Decline in journalism under precarious conditions [1]

Ünsal Çığ

Asst. Prof., Mersin University, Communication Faculty, Turkey

Abstract : Since the beginning, at least from an idealistic perspective, journalism has been considered as a public service and should serve democracy. Despite the relationship between democracy and journalism deteriorates rapidly, this liberal understanding of journalism is still used to evaluate the journalistic work. This relationship should be protected as a value and a target in order to maintain journalism as a meaningful social institution. But how can this objective be achieved in the current difficult conditions, which are the neoliberal working conditions changing the production of news dramatically and responsible for the declining journalistic quality in the first place ? Relatedly, an important consequence of the change in the knowledge production and news production process is the increasing precarization of journalistic labour.

In this respect, it is important to question how journalism maintain to claim fulfilling its basic function with the precarious journalists, who are obliged to behave individualistic, disorganised, competitive and as human capitals. It can be safely said that only journalists who have secure working conditions, basic rights and freedom of speech protected under law can produce quality information serving democratic process. And these are the exact rights under attack by neoliberal turn.

The study will focus on the question of how we can grasp "the relationship between journalism and democracy", which is substantially a liberal understanding, in the neoliberal period when precarious conditions have turned into a norm. In this context, the problematic aspects of insisting on the proposals of ancient liberal solutions to that degenerating relationship, such as journalism ethics, which almost completely ignores contemporary working conditions, will also be pointed out. In addition, the role of media, technological developments and social media will be addressed from the perspective of precarization and the process of capital accumulation. Information, whether as a daily communication or intellectual production, has been possible to be dispossessed in the contemporary capital accumulation process.

In neoliberal capitalism, the decline of democracy is accompanied by a decline in the quality of journalism. With the heavy attacks on journalism and academia, Turkey sets an example on this subject. In Turkey example, after the 1980 military coup neoliberal policies have gained momentum with the support of privatizations, financialization and deunionization and they have taken effect also in journalism sector. And there is a strong connection between the precarization in knowledge production processes and the current situation of journalists and journalism.

Journalists' struggle for freedom of press is inseparable from the struggle to improve working conditions. Job security, social rights and other demands are the subject of a general struggle for civic rights, in which readers of the journalistic work are also involved. The precarious conditions of the journalists connect them with all other sectors subject to similar conditions and ultimately with the society, as precarization is

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becoming the dominant production process in general. Because the most of the audience of the journalists are also the member of the precariat or becoming one rapidly, precarity and precarious conditions connect journalists and their audience. And this concrete and obvious base of connection is also a possible junction point for lots of other people and sectors. Journalists are the direct party/part of this struggle. Starting from this, a far-reaching political struggle against the same perpetrator, who is responsible for the dispossession of not only journalists', but also of whole society's civic and labour rights, is urgently needed all over the world.

Key Words : Precarity, Democracy, Political Struggle, Civic and Labour Rights, Journalism

1 Introduction

Professional journalism in the classical sense emerged in the 19th century. In that century, the emergence of journalism was directly influenced by the industrial revolution and, having internalized the conditions of industrial production, became an independent profession (Nerone, 2013). Daily newspapers could then be produced by professional employees. As a consequence, issues such as freedom of the press, the definition of the news, ethical codes or professional identity reached a maturity to form the paradigm of the liberal press in a holistic manner. This paradigm still constitutes our main reference point in our views on the press, even if journalism has taken many forms with technological changes over the last 200 years. The relationship between the press and democracy is closely tied to the idea of the public sphere, and the strength of these ties is evaluated by informed citizens. Citizens who are informed about public issues will be able to participate in democratic processes in which representatives in power can be elected or changed. At this point, journalism as a public service manifests itself in the sense that freedom of the press is not only a right but also a duty. This duty removes journalism from being just a job and makes it a social institution even in minimally democratic societies. The functioning of this institution is made possible by journalists who are accepted as professionals. This is briefly the journalism concept of the liberal paradigm [2] (Berry, 2016).

