interviews with Bianet, Dokuz8 Haber Agency and Ötekilerin Postası, and to the theoretical background in Chapters Three and Four. The theoretical framework of the research, definitions and concepts of citizen journalism, and practices of citizen journalism and criticism on its future will help to understand citizen journalism practices in Turkish alternative media.

	<b>BİANET</b>	<b>DOKUZ8 HABER</b>	<b>ÖTEKİLERİN POSTASI</b>
<b>Founded</b>	1997	2013	2012
<b>The number of employees</b>	18 people	In Newsroom: 30 people. Reporters: 40-50 people	Periodically changing but 4-5 people
<b>Funding</b>	Bianet is supported by Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)	So far, from Sweden and the UK embassy education funding has been taken.	Ötekilerin Postası does not receive funding from any local, international organizations.
<b>Platforms</b>	<b>Internet:</b> <a href="http://www.bianet.org/">http://www.bianet.org/</a> <b>Facebook:</b> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/bagimsiziletisimagi?_rdr=p">https://www.facebook.com/bagimsiziletisimagi?_rdr=p</a> <b>Twitter:</b> <a href="https://twitter.com/bianet_org">https://twitter.com/bianet_org</a> <b>YouTube:</b> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/bianetorg">https://www.youtube.com/user/bianetorg</a>	<b>Facebook:</b> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/dokuz8haber">https://www.facebook.com/dokuz8haber</a> <b>Instagram:</b> <a href="https://instagram.com/dokuz8haber/">https://instagram.com/dokuz8haber/</a> <b>Twitter:</b> <a href="https://twitter.com/dokuz8haber">https://twitter.com/dokuz8haber</a> <b>YouTube:</b> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/dokuz8haber">https://www.youtube.com/user/dokuz8haber</a>	<b>Internet:</b> <a href="http://otekilerinpostasi.org/">http://otekilerinpostasi.org/</a> <b>Facebook:</b> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/10.posta">https://www.facebook.com/10.posta</a> <b>Twitter:</b> <a href="https://twitter.com/otekilerpostasi">https://twitter.com/otekilerpostasi</a> <b>YouTube:</b> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC83YbqJqZ8kD88nAj7r93A">https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC83YbqJqZ8kD88nAj7r93A</a>
<b>The number of followers</b>	Facebook: 150.000+ Twitter: 128.476 YouTube: 750	Facebook: 8.090 Twitter: 30.929 Instagram: 58 YouTube: 150	Facebook: 183.000+ Twitter: 197.920 YouTube: 155
<b>The total number of messages</b>	Facebook: The total number is unknown, montly number: 4047 Twitter: 56.395	Facebook: 16.893 Twitter: 11.878 Instagram: 20	Facebook: 130.000+ Twitter: 121.610
<b>The number of daily news entry</b>	Facebook: 40-45 Twitter: 65-70	Facebook: 1 news in 90 minutes Twitter: 1 news in 45 minutes	Every platform: 100 In extraordinary agenda: 200
<b>News Style</b>	News related with protection of human rights; sexual, ethnic, religious minorities, women, children's rights	News about women, gender, labor, human rights, children, LGBT, community politics and foreign policy	News about the protection of human rights, observance and monitoring of human rights violations

**TABLE 1:** The Features of Participants (These data were taken on July 3, 2015.)

## **Chapter 3**

### **Alternative Media and Online Journalism in the Digital Era**

In this chapter, I will focus on the concept of alternative media and online journalism, and give information about the Turkish mainstream media. To interpret citizen journalism, how things were before alternative media should be reviewed. In this section, I will explain definitions and concepts of alternative media respectively, then mention features of alternative media and give current information on the mainstream media ownership in Turkey and lastly clarify 'what is online journalism' as an alternative media type. And also an assessment of the interviews conducted with Bianet, Dokuz8Haber Agency and Ötekilerin Postası is included in this chapter.

Alternative media theories do not give us a single, generally accepted definition of the concept. In academic literature, many different theoreticians describe the concept of alternative media differently. Considering this, various theories and definitions will be presented, however, the frame of this thesis will limit the definitions.

#### **3.1 Definitions and Concepts of Alternative Media**

Various forms of expressions of alternative media take part in the academic literature. Although 'alternative media' is still the most common label, some prefer 'radical' or 'independent' media, and others 'citizens', 'tactical', 'activist' or 'autonomous' media<sup>4</sup>. These are all meaningful expressions and represent cultural and political functions of alternative media. Media theorist Chris Atton suggests, "Even within a single area of alternative media there is such heterogeneity of styles, contributions, perspectives" (2002: 8). This shows that alternative media brings together the entire non-mainstream media practices and is more than the means of non-mainstream. Atton

explains why use the term 'alternative media' as follows: "Amateur media practices are always embedded in everyday life practices; they are therefore already located in broader political, economic, social and cultural contexts" (2009: 267). The content of the mainstream media is affected by economic, political, cultural, social factors. In mainstream media hegemony is in the hand of media producers who are government and private companies. Because media moguls depend economically on these factors, they represent the ideologies of the owners of this power. Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2007: 18) characterized alternative media as follows:

Alternative media can offer ideologies, representations, discourses that vary from those originating in the mainstream media. These differences emanate from the higher level of participation of different societal groups, communities.

John Downing refers to the concept of 'Radical Alternative Media.' Atton says, "Downing considers radical media as the media of social movements, produced by political activists for political and social change" (2009: 256) and suggests that the use of the term 'radical alternative media' is more appropriate than 'alternative media.' Radical media is described as the media of social movements. In modern cultures, radical media includes, "A huge gamut of activities, from street theatre and murals to dance and song and not just uses radical uses of the technologies of the radio, video, press and Internet" (2001: 9).

In alternative media, the citizen is not passive anymore. Alternative media makes the audience 'active.' Atton suggests, "Alternative media offers opportunities for participating in the world that go far beyond the narrow conceptions of citizens as passive consumers and marginal players in politics and culture" (2011: 17).

Although the ideal model of liberal approach, monopolization and commercialization

are in the media field hinder the fulfillment of the social role of the mainstream media. Monopolization and commercialization bring ethical problems out and the audience enters into alternative pursuits. To understand the relationship between media and democracy, one needs to move with another conception of democracy from the liberal media approach. Alankuş suggests, in liberal approach, there is no place for public broadcasting and non-profit publishing. (2008: 127). "The mainstream has a tendency to privilege the powerful while alternative media set out to privilege the powerless and the marginal; to offer a perspective 'from below' and to say the 'unspoken'" (Harcup 2013: 77).

### **3.2 Features of Alternative Media**

Alternative media can be seen as an ordinary part of society that should have a horizontal organizational structure, cut borders, be participatory, pluralist, community oriented, the voice of different ideologies, the 'media of others'<sup>5</sup> and suitable for new communication and mobile technologies. "Alternative media is one of the many available sites that provide these societal groups with the opportunity to produce these non-conformist and counter hegemonic representations" (Bailey, Cammaerts, Carpentier 2008: 17) Alternative media also creates its own possibilities for individuals and groups. Atton suggests, "Alternative journalism will examine notions of truth, reality, objectivity, expertise, authority and credibility" (2009: 272-273).

According to Chris Atton (2007: 3) the characteristics of alternative media are:

- i. Radical content, be it political or cultural
- ii. Strong aesthetic form
- iii. Employ 'reproductive innovations/adaptations' taking full advantage of the available and cutting-edge technology
- iv. Alternative means of distribution and anti-copyright ethos
- v. Transformation of social roles and relations into collective organizations and de-professionalization
- vi. Transformation of communications processes 'horizontal linkages'

By Susan Forde (2009: 9) alternative and independent journalism involves:

- i. Journalists – trained/untrained - who are personally driven to produce news and information that the public needs to know which enhances democracy
- ii. Community-funded media organizations, which provide local news and opportunities for ‘ordinary’ people to become skilled in the journalism and production fields.
- iii. Media organizations, which may be commercial but have, as their priority, quality news content over commercial imperatives
- iv. Journalists who are involved with a range of community initiatives and/or activities; and cultural and/or political organizations.

So far, I have explained the different definitions and defined the basic features of alternative media. I also asked each interviewee how the idea of establishing their media agency emerged. The journey of Bianet begins in the late 1990s, which started to rise of activism movements in Turkey. The mainstream media did not report the news on meetings organized by civil society organizations and trade unions. In such an environment, a conference with the main subject ‘can it be possible to establish an alternative media’ was organized and the idea of Bianet was established.

Dokuz8 Haber Agency is one of the outcomes of Gezi resistance. Before Gezi Park protests, Gökhan Biçici had an idea of establishing a news agency but the journey of Dokuz8 Haber Agency begins after Gezi Park protests. Gezi Park protests were against the mainstream media, government, opposition parties and the form of opposition. During the Gezi resistance citizens were confronted with this current state of the mainstream media and demonstrated a better example. This was the starting point for Dokuz8 Haber Agency.

Ötekilerin Postası set out on their journey with the name of Açlık Grevi Postası in 2012. As the name suggests, the period in which hundreds of Kurdish prisoners began

hunger strike in Turkey's prisons was the starting point. The hunger strike has ended; Emrah Uçar has decided to close the website. But with the intense interest of the followers and the increasing number of biased news in the mainstream media, he realized how the mainstream media affected the community and changed the name to 'Ötekilerin Postası'. Since then, Ötekilerin Postası has been considered as a platform, in which people can catch the 'other's agenda.

With government's political and economic pressure in last 10-15 years, the mainstream media has lost all objectivity and reliability. This situation led to the search of a new type of media in society and has established many different alternative media outlets. The citizens want to be aware of everything that happens in Turkey and around the world, be informed about everyone/everything marginalized and ignored by the mainstream media. This is the common starting point of the participants.

### **3.3 Mainstream Media in Turkey**

Ownership structure of mass media influences news and information content and interests of the state and expectations of international companies affect the presentation of the news. Although the real function of the media is to be the voice of the people, it has chosen to be the voice of the government and interest groups in Turkey. According to James Curran (2002: 220),

Media organizations have become more profit oriented. The sphere of government has been greatly enlarged, with the result that political decisions more often affect their profitability. Yet, governments need the media more than ever, because they now have to retain mass electoral support to stay in office.

Turkish mainstream media is under the control of the ruling power to make more profit commercially and politically; so it follows the basic principles of supply and demand of the industry, market and the government. According to Akser and Baybars-Hawks, "The media in Turkey has long been under economic and political restraints" (2012: 315). A few big media groups dominate Turkish mainstream media, economic pressure makes them dependent and they have to cooperate with holding political power for their benefits. This situation is ideologically uniform to the mainstream media and instead of being objective and ensuring the right to information, the mainstream media act as a spokesperson of those who has political and economical power. According to this thesis, three main factors prevent the independence of the Turkish mainstream media:

1. The media conglomerates
2. Government pressure
3. The number of dismissed and prosecuted journalists

Holding bosses manage the mainstream media in Turkey. A few big media groups like Doğan Media Group, Doğuş Media Group, Ciner Media Group, Turkuvaz Media Group, Feza Journalism, Albayrak Conglomerate, İhlas Conglomerate and Koza İpek Conglomerate dominate the mainstream media in Turkey.

	<b>TELEVISION</b>	<b>NEWSPAPER</b>	<b>RADIO</b>	<b>MAGAZINE</b>
<b>Doğan Media</b>	KanalD CNN Türk TV	Hürriyet Hürriyet Daily News	Radio D CNN Türk Radio	Burda, Elle, Seninle Atlas, GEO İstanbul Life, Haftasonu, Tempo Yacht, Auto Show Ev Bahçe, Evim, Maison Française Ekonomist, Capital Level, PCnet, Chip Heygirl, Popular Science, FormSante
<b>Doğuş Media</b>	NTV, NTV Spor, Star TV, CNBC-E, Kral TV, Kral Pop TV	---	NTV, Capital, Kral FM, Kral Pop	Vogue, GQ, National Geographic & Kids, Robb Report, Conde Nast Traveller
<b>Ciner Media</b>	Habertürk TV, Bloomberg TV, Show TV	Habertürk	Radio Haberturk	---
<b>Turkuvaz Media</b>	ATV, A Haber, Yeni Asır TV	Sabah, Fotomaç, Takvim, Yeni Asır	Turkuvaz	Home, House Beautiful, Home Art, Bazaar, Sofra Şamdan, Cosmopolitan, Aktüel, Esquire, Cosmo Girl, Forbes Türkiye, Para, Global Enerji Bebeğim

**TABLE 2:** Mainstream media owners in Turkey

	<b>TELEVISION</b>	<b>NEWSPAPER</b>	<b>RADIO</b>	<b>MAGAZINE</b>
<b>Feza Journalism</b>	STV, STV Avrupa, STV Amerika, S Haber, Mehtap TV, Irmak TV, Yumurcak TV, Küre TV, Dünya TV, Hazar TV	Zaman, Today's Zaman, Zaman Azerbaycan, Kazakistan, Avusturya, Fransa, Bulgaristan, Romanya, Türkmenistan, Amerika	Samanyolu News, Dünya, Burç FM	Aksiyon Sızıntı Gonca Yeni Bahar
<b>Albayrak Media</b>	TV Net, Tempo TV	Yeni Şafak	---	Derin Tarih, Lokma, Nihayet, Derin Ekonomi
<b>İhlas Media</b>	TGRT Haber, TGRT Belgesel	Türkiye	TGRT FM	---
<b>Koza İpek Media</b>	Kanaltürk, Bugün	Bugün	Kanaltürk	---

**TABLE 2:** Mainstream media owners in Turkey

These big mainstream media groups deal with energy, trade, real estate, highway and subway construction projects and tourism. Economic pressure makes them dependent and these groups always have to cooperate with political holding power for their benefits. Doğan Holding deals with energy, industry, retail, tourism and finance sectors; Doğuş Conglomerate deals with banking and finance, automotive, construction, tourism, retail, marinas aviation, real estate, energy and food sectors; Ciner Conglomerate deals with energy, aviation, health, tourism, insurance, marine, glass industry and construction sectors; Çalık Holding (Turkuvaz Media) deals with construction sector; Feza Journalism deals with companies and associations connected to Fethullah Gülen; Albayrak Holding deals with construction, industry, logistics and tourism; İhlas Holding deals with construction and real estate, mining, trade, health and education and Koza İpek Holding deals with mining, construction, industry, tourism, health and insurance. Akser and Baybars-Hawks suggests, "The mainstream media operate under a new political economy of censorship in which big businesses, media Holdings can only challenge the government and its repressive tactics toward the news media when their economic interests are threatened" (2012: 302). The situation of the Turkish mainstream media is ideologically uniform with the media and instead of being objective; the mainstream media is spokesperson of those who has political and economical power in Turkey.

The government pressure is the other factor that prevents the independence of the Turkish mainstream media. Gezi Park protests can be accepted as a turning point in terms of journalistic perspective. Actually, before Gezi Park protests, the earthquake in Van in 2011, Uludere attacks in Şırnak in 2011, Reyhanlı bomb attacks in Hatay in 2013 are the most important social catastrophes that increase the mistrust in the

mainstream media because of their biased and one-sided attitudes. These disasters have caused all kinds of information to be viewed with suspicion. In Uludere attacks, no information provided by the mainstream media nearly 13 hours and people got information from the Internet and social media. In Reyhanlı bomb attacks, because of the imposed ban on mainstream media, people again got information from the social media. When the prosecutor Mehmet Selim Kiraz was killed, publication ban was brought to Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. As in Gezi Park protests, Uludere attacks or the hostage situation and killing of prosecutor Mehmet Selim Kiraz, if state or the government authority is damaged, publication ban is brought to the mainstream media and Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, restricting people's freedom of information.

From time-to-time the government controls the freedom of the Internet access in Turkey. Although the ban was lifted several times, YouTube ban is very popular. In 2007 March, 2008 January, 2010 June, October 2010, November 2010, March 2014, April 2015 YouTube was banned.

Also, Turkey is one of the countries with the most content removal requests on Twitter. Between January 1<sup>st</sup> -June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014 Twitter received over 60 court orders directing to remove content regarding violations of personal rights and defamation of both private citizens and government officials. Also Between July 1<sup>st</sup> -December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014 Twitter received 328 court orders and 149 requests from Turkish government agencies directing to remove content ranging from violations of personal rights to defamation of private citizens and/or government officials.<sup>7</sup> The government is blocking access to some websites and the reason for blocking Internet access is "obscenity, protection of public order, national security, conservation of public

health" (Hasan Cemal 2015) but these reasons are arbitrary and the limits are not clear. Publication bans to the mainstream and social media prevent freedom of the right to information. Whatever the reason, removal requests by the government/official bodies is the control effort and censorship.

Last factor that prevents the Turkish mainstream media from being independent is the number of dismissed and prosecuted journalists. According to James Curran "Public broadcasters have been subject to direct censorship through restrictive laws; broadcasters have been encouraged to censor themselves in response to a variety of pressures and journalists have been summarily sacked, jailed or even killed" (2002: 222). According to Kalemî Kırılan Gazeteciler Report 2014, between the years 2007-2014, 306 journalists was fired from work (2014: 177-178) and between July 2013-June 2014, 25 journalists became imprisoned (2014: 188). Also according to a report prepared by the Journalists Union of Turkey, 981 press laborers were dismissed in the first half of 2014. 56 press laborers chose to resign from his job for several reasons.<sup>8</sup> According to Media Monitoring Report 2014 by Bianet, 22 journalists and 10 distributors entered 2015 in prison. Between October-December 2014 at least 47 journalists and media workers have been laid off or had stayed out of work. In the same period last year this figure was 23.<sup>9</sup>

### **3.4 Online Journalism as an Alternative Media Type**

Web 1.0 is used for the first stage of the Internet. During this period the Internet was primarily used simply for obtaining information from websites. There was no possibility to comment, contribute, produce or reproduce the content.

With the Web 2.0 era human interaction has begun. Users now have an active role. "With the coming of age of Web 2.0, sharing information around the world within seconds has become a reality for anyone who can access the Internet" (Jurrat 2011: 6). Personal web pages are replaced by Web 2.0 era of blogs, wikis and collaborative projects.

In general, Web 2.0 conceptualizes the basis of social networking and user-generated content and has been a starting point for discussion of alternative communication outlets through a variety of concepts of citizen media, participatory media, interactive journalism, public journalism, and radical media. User-generated content can be publicly accessed and used to identify the different forms of media content generated by users. Wikipedia, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Periscope are the most popular examples of user-generated content; it provides facilities for amateurs to create and publish their own content. According to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2007: 8), to call 'User Generated Content' it must have three basic features. First, the content must publish a website that can be accessed as public or a select group of people in a social networking site that can be accessed by people. Second, the content must contain a certain proportion of creative effort. Lastly, the content must be produced outside of professional routines and practices.