The liberal paradigm is still important to define and especially, to legitimate journalism's values. According to this paradigm, journalism is inherently a public service. Producing news, which should be correct, impartial and actual, is necessary to provide a public good. Although this paradigm is still used to evaluate journalistic quality, lately the conditions of production of news which journalists participate in have been dramatically changed. Journalists can still be held responsible for the flow of information to maintain ideal democratic life, but they should do the job in an insecure environment which is politically, economically and culturally hostile to general labour and creating a precarious, cheap workforce, in contrast to the relatively better past [3]. So, it is important to question how journalism maintains its claim to fulfilling its basic function with precarious journalists, who are obliged to behave in an individualistic, disorganised and competitive manner and as human capital. It can be safely said that

2. The liberal paradigm does not, of course, offer newspapers and news organizations a proposal beyond the free market model. However, its values in the context of human and democratic rights have gained acceptance in general throughout the years. How to reach these values, or rather, which economic and organizational models can be useful to approach these values should be discussed separately.

3. Here "relatively better past" is used considering the fact that relatively better conditions are the result of the past struggles. And relatively better past is mostly inherent in (again relatively) "developed countries" or "Western World".

journalists who have secure working conditions, basic rights and freedom of speech protected under law can only produce quality information serving the democratic process. These are the exact rights under attack by the neoliberal turn.

Precarity, among other things, denotes a general working condition in terms of employees. Insecure, short-term, flexible and disorganized work is currently very common in many sectors (Standing, 2014). But particularly in the sectors of information and knowledge, cognitive labour suffers ever-increasingly from flexibility. Historically, this flexibilization has been related to the evolution of production from Fordism to post-Fordism and the neoliberal transformation during the 1980's (Jessop, 2002). Therefore, there has been a shift in theoretical discussions from industrial labour, as autonomist Marxism refers to it, to immaterial labour and precarization (Berardi and Empson, 2009). As Federici stated, they call the new type of work immaterial labour because they claim that with the computer and information revolutions, the dominant form of work as we know it has changed (2006). In today's capitalism, work no longer produces only physical objects, it produces information, ideas, states of being and relations (Federici, 2006). Precariousness, which is understood by some of the autonomists not so negatively, has reached today to a point that leaves little space for optimism. With the rise of right-wing populism and anti-intellectualism, the sectors producing knowledge, ideas and information in increasingly flexible conditions can also be the subjects of politically motivated attacks, and journalism is among the most attacked occupations (Kaya, 20196, p.22). The politically motivated attacks which can be seen in the discourses of populist leaders worldwide such as Trump, Orban, Modi, Erdogan or Bolsonaro, or political organizations such as the UK's Brexit Party, Germany's *Alternative für Deutschland,* Le Pen's National Rally or Spain's Vox, show general hostility against critical thinkers on the plea of anti-elitism (Eaton, 2019). Flexibilizsation and precarious conditions in knowledge production create fractured and non-unionised labour open to political assaults and fear which are exploited and managed by populist politicians very easily. When these trends combine with the others in neoliberal capitalism, the decline of democracy all over the world becomes clear to understand. Turkey sets an example on this subject, ranking down in 157th position in the press freedom index (RSF Index, 2018a) However, it is also seen that some European countries, which were historically considered as more democratic than the rest of the world, plunged to lower positions, especially Malta and Slovakia, because of the murders of investigative journalists. Worldwide decline in press freedom is also visible, even the countries at the top of the Index are affected by this alarming climate with threats to investigative reporters and unprecedented verbal attacks on the media (RSF Index, 2018b) In the last 10 years, more than 900 journalists have been murdered all over the world. It should be remarked that most of them were killed in actual war zones, while they were reporting on corruption, organized crime, abuse of government power or human rights violations, which are the alarming topics of global neoliberalism (DW, 2019). The biggest factor in increasing the precarity of labour is the neoliberal political and economic system which has been carried out effectively since the end of the 1970s throughout the world. In Turkey for example, after the 1980 military coup, neoliberal policies have gained momentum with the support of privatizations, financialization and deunionization and they have also taken effect in the journalism

sector (Adaklı, 2010, p.68-69). There is also a strong connection between the precarization in information production processes and the current situation of journalists and journalism. Professionally or financially, the downfall of journalism today is very much related to the journalists' inability to resist because of their precarious existence stemming from neoliberal policies and technological developments. With the help of internet technologies, information is everywhere in terms of quantity and accessibility like never before in human history. Notwithstanding the fact that hunger for quality and true information is rising, attacks against institutional journalism are being normalised. Can this contradictory situation at the surface be related to precarity ? The point in question here is that capitalist globalization and the neoliberal turn, as autonomist Marxists point out, have transformed the production of knowledge, ideas and information all over the world. However, they do not consider the unequal consequences of this process adequately. For instance, Hardt and Negri evaluate the developments very optimistically by saying that the 'multitude' has potential to resist (2004, 2009), but on the contrary, a bigger fragmentation has emerged [4], at least for the time being. This fragmentation is worldwide but varies from country to country and region to region because of the unequal development of neoliberal capitalism. With the help of some concepts (David Harvey's concept of "accumulation by dispossession" (2012) is one of them), however, the direction of precarization in knowledge production exposes some of its universal characteristics.

2 Decline in Journalism and Journalistic Standards

This study will focus on the question of how we can grasp the relationship between journalism and democracy in the neoliberal period when precarious working conditions dominate the field. In this context, it would be useful to start by pointing out the problematic aspects of the proposals of traditional liberal solutions to that degenerating relationship, such as journalistic principles, standards or ethics, which almost completely ignore contemporary working conditions [5].

Almost all issues related to the decline of journalism worldwide are closely related to the conditions of media production and the changing capital structure, whether it is because of transformations in the ownership structure of the news media since the rooting of neoliberalism throughout the 1980's, or of the deep influence of information technologies on the production and consumption processes (McHesney, 2001 ; Hallin, 2008 ; Fenton, 2011, p.63-64 ; Phelan, 2014). The environment that journalism is practiced in has been changing radically and this change affects all journalists and the entire sector. Withstanding this transformation, which has important legal, political and cultural consequences, requires undoubtedly a collective struggle. The

4. It should be added that it seems fragmented but "the multitude" keep producing resistance all over the world. From the Yellow Jackets in France to Lebanon, Chile, Hong Kong or Iraq, social movements keep appearing, which seem a continuation of the protest waves that started with the so called "Arab Spring". In War and Democracy in the Age of Empire, "the multitude" is described as an "active social subject, which acts on the basis of what the singularities share in common" (Hardt and Negri, 2004, p.100).

According to Hardt and Negri, ""The creative forces of the multitude that sustain Empire are also capable of autonomously constructing a counter-Empire, an alternative political organization of global flows and exchanges." Hardt and Negri, 2000, p.15)

5. For a comprehensive analysis of ethical debate in the era of conventional news media see (Çiğ & Çamuroğlu, 2011) and in the era of new media see (Çamuroğlu, Çiğ, 2015).

liberal paradigm mentioned above reduces the focus stubbornly from the collective to individual responsibility. As Tılıç (2015) stated, it continues to explain the problems by discussing the position of journalists as the subject of ethical behaviour (p.51). However, the behaviours of the individuals especially when taking responsibility are highly dependent on the circumstances around them and even more so in professional environments. In a study of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), "Journalists under pressure" published in 2017 by the Council of Europe, based on a sample of 940 journalists reporting from 48 countries (Clark & Grech, 2017, p.11), journalists in Europe are found to be often exposed to serious pressure in their work, including intimidation and violence. As a consequence, many suffer from fear, which frequently leads to self-censorship, which indicates a collapse of ethical behaviour and taking responsibility from the beginning. Gözler (2010) emphasizes that rights, freedom and responsibility are always considered as a whole in law (p.185). Almost 70% of the journalists who participated in the study's survey had experienced psychological violence, including intimidation, threats, slander and humiliation, over a period of three years. 19% of the surveyed journalists reported intimidation and 24% reported belittlement and humiliation by their own management. The study shows that threats take a number of forms :

> "[t]hey may be physical but can also be generated by legal, political, cultural and economic pressures. (...) Market politics and oligarch ownership of media outlets also play a role. The press may be reluctant to offend advertisers or other influential parties. Self-censorship is often the result" (Clark & Grech, 2017, p.20).

It is clear that with the lack of legal, political or cultural freedom, ethical debate in a liberal sense discussing how journalists can act as ethical individuals, responsible professionals and be held liable is doomed to fail. As Moressi (2006) stated, freedom is the a priori of responsibility (p.32-33). The Call of EFJ on the Council of Europe is very important in that sense :

> "Member States should put in place a comprehensive legislative framework that enables journalists and other media actors to contribute to public debate effectively and without fear. (...) Due attention should be paid to the importance of adequate labour and employment laws to protect journalists and other media actors from arbitrary dismissal or reprisals, and from precarious working conditions that may expose them to undue pressures to depart from accepted journalistic ethics and standards" (Workers' Day : Media Freedom requires decent working conditions for journalists, 2017).