The Internet is a suitable infrastructure for various communication services and the most common examples of new communication technologies. The Internet, with all the facilities to cover the old media, which are text, images, audio, video, real-time broadcasting, with Web 2.0 offers new opportunities such as interactivity, user control and customization. Today, the audience wants to receive the news in real time, they

do not want to wait for the evening news or the next day's newspaper. According to John V. Pavlik (2013: 48),

New media can change the definition of journalism and Network-based new media is interactive, customized on request, image, a new combination of moving images and sound can be brought together, it can create a new society based on the interests and concerns, has unlimited space to provide depth and context for journalism.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the audience rejects being passive. The Internet technologies allow the masses to access information from all over the world. The masses can make a direct relationship without borders. "The online audience has the means to become an active participant in the creation and dissemination of news and information" (Bowman and Willis 2003: 7). Online journalism creates alternative platforms for people who want to be involved in journalism. Whether professional or amateur, they can create their own online journalism platforms, which are completely different from the mainstream media and its values. Academic Murad Karaduman, puts the possibilities of the Internet journalism as follows: (2005: 146-147)

- i. News can be given too quickly with continuous updates
- ii. Readers reach the news at any time
- iii. Using audio-visual graph-based multimedia files
- iv. Easy access to news archives to store the desired news
- v. Interactive interaction with readers; transmitted reviews instantly
- vi. In matters relating to news, access to background information easily
- vii. Ability to find different news not included in other media

To summarize, alternative media is not only the product of new communication technologies and new media, but also it emphasizes the challenges of the mainstream media practices in journalistic perspective. Alternative media is non-commercial and collective; it creates new content, it represents the people or groups who is ignored by the mainstream media; it is pluralist not majoritarian and also it is more suitable to adapt new communication technologies. The Internet and digital technologies have

led to a new understanding of journalism and it is an effective platform for online journalism. Online journalism, takes advantage of the possibilities of multimedia environment. The most important advantage of online journalism is the information presented which can be changed at any moment and does not need a big infrastructure for online publishing. The information is not only verbal but also supported by audiovisual content. From every corner of the world, one can post online publications simply with a decent enough computer.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Rise of Citizen Journalism in the Digital Era**

In this chapter, I will mention the issue of citizen journalism. I will explain a conceptual approach of citizen journalism; I will give some details about the factors affecting the emergence of citizen journalism. For this thesis, I re-conceptualized citizen journalism as 'digital citizen journalism' and gave more details about it. I classified citizen journalism into categories; these categories will be explained in details. For a better understanding, I will try to illustrate citizen journalism further with examples from Turkey. Also, I separate the necessity of citizen journalism into categories and these categories will be explained in details. Lastly, I will mention the criticism of citizen journalism. An assessment of the interview that I conducted with Bianet, Dokuz8 Haber Agency and Ötekilerin Postası is also included in this chapter.

The mainstream media do not merely inform the public, but also present common meaning, language and point of view about that information. In mainstream media, news is positioned according to primary identifiers<sup>10</sup>, which are 'prestigious' institutions and dependence of the powers. Frequently, this situation is positioning the public beside the authority and politically powerful actors. The mainstream media are under the financial pressure and the most important source of their income is advertising. Looking after the interests of the advertisers and the political power holders, media lose its basic features of informing the public, objectivity and impartiality. In such an environment and with coming the Web 2.0 era, the Internet creates alternative mediums; journalism has changed its form. Everything that the mainstream media did not or did not want to pay attention to, has found a place itself in alternative media. When the Internet users begin to create their own content and

share the information, they do not need professional journalists anymore because the citizen is the candidate for a journalist. Also with the new communication technologies, news production and distribution are much more easier. To produce and distribute news, there is no need for expensive staff and equipment owned by newsrooms. All these situations create a new understanding of journalism: Digital Citizen Journalism.

#### **4.1 A Conceptual Approach to Citizen Journalism**

Noam Chomsky suggests, the control of the media should fall into the hands of the people from the government and companies. In a declaration, Chomsky suggests the followings to media opponents: (1993: 19)

- i. To produce counter-commercial print, visual, auditory, modern, activist and communications-based media, to match each other and to participate in the strengthening of different types.
- ii. Corporate, government and the main source of the media document and audit the dynamics and effects. To expose the mind control, behavior change, image creation process.
- iii. To discuss strengthens the immune system and get rid of winning tools and methods against deceptive subconscious effect of media. To increase the public's media literacy to solve, produce and publish all communication media.
- iv. Cultural expression, education, work and create a network of resistance.
- v. To proclaim the public sovereignty in radio and TV broadcasts
- vi. To save all public areas from the message of the government, the company and the business world.
- vii. All commercial broadcast media transfer to public and creation of public production libraries.

As expressed in Immediate declaration, public should react to the mainstream media and people, as citizens, should seize and take control of the media. To make more objective news, the audiences should participate to the news production process.

Stuart Allan suggests citizen journalism to be described variously as 'grassroots journalism', 'open source journalism', 'participatory journalism', 'hyperlocal

journalism', 'distributed journalism' or 'user-generated content journalism' (2009: 18). These terms try to capture the idea that ordinary people, not just trained professionals, can collect and distribute information about events in ways that contribute to public knowledge. "Citizen journalism is the idea that news content is produced by ordinary citizens with no formal journalism training" (Wall 2012: 40).

The definition of citizen journalism is a highly controversial subject. Alternative media theorists' definitions of the concept differ from one another. Therefore, I asked each interviewee how they define citizen journalism and what it means for them. Haluk Kalafat says, Bianet gives too much space to readers' comments and the reader can send news whenever they want. According to Çiçek Tahaoğlu from Bianet, citizen journalism is very important, and this importance is recognized fully in recent years. Tahaoğlu suggests, because citizen journalists do not apply censorship and self-censorship mechanisms, it will set a good example to the mainstream media; it also supports freedom of expression and fights against censorship. Elif Akgül from Bianet says there is not a certain definition of citizen journalism. Citizen journalism is an area that is seen as a source of both local networks as well as citizens. Akgül says citizen journalists must have certain characteristics: they should provide reliable news, confirm the news, they should not work with a news agency and should not earn money from this work.

According to Gökhan Biçici from Dokuz8 Haber Agency, the definition of citizen journalism needs to be clarified. It is a right and a type of digital activism. Although there are differences between citizen journalism and digital activism, citizen journalism is an intermediate form of journalism and digital activism.

Emrah Uçar from Ötekilerin Postası says while citizen journalism should be collective; it also needs to be more amateur and original. It should not be imposed.

There are many definitions related to citizen journalism, but there is one thing that is certain: citizen journalists should be amateur people who work with amateur spirit and they should not receive any education in order to keep the amateur spirit.

The languages of the news in the mainstream media keeps ‘ordinary’ people away and only allow them to be visible in vox pop. Besides news is not people-oriented, it is elite-oriented. But journalism is not in place of citizens; journalism should activate the citizen (Alankuş 2008: 14). There is an ideology of citizen journalism to defend the rights of citizens on the basis of the facts and to respond citizen’s expectations through the media (Duran 2005: 100). In citizen journalism, authorities and official people are not accepted as primary news sources; the people in the street are the main news sources. Citizen opinion and information are the basis. It offers areas for every individual to comment and discuss the news. At that point, I asked the interviewees what their selection criteria for the news are? Haluk Kalafat indicates that there is a horizontal organizational structure in Bianet. People make their own news; have their own interests with the freedom to find news sources in their field. Çiçek Tahaoğlu says news sources are the subject of the news or experts. Elif Akgül says all kinds of news, the accuracy of which has been proved, is a news source.

Gökhan Biçici says social media is also a news source, but for them priority news sources will be their own volunteer reporters.

Ötekilerin Postası does not select news sources. Emrah Uçar says citizens send news to them. If there are certain news broadcasts in other alternative media, Ötekilerin Postası uses this news in their website by indicating the sources, but they have never indicated the sources of news which was published in the mainstream media.

In mainstream media, news sources are primarily people, which are institutions and official individuals. All information from them is considered accurate, cannot be questioned and doubted but in citizen journalism, news source is people on the street.

As I mentioned before, according to many theorists, citizen journalists should be 'ordinary people.' Based on this, I asked the status of their reporters to the interviewees. Since Bianet is not an example of citizen journalism, journalists are professional and everyone is paid a salary. It has a small number of volunteer journalists and they make news whenever they want. Also Haluk Kalafat believes that citizen journalists should not be professional.

In Dokuz8 Haber Agency there will be two different groups of reporters. One group will be consisted of professional journalists, and the other will be a group of volunteer journalists. Volunteer journalists will create a news network and produce news; professional journalist will check, confirm and broadcast the news. Editors will be professional journalists. Gökhan Biçici suggests that citizen journalists should not earn money from their work. They will not receive salary; only costs will be paid. Biçici believes that citizen reporters should not earn their livelihood from this work; instead their expenses should be reimbursed. Biçici suggests Dokuz8 Haber Agency will be a mechanism that goes beyond the individual struggle, which the citizens will

come together to institutionalize.

In Ötekilerin Postası only volunteer reporters and editors work. Editors work on a regular basis at certain times each day and they have never earned any money. Emrah Uçar suggests citizen journalism is a journalism based on a voluntary basis. Therefore, both editors and reporters should not earn money from the work they do. Uçar believes that if they receive money, nobody can say that they are citizen journalists.

To summarize, in Bianet and Ötekilerin Postası, volunteer reporters never receive a salary and everybody works on a voluntary basis. On the other hand, in Dokuz8 Haber Agency reporters will be volunteers, but editors will be paid even if they are volunteers. But Dokuz8 Haber is a news agency and performs citizen journalism, if citizen journalists earn money for his/her work, then it can be said that Dokuz8 Haber Agency may be faced with the danger of professionalism. On the other hand, the expenses of citizen journalists should be reimbursed.

As for the status of reporters, providing journalism training for volunteer journalists is the other important subject of discussion. Because citizen journalists are ordinary people, the people on the street. It is claimed that if volunteer journalists receive training, they will not be different than professional journalists. Therefore, I asked for participants' opinions on providing journalism training for volunteer journalists. Haluk Kalafat suggests that being a volunteer journalist is at the person's discretion and the news itself is an education. In Bianet, volunteers send their news, if there are things that need corrected, editors correct it and explain the reasons of the changes.

Çiçek Tahaoğlu and Elif Akgül say that volunteers can be trained in order to learn how to use technological equipment. Tahaoğlu believes, citizen journalists can participate in workshops or read online materials about journalism. Also working at a place is another way of training.

Dokuz8 Haber Agency gives journalism education in many cities in Turkey. Trainers are academics, professionals, freelance journalists and a few citizen journalists. Gökhan Biçici believes citizen journalists should be trained about journalism. Biçici states that Dokuz8 Haber Agency publishes news produced by citizen journalists who are not trained, but he finds that news less reliable. Biçici says citizen journalists are required to receive training.

Emrah Uçar believes that giving journalism training to the citizen journalist is not the right way and criticizes Dokuz8 Haber Agency's method. Emrah Uçar says if reporters make mistakes, we correct them. According to Uçar, the most important thing is not to lose their amateur journalism excitement.

Unlike Çiçek Tahaoğlu, Elif Akgül and Gökhan Biçici, according to Haluk Kalafat and Emrah Uçar, giving professional journalism training to the citizens are not right. Citizens can learn how to make news by making news. If citizen journalists are trained, there is no difference from professional journalists.

Through the Internet, citizen journalism is adapted very easily and has become widely available on digital platforms. Stuart Allan and Einar Thorsen (2009: xi) suggest,

These highly portable, low-cost, discreet, digitized communication technologies that are easily plugged into and uploaded to the World Wide Web have become

for many an integral part of everyday life and medium for the conduct of social relations. ... Citizen journalism variously enters into and informs today's world news ecology with its overlapping formations and flows of news, mainstream and alternative news media, and new interactive technologies of news dissemination and user-generated content.

With new communication technologies, visual artifacts have become more important and via Internet, people have started to share not only news stories in a textual format but also the photos and videos; and this reinforces the news visually. With digital photography and online photo sharing, people can easily store, display, manipulate, and share their pictorial experiences (Al 2009: 44).

Web 2.0 can be accepted as the rise of blogging, which is some kind of a daily personal diary and a media form that is used to bring the ordinary citizens to make their voices heard. With the Web 2.0 era, people start to use their personal home pages, share photos or videos using online media tools and this also increases the citizen journalism efforts. People use their personalized blogs not only to talk about everyday routines but also to share information, to comment and to show their reaction to political, economic and social incidents in their country or in the world. Through blogging, ordinary people produce citizen journalism practices. Before, blogs were only in diary format and they gave daily personal information about the blog owner. But then with the crisis, attacks, wars or natural disasters, the purpose of blogs started to change. "Bloggers began reporting directly from places where events occurred; they also contributed to political debates, both as information sources and public voices" (Quandt and Singer 2009: 138). Developing communication technologies via the Internet provides new platforms to make journalism. With the Internet anyone can be a journalist without the necessary training.

Media theorists and journalists discuss different forms of citizen journalism. For instance, Steve Outing, who is a media futurist and journalist, divides citizen journalism into eleven different layers. Journalism expert Tony Rager places citizen journalism into two main categories. Joseph Daniel Lasica, who is an online journalist and blogger, classifies citizen journalism into six different types. Dan Gillmor characterizes citizen journalism eight different kinds.<sup>11</sup> Theorists and journalists present different types. In this thesis, I classify types of citizen journalism considering the ideas of all these layers. Basically, it is possible to differentiate citizen journalism into three different categories as follows:

1. Mainstream media initiatives
2. New participatory social media sites
3. Independent news and information initiatives

Personal homepages, blogs, Wiki's or subcategories such as video and photography platforms, all of these forms could be recognized for defining citizen journalism. But as divided into mainstream media initiatives such as CNN IReport, BBC Have Your Say, Radikal Blog, Milliyet Blog; new participatory social media sites such as YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, Periscope and independent news and information initiatives such as OhMyNews, Dokuz8 Haber Agency, Ötekilerin Postası should be the main categories to understand and see the effects of citizen journalism better.

Citizen journalism is not produced by professional journalists, it is a voice of ordinary people, encourages attention to issues that professional journalism overlooks or willfully ignores, observes the professional observers, becomes the watchdog for civil rights abuses and shapes the news agenda (Wall, 2012: 4-5-6). These advantages can make citizen journalism more effective than the mainstream media.

## **4.2 Factors Affecting Emergence of Citizen Journalism**

The concept of citizen journalism is not new as generally considered. "The underground press of the 1960s, the punk fanzines of the 1970s and the direct-action papers of the 1990s offer examples that are more or less culturally and politically congruent" (Atton 2002: 1). In those times, alternative voices in the society announced through fanzines and zines, but due to lack of technology and high-cost level, it was very difficult to circulate these materials.

Technical changes and developments always affect journalism and journalism practices. Today, humanity lives in the information age. This age puts the Internet and mobile communication technology at the center of people's daily lives. With the Internet, people can reach and spread the information anywhere in the world, whenever they want. The Internet has transgressed geographic boundaries between countries. With these developments, fanzines and zines also transform through the Internet. Today, websites offer opportunities to create information. It can be said that fanzines turn into e-fanzines, zines turn into e-zines. New digital technologies create new and alternative forms to mainstream media. The alternative media has prepared the ground for citizen journalism.

Both the public and a small group of media professionals are impelled by one-sided and biased mainstream media to alternative media. There are many methods of producing alternative forms of media. Citizen journalism is one of them. To understand citizen journalism better, what citizen journalism means for alternative media becomes an important question. According to Haluk Kalafat, there are many alternative ways of citizen journalism practice. But in order to adopt these ways, the

format of news production needs to change. News production format and quality of the correspondents are more important to understand what citizen journalism means to alternative media. Elif Akgül suggests that alternative media should be practically and systematically different.

Gökhan Biçici says citizen journalism is one of the alternative media channels, and thinks citizen journalism would be more decisive. Alternative media is characterized as a substitute for mainstream media. Biçici is against this definition because it means to admit the mainstream media's sovereignty.

Emrah Uçar thinks alternative media experiencing economic difficulties, resource trouble and it failed to create its own independent network of correspondents. People cannot do anything unless they can produce content. Uçar thinks sometimes the alternative media journalists are unable to work independently.

To be alternative, alternative media should produce their own content. Having different political views or economic infrastructure in terms of production does not make an alternative. Because citizen journalism creates an environment that produces content, becomes more valuable and meaningful kind of journalism.

### **4.3 A New Journalism Concept: Digital Citizen Journalism**

In 1990s, with the rise of the World Wide Web which can be seen as the turning point for citizen journalism. In 1999, a group of organized people who want to protest the World Trade Organization in Seattle began planning activities months in advance over the Internet. In the day of the event, activists closed the roads leading to the hall

where the event is taking place. And the activists spread their voices from their city to the whole world. 1999 World Trade Organization protest is accepted as one of the first major actions through Internet technology. As one of the results of the events, the first Independent Media Center (Indymedia) project has come into existence. Indymedia is a network for the creation of radical and accurate way telling of the truth and collective use all forms of media and with only the Internet access through a decentralized and autonomous network for anyone who wants to publish new. Indymedia defines itself as follows:

IMC was established by various independent and alternative media organizations and activists in 1999 for the purpose of providing grassroots coverage of the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle. The center acted as a clearinghouse of information for journalists, and provided up-to-the-minute reports, photos, audio and video footage through its website.<sup>12</sup>

Shortly after, with motto 'every citizen is a reporter', South Korea based OhMyNews is established by Oh Yeon Ho in 2000. Because, as opposed to traditional media, dissatisfaction with mainstream media and the request of the citizen talk to each other everyday, nearly 2 million people read OhMyNews. In OhMyNews both volunteers and professional editors work. Oh Yeon Ho says, 'With OhmyNews, we wanted to say goodbye to 20th-century journalism where people only saw things through the eyes of the mainstream, conservative media.' (Young 2009: 147) OhMyNews need people who can update them on what's happening in the world of citizen journalism along with opinions and tips.<sup>13</sup>

In Washington, DC, Pew Center was established in 2004. It criticizes the policy of mainstream news media and aims to transform media users from being a passive audience to an active participant. Pew Center began to give support to citizen journalism practices with the concern that citizens are not actively involved in the

public sphere. They conduct public opinion polling, demographic research, media, content analysis and other data-driven social science research.<sup>14</sup>

As a result of the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, American citizens have started to write blogs to express themselves. Eyewitnesses took photos and videos with their mobile phones and used this visual information in their blogs; and mainstream media channels get details about the attacks from blogs.<sup>15</sup> Ordinary people became a main news source for mainstream media.

In 2005, suicide bombers exploded detonating devices on three London underground trains and a bus in the center of the city. They killed 52 civilians and over 700 injured in the attacks. Because the attacks were below the ground, it was not possible for mainstream media to get information. Ordinary people played an important role during the incident. BBC Newsroom received more than 1,000 photographs, 20 videos, 4,000 text messages and 20,000 emails from citizens who were affected by the attacks. From BBC's website, people could learn how to submit their videos and photographs.<sup>16</sup> It can be said that, the images and videos were not professional, but these sources were exclusive and unique to understanding what happened.

In December 2004 Asian earthquake and tsunami, citizen journalists obtained a special place. Using digital technologies, the people who experienced this disaster took photos and videos. International televisions like CNN and BBC use tsunami videos taken by Cut Putri<sup>17</sup>, who was an eyewitness of the tsunami. Msnbc.com collected comment of surviving, publish reader's reaction to Asian's deadly tsunami.<sup>18</sup>

2009 Iranian presidential elections, 2010 Haiti earthquake, 2011 Occupy Wall Street, 2011 Arab Spring and 2015 Charlie Hebdo shooting are the other resounding worldwide events to understand the importance and effects of citizen journalism. People started to receive the latest information initially from other citizens via the Internet and social media. After blogs and websites, Twitter, YouTube, Periscope and Facebook has become the most important news source for both citizens and mainstream media. That's why I prefer to rename the citizen journalism as 'digital citizen journalism'.