The result of the Leveson Inquiry (Leveson, 2012) in England, which was a public, judge-led inquiry set up by the then-prime minister David Cameron to examine the culture, practice and ethics of the press has ascertained the corrupt relationship between neoliberalism and the media. It was established in the wake of the phone-hacking scandal at the now-defunct News of the World tabloid and Lord Justice Leveson made recommendations on the future of press regulation (Q&A : The Leveson Inquiry, 2012).

The result of neoliberal financialization can be seen even in the oldest and the most rooted of democracies that leaves very little space to idealists. The situation is getting worse in terms of neoliberalism's tendency to authoritarianism, especially for the countries which have weak democratic institutions : "We are witnessing the rise of authoritarian neoliberalism, which is rooted in the reconfiguring of the state into a less democratic entity through constitutional and legal changes that seek to insulate it from social and political conflict" (Bruff, 2014, p.113). This insulation benefits greatly from the current media structure. Arsan (2015, p.338) stated that a media structure emerged adjusting itself to the changes in political and economic hegemony and thinking primarily of its own interests. Journalists contributed to the current condition of the news media with their disorganized and ununionized state and unprofessional decisions.

> "[I]n a neoliberal free market economy, news has no right to exist if it cannot pay its way. But news is not an 'ordinary' commodity – it has a special status by dint of its relationship to democratic life. So when markets fail or come under threat and ethical journalistic practice is swept aside in pursuit of financial stability, the consequences are felt more broadly than the marketplace" (Fenton, 2011,p.66).

One of the very important consequences is the loss of citizens' right to inform and to be informed. However, this loss is more corelated with the journalistic labour treated within the process of news production, which is often kept hidden in ethical debates [6].

In the mainstream view, principles, standards or ethical guidelines are still considered as a solution for the contemporary challenges of journalism, especially in terms of journalism and democratic relationships. But this normative approach, while drawing attention to individual acts and the news itself, hides the conditions of production which can cause journalists to behave unprofessionally in terms of their relation to the truth, in a journalistic sense. Especially, considering the working and production conditions in the new media and in the neoliberal era, it is the precarious conditions themselves that have been tried to be kept hidden.

To understand the crisis of journalism related to precarity in the hybridization stage of industrial and post-industrial conditions, it is important to include in the discussion the process of news production and the role of media and social media in the process of capital accumulation.

3 Digitalization, Neoliberalism and the Process of Capital Accumulation

Giroux (2004), in his book "The Terror of Neoliberalism" states that neoliberalism is not simply an economic theory but also a set of values, ideologies, and practices that refigures political and economic power and eliminates the essential elements of democratic life. It collapses the link between corporate power and the state, while

6. This secrecy about the news production conditions and journalistic labor creates an effect like commodity fetishism. For a detailed discussion about the commodity fetishism and journalism, see (Çiğ & Çamuroğlu Çiğ, 2011, p.28-29)

corporate power gains a stranglehold, for example on the media necessary for a healthy democracy. Journalism is traditionally thought of as linking certain political and economic aspects of a society by monitoring the power in the name of the people to protect the public good, but that ability is diminishing gradually under neoliberalism. As Cohen (2015, p.528) argues, "[j]ournalism's current crisis presents an opportunity to rethink journalism as it has been practiced until now and emphasizes the failings of an advertiser-supported capitalist model and the role for-profit journalism has played in the commodification of what should ostensibly be a public good." But so far, as Fenton (2011) states, "response to the crisis in news media clearly falls far short of realizing a constitutive alternative to neoliberal approaches. The market remains firmly at the core of all policy considerations that continue to prioritize deregulation over democracy" (p.66).

Naturally, neoliberal economic policies as a set of values, ideologies, and practices have effects not only on journalism or news media, but also on all the sectors doing business in market economies, "which began to prevail from the 1970s and 80s onwards and comprise on the one hand deregulation of economic activities, privatisation of public institutions, liberalisation of foreign trade ; and on the other hand an overall assault on the labour and its gains along with social spending cuts, subcontracted labour and undermining of trade unions. These policies, together with the internationalisation of production, have led to the spread of precarious work." (Ergüven, 2017).

Precarious labour has limited resources and security mechanisms to survive all over the world. Marx points out that "primitive accumulation" is the initial process of depriving labour from the means of production and from the means of reproduction of its own existence (Marx, 2013). David Harvey states that in neoliberal capitalism, this strategy is still in use and extends in the northern capitalist countries by flexibilisation of the rights of the social welfare state and is marked by the concept of accumulation by dispossession. (Harvey, 2012). Gandesha (2018) summarises that in Harvey's conceptualization "neoliberalism comprises : 1) accumulation by dispossession ; 2) deregulation ; 3) privatization ; and 4) an upward redistribution of wealth. It has increased both economic insecurity and cultural anxiety via three features in particular : the creation of surplus peoples, rising global inequality, and threats to identity. The anxiety wrought by neoliberal globalization has created a rich and fertile ground for populist politics of both right and left" (p.62). News media has two roles to play in this process. Firstly, in the neoliberal era, the transition between the state and violence is facilitated and naturalized by the news media. Secondly, the accumulation of capital is enabled and increased by social media and its mass data processing and analysis capacity. Internet users and their data are captured through the commodification processes of the news media (Ekman, 2014, p.99).

At this stage, it is useful to emphasize this point in order to clarify how the accumulation process works in the new media era. Fuchs (2014) states that "digital labour is alienated digital work : it is alienated from itself, from the instruments and objects of labour and from the products of labour" (p.35). According to Muelrath (2018) :

> "In these terms, in today's media landscape the newspaper, and in turn journalists, are now beholden to corporate social media companies. What

> news items get consumed is now largely dependent on either 1) the algorithms of social media sites such as Facebook, which dictate what is shown based on formulas that maximize potential benefits for social media corporations in user engagement and advertising ; or 2) through the 'slave labourers' of the social media companies – essentially any user who generates and shares content which engages other users. The result of this is pressure to create content that will travel further and generate more impressions or 'clicks,' and in turn, ad revenue. News organizations are forced to comply with these new methods of circulation in attempt to meet the demands of the social media corporations (. . .) All are being fed by the automatic machines of the digital communications environment, working ceaselessly, powered by capitalistic poaching of our biological energy through activities often perceived as benign, such as clicking on news articles. Despite moral outrage about illusions disrupting consensus concerning objective reality, the social media companies will not, in earnest, hinder the ecosystem, due to viral traffic increasing market-value" (p.238-239, 242).

Digitalization and precarization are among the most important elements, which lie at the heart of contemporary journalism's crisis. At the same time, the developments that triggered this transformation have started a whole range of new discussions about the professional identity of journalists.

4 Precarious Conditions and the Deteriorating Professional Identity of Journalists

The neoliberal transformation of the state lies at the heart of the crisis of journalism. Increasing interventions of the state and the government into the press and the media use financialization through deregulation intensively. The danger is that even in the relatively rich, northern part of the world, problems increasingly tend to be normalized because of the fact that public debates are becoming more polarized. Irrationality, as a political result of our neoliberal world, is harming journalistic work very badly. Not only journalistic work, but also the labour process of journalism is changing considerably.

Capital acts in an organized manner in the formation of these conditions. They have prevented journalists who have left their own institutions from working in others, by making gentlemen's agreements between them (Arsan, 2008). Advertising-oriented and pro-government publishing could be imposed on journalists, thus the relationship of journalists and news in terms of journalistic professional principles has deteriorated. Journalists have become compelled to establish this relationship according to the wishes of their companies and their bosses. The duty to provide information that would nurture public debate and democracy has been replaced by creating content aimed at fulfilling corporate interests. Mechanisms to protect journalists who object to this process have been rendered ineffective by economic, political and legal moves. Hence, by disorganizing through deunionization, the neoliberal paradigm has substantially broken the link between journalistic labour and the identity and dignity of the profession, fundamentally weakening the entire media landscape in the face of further

massive attacks. The weakening of journalists and the weakening of democratic rights therefore continue to mutually affect each other.

The ability of journalists working in these conditions to involve citizens in public political debate is doubtful. In terms of democratic processes, the function of journalism is weakening. However, the democratic credentials of journalism was also highly controversial before the intensive use of internet technologies and was again a field of struggle. In the period of career journalism, professional ideology shaped journalists in hierarchical organizational structures. When we also consider the reasons originating from the ownership structure of the media, the news report of the journalist was turning into the text of the institution as a result of the characteristics of gatekeeping in the sector. The organizational and spatial structures of newsrooms in traditional news media were even at times perceived as the only obstacle to democratic functioning and freedom of the press. For the supporters of this idea, journalism must be deinstitutionalized, the gatekeeping power of the legacy press must be weakened, organizational hierarchies must be collapsed, distinctions between producers and consumers should be blurred and journalism's labour process and the final product have to be decentralized (Kreiss and Brennen, 2016). As in many other sectors, there has been a period in which the new media was considered (and often still is) seen as an opportunity to liberate journalism from industrial discipline mechanisms.