#### **4.4 Citizen Journalism In Turkey**

The period of Gezi Park protests in May 2013 is the turning point for Turkish mainstream media. Because, during the protests, Turkish mainstream media legitimized police violence, broadcasted the government's official statements, ignored the protesters. While the protests were continuing throughout Turkey, media channels were publishing documentaries. Owing to Turkish mainstream media, which focused entirely on government policy and following a biased editorial policy, media has almost completely destroyed the trust. Gezi Park protests have created its alternative media and social, political awareness in the society.

During Gezi Park protests, anyone who has Internet access saw that things were not as it seems as depicted in the mainstream media. Anyone with digital technology tools became a reporter and began, with this technology, to share visual and auditory information from every moment of the protests. Politicians, artists and intellectuals protested mainstream media publications; they appeared in and gave interviews to the alternative media channels. In that period, this dynamic has created many alternative

media channels. But with the fall of the Gezi Park protests and with the society returning to “normal”, those channels did not last. With technological opportunities, citizens very clearly understood that those who do not have any political or financial dependence to mainstream media are candidates of journalism. But to do this, an organization is needed. During Gezi Park protests it was observed that communities are mobilizing in exceptional circumstances, but this situation needs to be permanent and also sustainable under normal conditions. With this process in alternative media, many citizen journalism initiatives began with using social media and web sites.

In mainstream media, decisive advertisement revenues, ratings, and sales of newspapers or clicking rates of websites are the determinant factors for news value. On the other hand, in citizen journalism, the interest groups do not determine editorial policy and news value. So what does editorial policy/news value mean for citizen journalism? I asked this to the interviewees. For Bianet, the news about infringements and violations of rights has priority. Haluk Kalafat explains that with an example: There is no news value of a specific football match; but if there is violence in that match it is newsworthy. Çiçek Tahaoğlu and Elif Akgül suggest that everything newsworthy is confirmed.

Gökhan Biçici states that the classic news definition also applies to Dokuz8 Haber Agency. The Dokuz8 Haber Agency’s goal is to be the voice of women, gender, labor, human rights, children, LGBT, politics, foreign policy.

Human rights-based news has a news value for Ötekilerin Postası. For instance Emrah Uçar says, if there’s no human rights violation in a traffic accident, we do not publish

it. People and community-oriented journalism are the keywords for Ötekilerin Postası. The news that serves certain segments does not have news value of citizen journalism. To have news value, it must be focused on people and people's rights.

The necessity of editorial control mechanism in citizen journalism is a controversial subject. It is claimed that if there is an editorial control mechanism, citizen journalism is not different from professional journalism. Although editorial control does not pose negative meaning, today's mainstream media uses editorial control as a censor mechanism. Therefore, I asked the interviewees about the necessity of editorial control. According to Haluk Kalafat, editorial controls must be carried out of respect to the readers. The news must be true and told correctly. Although the news is true, it may be written with wrong expression. To avoid this, editorial control is necessary.

Gökhan Biçici says editorial control is important to apply a certain news language to the news. Dokuz8 Haber Agency has its own news style and specific language. Because of this the news should be compatible with these policies. On the other hand, editorial control should not provide an authority on reporters. To avoid this, in Dokuz8 Haber Agency editors will come from a citizen reporter background.

Emrah Uçar also thinks that editorial control mechanism is necessary to create own news language. Ötekilerin Postası has forbidden words and there are rules regarding its news perspectives.

It is understood that editorial control mechanism does not have to be negative. It is necessary to create a unique language, avoid wrong expressions, not about censor.

The question of why we need citizen journalism is important. Theorists, academics or the people who deal with citizen journalism make their own lists. Based on the article, in this thesis, I suggest that the necessity of citizen journalism can be examined into three different terms considering the condition of Turkish mainstream media:

1. Against censorship
2. Convenience of information access
3. Economical advantages

Firstly, citizen journalism is necessary against censorship. Because a few big media groups dominate mainstream media in Turkey; news, which is against the interests of these media groups can be censored. During Gezi Park protests mainstream television channel CNNTürk censored the news of the protests and instead showed a documentary on penguins. However, since everyone had a phone, they took pictures and broke the censorship of mainstream media. As in Gezi Park protests, in Uludere attacks or in taking hostage and killing of prosecutor Mehmet Selim Kiraz, if the authority of the state and the government is likely to be damaged, publication ban is brought, resulting in restrictions of people's freedom of information. Publication bans obstruct freedom and right of information. Ordinary citizens transform into private citizens who share information via the Internet and social media, and they become the single source. Citizen journalism is the most resistant type of media in terms of dominant groups opposed to the introduction of alternative content, against the tendency to censor the mainstream media.

The other one is convenience of information access. Mainstream media channels use heavy and complex equipment. For instance, to do a live broadcast from a specific place, live broadcast vehicle or 3G connection is needed. In some cases, for example,

when live broadcast vehicle could not go to the location, these methods may not work. For instance, a bomb attack on the London underground, live broadcast vehicle could not enter the underground. Because the attacks were below the ground, it was not possible to get any visual and auditory information. Also in some cases, making the news with 3G connection is difficult due to a connection error or insufficient battery. However, to practice citizen journalism the only tools one needs are a mobile phone and an Internet connection. Because live broadcast vehicles could not enter London underground, citizens sent videos; photographs from the underground, mainstream media channels used these.

Lastly, citizen journalism has the advantage of being more cost-effective compared to the mainstream media. In order to make a television broadcast or print a newspaper the technical materials and interior space are needed. These materials are expensive. In addition to that, directing teams who use this technical equipment like directors, cameramen, producers, editors etc. are also needed to make a television broadcast. The cost of making a live broadcast of a television channel is as follows<sup>19</sup>:

- i. The live broadcast vehicle purchase costs 400 thousand-3 million euros. If vehicles belong to the channel, crew costs for only 10-minute broadcast is 8 thousand Turkish liras (3 cameramen, uplink operator, image selector, sound man, lighting designer, technical director, driver). In addition, the vehicle has an annual maintenance cost.
- ii. If the vehicle is rented 1-hour cost is 25 thousand Turkish liras.
- iii. There are also generator costs. A daily cost per kilometer is 1.5 Turkish liras.
- iv. Depending on where the live broadcast will be there is a fuel cost of 800-1000 Turkish liras.

Also, to print a newspaper, one needs both human power and technical equipment like printing machines or distribution networks. These are all cost-increasing factors and mainstream media organizations reduce these costs by exploiting their press laborers and work with less human power in order to give minimum salary to them.

Against censorship, convenience of information access, economical advantages make the citizen journalism effective and attractive. Digital communication tools and the Internet make every citizen both an audience and a journalist. At this point, I asked the interviewees about what they thought on the practice of citizen journalism in Turkey and what they think about the future of citizen journalism. According to Haluk Kalafat, each reader is a journalist and should be a journalist. Kalafat believes that today's readers are better than they were 10 years ago and citizen journalism is advancing in a positive way. Citizen journalism is more important in countries with social conflicts, ideological pressures like Turkey. Kalafat suggests everyone has an opinion, which is both good and bad. Everyone writes and talks too much; but on the other hand, no one will listen and read each other. Çiçek Tahaoğlu believes Ötekilerin Postası and Dokuz8 Haber Agency are very important initiatives. Turkey needs citizen journalists and it would be more important in the future. Elif Akgül believes there are good and bad examples of citizen journalism in Turkey. And Turkey is in a learning process both in terms of newsmakers and newsreaders.

Gökhan Biçici thinks there are important examples of citizen journalism in Turkey, but the weakness of the corporate culture effects citizen journalism. Biçici suggests in terms of citizen journalism, Turkey is one of the examples that stand out in the world.

According to Emrah Uçar, firstly, it needs to guarantee people's right of information, and also needs to guarantee the right to inform the people. On the other hand, Uçar believes citizen journalism needs funding to be productive.

The development of the Internet, the increasing use of social media and consequently, the multiplication of alternative media channels allow the emergence of new journalism practices. Citizen journalism is one of them and is a recent understanding of journalism in Turkey. Being a journalist and practicing journalism are always difficult in Turkey because of the political and economic factors. Considering the political and economic situation in Turkey, the existence of alternative media and new journalism is inevitable. Citizen journalism is also one of them. There are valuable examples, but there must be better. To be a better citizen, one should be more conscious. Thanks to the Internet and technology citizens should be aware that they are as journalist candidates.

#### **4.5 Critiques of the Citizen Journalism**

When considering the current state of mainstream media, it is clear that there is a need for different journalism practices. Although, technology and the Internet make citizen journalism more effective, there is some criticism directed towards citizen journalism. These are about trustworthiness, reliability, bias, lacking legal status and protection before the law and the proficiency of volunteer reporters.

Citizens are not professional journalists and because of this it faces doubt about trustworthiness and reliability. Hubb Evers asks that in the absence of a professional stamp of a reporter, how readers or editors can be sure of the accuracy of the

transferred events or ensure the reliability of the transfer? (2010: 327) The critics argue, "Citizen journalism will displace the careful, credible reporting of professionals with an untrustworthy version of events that is at best incomplete and at worst sensational, propagandist, and potentially dangerous" (Wall 2012: 2). Therefrom, I asked the interviewees about how they check the accuracy and reliability of the news. In the process of producing news it is already done by the controls said Haluk Kalafat. But if false news is published, the readers immediately warn them. According to Kalafat, there are some methods and in Bianet to check the accuracy and reliability; news are checked by the document. Also, Çiçek Tahaoğlu says the most important confirmation is document. Researches on the Internet, to verify from different sources are important confirmation mechanisms. Asking someone else is another conformation method by Elif Akgül.