Berardi and Empson (2009) state that Thatcher's and Reagan's deregulation wave was the answer of capitalism to the demand of free and autonomous labour from the disciplinary regime. Workers wanted to get rid of the prison of the factory. Deregulation gave them the liberty, in exchange for creating a flexible and fractured model of working conditions. For journalists, the newsroom is the factory. As in a factory, journalists had the chance to build a career in their institutions with social benefits, pensions etc. In the new media landscape, this is now almost impossible. Newsrooms are being dissolved every day and it is also an important factor in rising precarity among journalists. But in terms of participation in the news making process, as an independent journalist in times of pure print-media era, this was also not an easy task. Newsrooms have always been hierarchical in nature. The history of the press worldwide is replete with examples of journalists who fought for the news report to be published by the newspaper. Some of them could, many could not. It has always been a challenge to reach true information and to deliver it for the general public. In this respect journalists lost their jobs, even their lives. But today, most of the journalists cannot live on, let alone fight for the news as a public good.

> "Reports of journalism unions and associations, such as the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance in Australia, the Society of Professional Journalists in the United States, the National Association of Journalists in The Netherlands, and the National Union of Journalists in the United Kingdom in recent years, suggest their members see their colleagues being fired and not replaced, as journalists working in newsrooms consistently report having to do more with fewer colleagues and less resources. Long-term planning and 'moving up the ladder' have been replaced by job-hopping

> and a portfolio work life as news professionals increasingly have contracts, not careers in journalism" (Deuze and Witschge, 2018, p.170).

Mustafa Kuleli, organizing secretary of the Turkish Journalists' Union, states that nine thousand of 25 thousand journalists in Turkey seems to be unemployed according to recent data. Three thousand people are unionized and two thousand have collective agreements (Keten and Aydın, 2018). Deuze and Witschge (2018) add that many journalists are thinking of abandoning the profession, and that precarity and job insecurity are the norm in contemporary news organizations (p.171). Unpaid internships and other forms of free and underpaid labour are very common. Thus, the voice of journalists in precarious positions is further narrowed whether in traditional newsrooms or newsroom-like structures in new networks.

> "Of the people who are left in the newsroom proper, some still enjoy permanent employment (including benefits and protections). These, generally senior, staffers work side by side with a host of colleagues in part-time, contract, freelance, temporary, casual, and at times underpaid or unpaid roles : Practitioners who come in irregularly to file stories, produce segments, push stories online, or provide other editorial services (Cohen, 2015 : 515). Not only are these contractual working arrangements of newsroom colleagues under-represented in discussions of the profession (about itself) and, subsequently, in surveys and ethnographies of news organizations, but also the myriad of additional functions in the newsroom ranging from technical support staff, copy editors, ombudsmen and reader representatives, designers, producers, and programmers are often left out of the conversation" (Deuze and Witschge, 2018 : 171).

As a result, whether it is for internet-era journalism or for traditional news media, the problem is that the impact of journalistic labour on final news texts during the news production process continues to be reduced by technological, institutional or political reasons. When the entire news production process is considered, journalists have little or no ownership of the means of production. The difference of the recent precarious working conditions as a norm can be summarized as follows : the relationship between the ownership of the means of production and the quality of journalistic activity has become more evident. The fundamental reason for the existence of journalists, enabling the democratic involvement of the public in political processes, has significantly worsened in recent years.

5 Reconsidering the Relationship Between Journalism and the Struggle for Basic Rights

Returning to our initial problematic, we cannot expect from journalists working in precarious conditions to successfully carry out the task of maintaining the relationship between journalism and democracy, as presumed by the liberal paradigm. This is, for example, beyond the subject of occupational standards, but the subject of a struggle for rights, which is related to the improvement of working conditions. The responsibility for the current situation of journalists belongs to those who have lost

their rights one by one, whether by being defeated despite fighting or by not entering into the struggle right from the beginning, for various reasons. It is the responsibility of the sector as a whole.

The journalist Bredart (2017) says that :

> "the result of waves of redundancies, the decline in the number of journalists with open-ended employment contracts in Europe has gone hand-in-hand with a proliferation of atypical jobs, especially 'gig' work. Workers hired under such contractual agreements are finding themselves faced with obstacles in defending their professional and social rights. This cheap workforce has become symptomatic of the precarious situations of journalists." (p.20).

The means of production and the rights of journalists (and therefore their freedom and social power) have been dispossessed, as in many other sectors today. Bredart adds that "[w]e should also remember that these financial difficulties are often compounded by limited access to social security (unemployment benefits, maternity leave, work incapacity, pensions)" (p.21). The journalist Timur Soykan (2020) explains why limiting social security is important for capital accumulation, especially through hindering unionisation :

> "[t]hese legal rights are the reason of union allergy of media moguls. The more they reduce the rights, the more they keep money in their pockets. They know that if there is a union, they can't lay off arbitrarily, they can't increase salaries 5% while the inflation rate is 25%. They know that they should open kindergarten in the company where thousands work, they should pay overtime".

Therefore, the means of production and the rights of journalists (and therefore their freedom and social power) have been dispossessed, as in many other sectors today.

The phenomenon of accumulation by dispossession also explains the recent attack on institutional journalism on a global scale. In the neoliberal era, it is one of the means of expelling 'citizens' from participating in governmental processes and politics in general. Creating an uncontrollable, non-transparent management is the main motivation for attacking news media. In a sense, it is an effective means of preventing mass objections to neoliberal capital accumulation. The attacks are not limited to certain individual journalists, but are directed at journalism as a whole. Therefore, journalists who are powerless under precarious conditions are easy targets. Consequently, journalism is transformed into a pure public relations activity and, in the latter case, it is in danger of becoming a direct propaganda machine.

Donald Trump's constant attack on the institutional news media by labelling various outlets such as CNN as 'fake news' is symbolic at a discursive level. [7] "Since becoming

7. Among many, these tweets of Trump summarize his use of the phrase : "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @ CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People ! February 17 at 4 :48 PM" and "FAKE NEWS media knowingly doesn't tell the truth. A great

president, Trump has often used Twitter as his own private spin room, shaping developing stories and discrediting mainstream media outlets. His 'fake news' construct has taken spin to a whole new level as he has used it so far more than 120 times. His attack on the press includes discrediting news media as well as personal attacks on journalists. He has over 300 tweets since 20 April 2015 attacking the press and insulting journalists" (Gounari, 2018, p.223). The discourse involves "the constantly repeated binary construction between 'us' and 'them,' which simplifies a complex world and its challenges by dividing society into kind-hearted followers and ruthless 'enemies of the people' (in the words of Geert Wilders or Donald Trump in reference to 'the media' and 'the corrupt establishment')" (Rensman, 2018, p.42). The concrete and systematic equivalent of this discrediting campaign in the sector is to create precarious conditions in order to destroy job security. So, on the one hand, there are journalists placed in politically polarized positions and their words are discredited, on the other hand, there are those who are deprived from or who lose access to the means of production (through monopolization of the production, management and distribution processes in various ways) and who lose the ability to even say a word.

Political journalism is traditionally considered to be the high-quality press. In market economies, where neoliberal production relations are intense, the precarity is widespread. The intended audience of the journalists are also part of the precariat. However, precarity aims to create a mass which is depoliticized, in the struggle for individual survival by its nature and does not demand political and high-quality news. The process of precarization weakens both journalists and readers and contributes to the reproduction of neoliberal domination in the knowledge production process.

Emerging information technologies and new media are further factors in the precarization process. Mergers and acquisitions, a common phenomenon before digitalization, were further escalated by digitalization. The ability to do business through virtual networks has reduced the necessity of many material elements in business processes. Digitalization has also increased the variety of work imposed on employees. Today, a reporter can do the work, which required a different kind of labour before the digitalization process. Written, audible or video formats of the same news can be made by a single correspondent and can be used as content on different media platforms . This possibility causes the employees to use their labour force more intensively with the same amount of income. The increase of using artificial intelligence has made it possible to produce routine content without human input. News agencies have already been using 'robots' to produce certain news reports. When it is interpreted from the reader's perspective, individuals, who are already lonely in the labour market competing against each other, are under the influence of algorithms that bring out individualized content over new media. Individual content sets individualized realities, which undermines the necessities indispensable for democratic functioning such as discussion and compromise on public issues. Employees try to survive in the labour market unorganized and also withdraw into themselves in a fragmented communicative universe.