Gökhan Biçici says Dokuz8 Haber Agency checks the accuracy and reliability of the news by applying the rules of journalism. According to Biçici, the best way to verify news is human. It aims to have reporters in almost every city in the country. Dokuz8 Haber Agency volunteer reporters will check the accuracy and reliability of the news. To check the accuracy, Ötekilerin Postası applies certain methods. First, looks to the message that previously was sent by the experienced reporter. Second, they want pictures and videos about the news as much as possible, and lastly they do a little research on the Internet. Emrah Uçar says news verification period is a maximum of 5 minutes.

Also, the other criticism is on the issue of confidentiality of private life. New communication technologies enable the usage of mobile phones and cameras. With this technology citizen journalist can take photos, videos of other people and share

them in their websites or blogs, etc. It is considered that citizen journalists can violate the confidentiality of private life.

Using propagandist language or giving a voice to extremist groups is the other criticism. It is said that citizen journalism can be a platform for extreme groups, racists, hatemongers and violence.

The other criticism is about lack of protection under the law. Citizen journalists can visit dangerous places and may be under a potential risk, but the law does not protect them. In Turkey, Law No. 212<sup>20</sup> determines the rights of journalists. According to Law No. 212, the person who is employed and works in an intellectual and artistic work called journalist but this definition is problematic. Legal regulations protect traditional journalists. Therefore, citizen journalists have problems with both the nation state institutions and other social and economic factors.<sup>21</sup> Melissa Wall suggests, "Amateurs may lack the protection that comes from having a full-time employer as well as international journalism organizations willing to speak out on their behalf" (2012: 6). Briefly, the accuracy and reliability of the news, trustworthiness or the use of propagandist language are the main topics directed towards citizen journalism. I asked the ethical issues raised by citizen journalism to the interviewees. Haluk Kalafat suggests every media institution has its own code of ethics but these ethical rules should be consistent. Kalafat says ethical issues can change and be interpreted. According to Çiçek Tahaoğlu, sharing everything in social media is citizen journalism, it should discuss. Citizen journalists must dedicate themselves to their work and must follow journalism principles. Elif Akgül believes ethical issues are not only about citizen journalism, but also about professional

journalism. Akgül says if a person calls him a journalist, she looks at his work; she does not look whether they are professional or not.

Gökhan Biçici does not think that Dokuz8 Haber Agency should have a different sense of ethics from mainstream media's ethical rules.

Emrah Uçar says Ötekilerin Postası stays away from anything that provokes people and practice self-control. For instance, Ötekilerin Postası does not publish the names of persons involved in a murder or rape case. And it pays attention to everything related to human rights.

It should be noticed that this criticism also applies to professional journalists. Professional journalists have ethical responsibilities too. Therefore, interviewees recognize the need to be cautious, but do not accept these ethical issues raised by citizen journalism. The journalist is a person who balanced field of reliability and fairness ethics, current information gathering, organizing and disseminating the act of performing a unique method (Singer 2006).

Today, the mainstream media professional journalists acts according to economic, political interests of institutions and can obscure the actual information to the public. Also, considering the conditions of Turkey, many professional journalists cannot benefit from the Law No. 212. Therefore, this criticism directed towards citizen journalism is unwarranted. It suggests producing news without neglecting ethical values. Citizen journalism is important because it attracts the attention of the public to create awareness and becomes the voice of the voiceless.

To summarize, in citizen journalism, ordinary people play an active role in gathering information, recording, analyzing and dissemination processes. Although citizen journalism is not a new concept, with the rise of the World Wide Web it's form has changed and become digitalized. The Internet and social media have become the most important news source for citizen journalism and thanks to the advances in communication technologies; citizens can now transmit breaking news faster than traditional media. On the other hand, there are some criticisms directed towards citizen journalis; however, these criticisms are not accepted by citizen journalists. Because, the main task of the journalist, professional or not, is to share the right information with the public and all ethical rules apply to both professional and citizen journalists.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

This study focuses on the practices of citizen journalism in Turkish alternative media in the digital era. In this study, I classified citizen journalism into different categories, explained the necessities of citizen journalism, and re-conceptualized citizen journalism as ‘digital citizen journalism’. Regarding all these arguments, this study concludes with an overview of citizen journalism in Turkey.

In this thesis, I argue that the mainstream media in Turkey is associated with the government, corporations and interest groups; produces one-sided and biased news. Therefore the mainstream media is not independent. In such an environment to ensure people's freedom of receiving and transmitting news, a new understanding of journalism is needed, which can be citizen journalism. With the developments in communication technologies and the rise of the World Wide Web, it has become more effective. Through the Internet and mobile communication technologies, each individual with access to certain technology has the potential to act as a digital citizen journalist. Also, in Turkey, citizen journalism has gained more importance in parallel with the social events. With publication bans or government’s withholding information from the citizens, citizen journalism becomes more effective compared to the mainstream media.

Based on this argument, is that citizen journalism can replace Turkish mainstream media and is that citizen journalism can be as effective as Turkish mainstream media were the basic questions that I wonder. For this thesis citizen journalism practices in Turkish alternative media were analyzed with reference to both theoretical

background in the literature and face-to-face in-depth interviews with Bianet, Dokuz8 Haber Agency and Ötekilerin Postası. These participants that are the subject of this thesis are promising initiatives for the future of Turkish alternative media and citizen journalism. When considering this condition, each interview questions are selected to understand and reveal how citizen journalism works, what is needed to make independent and unbiased journalism and how the participants implementing citizen journalism. If I need to make an overview of the implementation of the citizen journalism in Turkey based on the responses that I received from interviewees, I would like to draw attention to certain points. Bianet, Dokuz8 Haber Agency and Ötekilerin Postası are established based on the idea that mainstream media cannot be independent from government and interest groups, and it cannot produce objective news involving all sections of society. This is the common starting point and it is meaningful. Therefore, the concept of editorial policy and news value of citizen journalism are different from the mainstream media. According to participants, violence, news that appeals to certain segments, news made with rating concerns cannot carry news value. Their main news sources are ordinary people, the people on the street. Also, they do not accept ethical issues raised by citizen journalism. Because according to them, ethical issues are not only about citizen journalism. These are issues that need to be addressed in the mainstream media. At this point, I agree that it does not matter whether professional journalists or citizen journalist, both should have ethical responsibility in news production. Monopolization and commercialization bring ethical problems out in mainstream media; that's why it is not fair to direct those criticisms solely to citizen journalism. Checking of the accuracy and reliability of the news is another issue for citizen journalism. With these features, the participants apply certain methods to check the accuracy and reliability as mainstream

media. The number of female employees in the mainstream media also applies to the participants of this thesis. Çiçek Tahaoğlu and Elif Akgül from Bianet are selected not only because they make news about all kinds of minorities and freedom of expressions in Turkey, but also especially because they are women. I realized that except Bianet, there are no women journalists that I can interview in Dokuz8 Haber Agency and Ötekilerin Postası. Also there are no other qualified people that I can interview with. Because of this, the only interviews are made with Gökhan Biçici and Emrah Uçar. I think this is debatable. Dokuz8 Haber Agency and Ötekilerin Postası are promising examples of citizen journalism in Turkey, but their organizational structure is not suitable for this. Alternative media's organizational structure should be horizontal, not vertical. Both content and organizational structure should be different than the mainstream media in order to claim to be alternative and practice citizen journalism. Therefore, their organizational structure must change otherwise they cannot be different from the mainstream media's organizational structure.

On the other hand Bianet, Dokuz8 Haber Agency and Ötekilerin Postası differ from one another in some respects. For instance, providing journalism training to volunteer journalists is an important subject of discussion. According to Haluk Kalafat from Bianet and Emrah Uçar from Ötekilerin Postası volunteer journalist should not take journalism training. On the other hand, according to Elif Akgül, Çiçek Tahaoğlu and Gökhan Biçici, citizen journalists can take journalism training. Also, Dokuz8 Haber Agency gives journalism training in many cities of Turkey. Dokuz8 Haber Agency's journalists will have two different statuses: volunteer reporters and professional editors. There are different opinions in the literature concerned with these issues but in my opinion, citizen journalists should be volunteers. If they earn money, nobody

can say that they are citizen journalists. They may lose their amateur spirit and eventually they may not have a distinct characteristic that set them apart from professional journalists. Also, the necessity of editorial control mechanism is another controversial issue. At first, I believed that editorial control mechanism has a negative connotation and it can be exploited easily since today's mainstream media mostly use editorial control for censorship. But after the interviews, I am convinced that editorial control is not only about censorship; it is necessary to create distinctive language.

Citizen journalism is trying to bring a new breath of journalism in Turkey. Especially, when the social and political conditions of Turkey are taken into consideration, the importance of citizen journalism is increasing. It is clear that citizen journalism is differ from the mainstream media in respects to definition of newsworthy and news production processes. On the other hand, unless the problems that citizen journalism has are not solved, it cannot be more successful, effective than the mainstream media.

For further research, I would like to make some suggestions. Citizen journalism has become a kind of alternative journalism that changes its forms in the digital age. Together with the digitization, it is now competing against mainstream media. Up to this stage, the definitions, the necessities, the features and how to rotate with the digitalization of citizen journalism have been described. Researches for measuring the effects of citizen journalism in the digital era should be performed. In order to add actual information to the literature, the implementation of it should be investigated the perspective of the readers. Is the reader satisfied with the way construction of citizen journalism, how do readers perceive the news of citizen journalists? These are the questions to be answered to understand the readers' perspective.

## ENDNOTES

### Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> According to the survey in response to questions about the area where democracy and freedom; freedom of the media was about the most important difference compared to last year. The ratio of those who think that freedom of expression in Turkey went from 30.8 percent to 27.5 percent. The ratio of those who think that the press is free in Turkey went from 38.5 percent to 24.6 percent.  
<http://www.khas.edu.tr/news/1119/455/Khas-2014-Tuerkiye-Sosyal-Siyasal-Egilimler-Arastirmasi-Sonuclari-Aciklandi.html> Accessed on: May 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Biggest rises and falls in the 2014 World Press Freedom Index: Out of 180 countries Turkey is 154  
<https://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php> Accessed on: May 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Freedom in the World, Turkey Index  
Status: Partly Free  
Freedom Rating: 3.5 (1 = best, 7 = worst)  
Civil Liberties: 4 (1 = best, 7 = worst)  
Political Rights: 3 (1 = best, 7 = worst)  
<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/turkey#.VSDIAWCMCXv>  
Accessed on: May 2015.

### Chapter 3

<sup>4</sup> David Garcia gives more information about Tactical, Citizen's, Activist and Autonomous Media in The Alternative Media Handbook by Kate Coyer, Tony Downumt and Alan Fountain

<sup>5</sup> Others: the mainstream media ignores and denies who are victims of class, gender, ethnicity and religious inequalities, those excluded from public and political sphere. Refers to Sevda Alankuş 'Demokrasi ve Başka Medya İlişkisi' Başka Bir İletişim Mümkün Bildiriler

### Chapter 4

<sup>6</sup> To get more information about Doğan Media Group, Doğuş Media Group, Ciner Media Group, Turkuvaz and Feza Journalism, Albayrak Media Group, İhlas Holding, Koza İpek Holding  
Accessed on: May 2015.  
<http://www.dyh.com.tr/>  
<http://www.dogusyayingrubu.com.tr/Markalarimiz/>  
<http://www.cinergroup.com.tr/companies/ciner-yayin-holding>  
<http://www.turkuvazyayin.com.tr/>  
<http://ik.zaman.com.tr/ik/mainAction.action>  
<http://www.albayrak.com.tr/SektorSirket>  
<http://www.ihlas.com.tr/sayfa/1397662505184234/ihlas-yayin-holding>  
<http://www.kozaipekholding.com/>

<sup>7</sup> We received over 60 court orders directing Twitter to remove content in Turkey regarding violations of personal rights and defamation of both private citizens and government officials.

We un-withheld content on two separate occasions in Turkey during this period. The first instance was outlined in our blog post from March, when we challenged the government's ban on access to Twitter. The second time we un-withheld an account followed our successful appeal of a court order that we had originally complied with. More information on that situation is available on Chilling Effects.

<https://transparency.twitter.com/removal-requests/2014/jan-jun> Accessed on: May 2015.

We received 328 court orders and 149 requests from Turkish government agencies directing Twitter to remove content ranging from violations of personal rights to defamation of private citizens and/or government officials.

We filed legal objections with Turkish courts in response to more than 70% of Turkish orders received. Objections were filed where we believed the order interfered with freedom of expression law or had other deficiencies. Our objections to Turkish courts prevailed only ~5% of the time.

We un-withheld three accounts and 196 Tweets following the acceptance of several objections that Twitter filed in the Turkish courts in response to various removal demands.

<https://transparency.twitter.com/removal-requests/2014/jul-dec> Accessed on: May 2015.

8

According to a report prepared by the Journalists Union of Turkey, in the first half of 2014, 981 press laborers were removed. The 56-press laborer has chosen to resign from his job for several reasons.

<http://t24.com.tr/haber/2014un-ilk-sekiz-ayinda-981-gazeteci-isten-cikarildi.269326>

Accessed on: May 2015.

9

The three-month period, at least 47 journalists and media workers have been laid off or had had to go to work. In the same period last year this figure was 23.

<http://www.bianet.org/bianet/ifade-ozgurlugu/161783-medya-gozlem-4-ceyrek-duzenlemeler-tepkiler-isten-cikarmalar> Accessed on: May 2015.

22 journalists and 10 newspaper distributors went to prison in 2015.

<http://www.bianet.org/bianet/ifade-ozgurlugu/161781-bia-medya-gozlem-raporu-tam-metin>

Accessed on: May 2015.

10

For the term ‘Primary Identifiers’ Alankuş references to Stuart Hall in Yeni Habercilik Arayışları: Hak Odaklı Habercilik, Yurttaş Gazeteciliği, Barış Gazeteciliği (100-101)

11

The 11 Layers of Citizen Journalism by Steve Outing

<http://www.poynter.org/uncategorized/69328/the-11-layers-of-citizen-journalism/> Accessed on: May 2015.

1. The first step: Opening up to public comment
2. Second step: The citizen add-on reporter
3. Now we’re getting serious: Open-source reporting
4. The citizen bloghouse
5. Newsroom citizen ‘transparency’ blogs
6. The stand-alone citizen-journalism site: Edited version
7. The stand-alone citizen-journalism site: Unedited version
8. Add a print edition
9. The hybrid: Pro + citizen journalism
10. Integrating citizen and pro journalism under one roof
11. Wiki journalism: Where the readers are editors

What is Citizen Journalism? by Tony Rager

<http://journalism.about.com/od/citizenjournalism/a/whatiscitizen.htm> Accessed on: May 2015.

1. Semi-Independent Citizen Journalism
2. Independent Citizen Journalism

What is participatory journalism? By Joseph Daniel Lasica

<http://www.jdlasica.com/2003/08/07/what-is-participatory-journalism/> Accessed on: May 2015.

1. Audience participation at mainstream news outlets.
2. Independent news and information Web sites.

3. Full-fledged participatory news sites.
4. Collaborative and contributory media sites.
5. Other kinds of “thin media.”
6. Personal broadcasting sites.

We The Media Grassroots Journalism by The People, For The People by Dan Gillmor (2006: 27-41)

1. Mail lists and forums
2. Weblogs
3. Wiki
4. SMS
5. Mobile-connected Cameras
6. Internet ‘Broadcasting’
7. Peer-to-peer
8. The RSS Revolution

<sup>12</sup> The Independent Media Center is a network of collectively run media outlets for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate telling of the truth. Work out of a love and inspiration for people who continue to work for a better world, despite corporate media's distortions and unwillingness to cover the efforts to free humanity.

History: Various independent and alternative media organizations and activists established The Independent Media Center in 1999 for the purpose of providing grassroots coverage of the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle. The center acted as a clearinghouse of information for journalists, and provided up-to-the-minute reports, photos, audio and video footage through its website. The center also produced its own newspaper, distributed throughout Seattle and to other cities via the Internet, as well as hundreds of audio segments, transmitted through the web and Studio X, a 24-hour micro and Internet radio station based in Seattle. The site, which uses a democratic open-publishing system, logged more than 2 million hits, and was featured on America Online, Yahoo, CNN, BBC Online, and numerous other sites. Through a decentralized and autonomous network, hundreds of media activists setup independent media centers in London, Canada, Mexico City, Prague, Belgium, France, and Italy over the next year. IMCs have since been established on every continent, with more to come.

<sup>13</sup> OhMyNews is looking for volunteers who are passionate about citizen journalism to help to OhMyNews curate the news about the news. OhMyNews is not looking for reporters. That’s not within OMNI’s scope. They need people who can update them on what’s happening in the world of citizen journalism along with opinions and tips. They can even provide volunteer’s with sources to mine for ideas and stories.

<sup>14</sup> Pew Research Center has its origins in a research project created in 1990 by the Times Mirror newspaper company and called the Times Mirror Center for the People & the Press. The project conducted regular polls on politics and major policy issues. In 1993, Andrew Kohut became its director, and in 1996, The Pew Charitable Trusts became the center’s sponsor and renamed it the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. They conduct public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and other data-driven social science research. They generate a foundation of facts that enriches the public dialogue and supports sound decision-making.

<sup>15</sup> Paying Attention to 9/11 Related News  
<http://911blogger.com/> Accessed on: May 2015.

How can a site about New York City blogs not deal with September 11th, 2001?  
<http://www.nycbloggers.com/911.asp> Accessed on: May 2015.

What Really Happened on September 11, 2001

<http://whatreallyhappenedonseptember112001.blogspot.com.tr/> Accessed on: May 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Citizen Journalism and BBC

<http://niemanreports.org/articles/citizen-journalism-and-the-bbc/> Accessed on: May 2015.

On the day of the London bombings, the BBC News's Web site used images sent to them by citizens who were affected by the attacks. On the site, people could learn how to submit their video, photographs and words for use by the BBC.

Before long, many more text and e-mail messages containing images and information arrived from the public, and these became an integral part of how the BBC reported the day's events. Within six hours we received more than 1,000 photographs, 20 pieces of amateur video, 4,000 text messages, and 20,000 e-mails. People were participating in our coverage in a way we had never seen before. By the next day, our main evening TV newscast began with a package edited entirely from video sent in by viewers.

<sup>17</sup> The Roles of Broadcasters in Disaster Reportage: A Lesson Learned from Tsunami Reportage in Indonesia

<http://www.jamco.or.jp/en/symposium/21/5/> Accessed on: May 2015.

While not many people have a chance to record special events, such as natural disasters and Tsunami Aceh, Mr. Cut Putri, a medical student of the University of Padjadjaran, Bandung, west Jawa, had something to share. The earthquake struck when he was staying at his relative's residence having a breakfast. He immediately took the handycam, shot the ferocious wave motion from the second floor of the house, which is located in Jalan Lam Jame, Banda Aceh, about a kilometer from the beach. Three days later, the images recorded by Cut Putri was aired over Metro TV. Video images enabled the viewers to imagine how fierce Tsunami Aceh was. The tsunami video made by Cut Putri was not only aired on Metro TV but was also aired in international television networks such as the CNN and BBC.

<sup>18</sup> Readers reacts to Asia's deadly tsunami. Here are some of readers thoughts on Asia's deadly tsunami

<http://www.nbcnews.com/id/6766110/ns/msnbc/#.VTS0mWCMCXs> Accessed on: May 2015.