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danger to our country. The failing @nytimes has become a joke. Likewise @CNN. Sad ! February 24 at 10 :09 PM" (Gounari, 2018, p.224).

It is clear that all of these factors have had a profound effect on the relationship between journalism and democracy, which is the fundamental legitimate basis of journalism. Both journalists and readers, under the influence of precarious conditions, are observed to have significantly lost their powers of monitoring and controlling the states which are both the producers and supporters of an increasingly arbitrary neoliberal system. Precarity is a phenomenon that leads individuals living in fear to extreme political movements and practices that exploit those fears. However, this stage has come from a certain historical process. In some relatively democratic countries where journalists have not yet lost their professional and social standing, the collapse of journalism and democracy will also be inevitable, if neoliberal practices and precariousness deepen.

6 Conclusion

The relationship between democracy and journalism continues to deteriorate rapidly. However, it has already been stated that this relationship should be protected as a value and a target. So how can this objective be achieved in the current difficult conditions ? Because most of the audience of journalists are also members of the precariat or are rapidly becoming members, precarity and precarious conditions connect journalists and their audience. This concrete and obvious base of connection is also a possible junction point for many other people and sectors. Starting from this, a far-reaching political struggle against the same perpetrator, who is responsible for the dispossession of civic and labour rights at the same time, is urgently needed all over the world. The relationship between democracy and journalism could then be discussed on solid ground again.

Therefore, it is impossible to build journalism from scratch on alternative fields isolated from social and economic struggles. Every kind of journalistic form, like other derivatives of the media sector, is still dominated by market conditions :

> "[t]he ideal of practising grassroots democracy in a world that is dominated by economic and political elites who control economic and political resources can become problematic for alternative media. If they lack resources (as they frequently do), then self-exploitation and precarious labour will be the outcome. Resource scarcity can result in time- and energy-consuming internal conflicts and divisions that further undermine the political potentials of alternative media. A pluralistic media landscape, in which each consumer can become a media producer with the help of alternative media, is not automatically a media democracy." (Fuchs, 2010, p.177-178).

'Alternative media' is also deeply dependent on the networks created and controlled by technological monopolies. They have to adopt contract-based, cheap or free labour policies of the institutions they are affiliated with or outsourcing. Here, labour exploitation, under the name of volunteerism or solidarity, is sometimes worse than the exploitation of traditional media outlets.

Journalists' transforming to precarious labour changes journalism radically. In this sense, the big challenge of our time is to understand precarization :

> "[i]f we fail to understand precarization, then we understand neither the politics nor the economy of the present. Precarization is not a marginal phenomenon, even in the rich regions of Europe. In the leading neoliberal Western industrial nations, it can no longer be outsourced to the socio-geographical spaces of the periphery where it only affects others. Precarization is not an exception, it is rather the rule. It is spreading even in those areas that were long considered secure. It has become an instrument of governing and, at the same time, a basis for capitalist accumulation that serves social regulation and control. Precarization means more than insecure jobs, more than the lack of security given by waged employment. By way of insecurity and danger it embraces the whole of existence, the body, modes of subjectivation. It is threat and coercion, even while it opens up new possibilities of living and working. Precarization means living with the unforeseeable, with contingency" (Lorey, 2015 : 1).

The first point in Lorey's words on journalism is that the global attack on journalism is mandatory for this model of management and accumulation which is based on "insecurity". Constant fear and uncertainty require a lack of journalism. Secondly, this model can no longer be thought that it belongs to what is considered as the periphery. Turkey's example is not a neoliberalism off-track, on the contrary, it is the direct result of neoliberalism which will be an exemplary model for many countries.

In this context, a global struggle against the climate of fear and uncertainty created by neoliberal conditions awaits us. Journalists' struggle for freedom of the press is inseparable from the struggle to improve working conditions. Job security, social rights and other demands are the subject of a general struggle for civic rights, in which readers of the journalistic work are also involved. The precarious conditions of the journalists connect them with all other sectors subject to similar conditions and ultimately with society, as precarization is becoming the dominant production process in general. Journalists are the direct party/part of this struggle. Do we want to save journalists and journalism ? If the social mode of production cannot eliminate precarity, journalism cannot be saved. Therefore, a united struggle is necessary. We can get to work by questioning the distant relationship that has been established between journalists and the concepts of labour and the labourer.

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