<sup>19</sup> The data is taken from Mesut Yıldırım who is a live broadcast vehicle technical director in Habertürk TV.

<sup>20</sup> The provisions of this law are about working in all kinds of intellectual and artistic works in Turkish newspapers, news and photography agencies. According to this law, the person who works in the intellectual and artistic works and earn money from this work is called journalist.

[http://www.tgc.org.tr/mevzuat\\_212.asp](http://www.tgc.org.tr/mevzuat_212.asp) Accessed on: May 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Critiques of citizen journalism:

1. Citizen journalism does not give much place to objectivity.
2. The low level of qualifications. Weakness seen in terms of content and quality
3. Citizen journalists occurs less protected against the laws

<http://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/erkan-saka/yurttas-gazeteciligi-uzerine-birkac-not.5329> Accessed on: May 2015.

## REFERENCES

Ağbaba, V. Özel, Ö. Demir, N. Işık, M. 2014. *Kalemi Kırılan Gazeteciler*. İstanbul: Cumhuriyet Kitapları.

Alankuş, S., 2008. "Demokrasi ve Başka Medya İlişkisi. Türkiye'deki Yaygın Dışı Medya Ortamını Anlamak Üzere Teorik Bir Çerçeve. " in *İstanbul Uluslararası Bağımsız Medya Forumu Başka Bir İletişim Mümkün Bildiriler*. (121-136) der. Sevilay Çelenk. IPS İletişim Vakfı Yayınları.

Alankuş, S., 2008. *Yeni Habercilik Arayışları: Hak Odaklı Habercilik, Yurttaş Gazeteciliği, Barış Gazeteciliği*. Accessed on: March 2015. Online available at: [https://www.academia.edu/1141388/Yeni\\_habercilik\\_arayışları\\_Hak\\_odaklı\\_habercilik\\_yurttaş\\_gazeteciliği\\_barış\\_gazeteciliği\\_Seeking\\_for\\_New\\_Journalism\\_Right-Based\\_Journalism\\_Public\\_Journalism\\_and\\_Peace\\_Journalism](https://www.academia.edu/1141388/Yeni_habercilik_arayışları_Hak_odaklı_habercilik_yurttaş_gazeteciliği_barış_gazeteciliği_Seeking_for_New_Journalism_Right-Based_Journalism_Public_Journalism_and_Peace_Journalism).

Alankuş, S. 2009. *Gazeteciliğe Başlarken: Okuldan Haber Odasına*. İstanbul: IPS İletişim Vakfı Yayınları.

Allan, S., Thorsen, Einar. 2009. *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives Global Crises and The Media*; vol 1. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Atabek, Ü. 2005. "İletişim Teknolojileri ve Yerel Medya İçin Olanaklar. " *Yeni İletişim Teknolojileri ve Meyda* (61-90) ed. Sevda Alankuş. İstanbul: IPS İletişim Vakfı Yayınları.

Atton, C. 2002. *Alternative Media*. London: Sage.

Atton, C., 2009. "Alternative and Citizen Journalism. " In *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*. (265-278) der. Coyer., K., Dowmunt., T., Fountain., A. International Communication Association Handbook Series Routledge.

Aydoğan, A., Başaran, F. 2012. "Yeni Medyayı Alternatif Medya Bağlamında Anlamak. " in *Alternatif Medya Alternatif Gazetecilik: Türkiye'de Alternatif Gazetecilik Üzerine Değerlendirmeler*. (213-246) ed. Ömer Özer. İstanbul: Literatürk Yayınevi.

Bailey, O., Cammaerts, B., Carpentier, N., 2007. *Understanding Alternative Media*. London: Open University Press.

Bowman, S., Willis, C., 2003. *We Media: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information*. American Press Institute: The Media Center.

Burns, A., 2003. Gatewatching, Not Gatekeeping: Collaborative Online News. *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture and Policy: Quarterly Journal of Media Research and Resources*, (107): 31-44. Accessed on April 2015. Online available at: <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/189/>.

Cemal, H. 2015. "İnternette özgürlüğün başına üçüncü çuval geçirildi" Accessed on: July 2015. Available at: <http://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/hasan-cemal/internette-ozgurlugun-basina-ucuncu-cuval-gecirildi,11582>

Chomsky, N., 1993. *Medya Denetimi Immediast Bildirgesi*. Ş. Süer (çev.). İstanbul: Tüm Zamanlar Yayıncılık.

Coyer, K., Dowmunt, T., Fauntin, A., 2007. *The Alternative Media Handbook*. Routledge (1-13).

Curran, J. 2002. *Media and Power*. London: Routledge

Evers., H., 2010. "İnternet Haberciliği: Yeni Etik Sorunlar mı?." in *Televizyon Haberciliğinde Etik* (322-328) eds. Çaplı, B., Tuncel. H. Ankara Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi ve Fatusch B.V

Downing., J., 2001. *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements*. Thousand Oaks, London: Sage.

Downing, J. 2011. "Encyclopedia of Social Movement Media." In *Alternative Media* (15-20) ed. Chris Atton London: Sage.

Duran, R., 2005. "Yurttaş Gazeteciliği." in *Habercinin El Kitabı: Gazetecilik ve Habercilik*. (91-105) ed. Sevda Alankuş. IPS İletişim Vakfı Yayınları.

Forde, S. 2009. "What's so alternative about 'alternative' journalism?" Accessed on: April 2015. Online available at [http://www98.griffith.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/handle/10072/31899/58804\\_1.pdf;jsessionid=DC06B2F4A24AEA67A92BD6F4D4DB8009?sequence=1](http://www98.griffith.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/handle/10072/31899/58804_1.pdf;jsessionid=DC06B2F4A24AEA67A92BD6F4D4DB8009?sequence=1)

Freedom In The World. 2015. *freedomhouse.org*. Accessed on: April 2015. Online available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/turkey#.VSDIAWCMCXv>.

Harcup, T., 2013. "The Unspoken-Said': The Journalism of Alternative Media. " in *Alternative Journalism Alternative Voices*. (63-79) Routledge.

Jorgensen, K. W., Hanitzsch, T. 2009. *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*. Routledge, NY.

Jurrat, N., 2011. "Mapping Digital Media: Citizen Journalism and The Internet. " *opensocietyfoundations.com* Accessed on: March 2015. <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/mapping-digital-media-citizen-journalism-and-internet-20110712.pdf>.

Karaduman, M., 2005. "İnternet ve Gazetecilik" *Yeni İletişim Teknolojileri ve Medya*. (141-153) ed. Sevda Alankuş. IPS İletişim Vakfı Yayınları.

Kutlu, T.Ö., Bekiroğlu, O. 2010. "Türkiye 'de Yurttaş Gazeteciliği Bağlamında İnternet Haberciliği: Bianet Örneğinde Kentsel Dönüşüm Projesiyle İlgili Haberlerin Analizi, " 6(2): 254-269.

Lasica, J.D., 2003. *What is participatory journalism?* Accessed on: March 2015. Online available at <http://www.jdlasica.com/2003/08/07/what-is-participatory-journalism/>.

Mora, N. 2008. "Katılımcı Demokrasi Açısından Yurttaş Gazeteci liği. " in *Medya Çalışmaları Medya Pedagojisi ve Küresel İletişim*. (31-39) altkitap.com.

Morgan, C., 2013. *prezi.com*. Convergence of the Media. Accessed on: April 2015. Online available at <https://prezi.com/mnizzjxt1ipl/convergence-of-the-media/>.

OECD. 2007. *Participative Web: User Created Content Report*. Online available at <http://www.oecd.org/sti/38393115.pdf> Paris: OECD.

Pavlik, J.V., 2013. *Yeni Medya ve Gazetecilik*. M. Demir and B. Kalsın. (çev.). Ankara: Phoenix Yayınevi.

Rosen, J., 2006. "The People Formerly Known as the Audience." *archive.pressthink.org*. Accessed on February 2015. Online available at [http://archive.pressthink.org/2006/06/27/ppl\\_frmr.html](http://archive.pressthink.org/2006/06/27/ppl_frmr.html).

Saka, E., 2012. *Yurttas Gazeteciliği Üzerine Birkaç Not*. Accessed on: March 2015. Online available at <http://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/erkan-saka/yurttas-gazeteciligi-uzerine-birkac-not,5329>.

Singer., J. B., 2006. The Socially Responsible Existentialist, A Normative Emphasis for Journalists in a Media Environment. *Journalism Studies*, 7(1), pp. 2-18. <http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/3460/>.

Sözeri, C. 2013. *Türkiye'de Medya Sahipliği ve Getirileri*. Accessed on: July 2015. Available at <http://t24.com.tr/haber/turkiyede-medya-sahipligi-ve-getirileri,244181>

Sözeri, C. 2015. "Hükümeti Destekleyene Bütün Kapılar Açılıyor" Accessed on: July 2015. Available at: <http://platform24.org/medya-izleme/813/-hukumeti-destekleyene-butun-kapilar-aciliyor>

*Tgc.com. Basın Mesleğinde Çalışanlarla Çalıştırılanlar Arasındaki Münasebetlerin Tanzimi Hakkındaki Kanun*. Accessed on: April 2015. Online available at: [http://www.tgc.org.tr/mevzuat\\_212.asp](http://www.tgc.org.tr/mevzuat_212.asp).

Uzun, R. 2006. "Gazeteci likte Yeni Bir Yönelim: Yurttas Gazeteciliği. " *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 16: 633-656. [dersisoyalbil.selcuk.edu.tr/susbed/article/download/551/531](http://dersisoyalbil.selcuk.edu.tr/susbed/article/download/551/531)

Wall, M., 2012. *Citizen Journalism: Valuable, Useless, or Dangerous?*. International Debate Education Association: New York

World Press Freedom Index. 2015. *rfs.org*. Accessed on: April 2015. Online available at <https://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php>.