

Chapter 6

The Political Economy of News Production

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ABSTRACT

The products produced by the media as professional work is news, information, and cultural content. These products are produced based on the historical organization of the media operating as a commercial company. With the 1980s, some structural changes in capitalism, such as globalization, flexible capital-labor relations, and the digital revolution, have greatly influenced the field of journalism. In parallel with the transformations in the media ownership structure, media organizations operate according to market conditions. As a result, the transfer of news and information of media is gradually decreasing. Today, the Propaganda Model, which reflects the merger of commercial media companies, levels of extreme inequality, class conflict and emerging new authoritarianism, remains valid. On the basis of a critical political economy approach, this chapter proposes to draw a road map of Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model and the current theoretical framework of journalism, including the effects of digital technology in journalism on news production.

INTRODUCTION

In the Grundrisse, Marx (1979) argues that the labor tool, the labor material, and the labor product are interconnected in the labor process. Accordingly, the form of organization and relations of capital in its production reveals the social function and characteristics of the produced commodity. The products produced by the media as professional work is the news, information and cultural content. Thus, the media operates as an industry that produces and distributes commodities. These products are produced on the basis of the historical organization of the media operating as a commercial company.

Most of the people's perceptions about the events happening around them are produced by the media industries and thus the media plays a central role in structuring their worldview. In short, products produced by the media affect every aspect of daily life practices of people. These products of the media

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industries have an important place in organizing the images and discourses through which people make sense of the world. In brief, the media does not only transmit information, but also has the function of generating and spreading symbols which can be called symbolic production. The production processes of such symbolic commodities also has a unique characteristic. It should be stated primarily that the end consumers of symbolic commodities (readers, viewers and users) are not the main source of funding for the producing media industries. Advertisers or sponsoring organizations- they are real customers of funding- do not fall into the same social categories as end consumers. Journalists / programmers who produce content in the media industries are also white collar workers/ professionals who are different from direct producers in their own businesses and in other sectors. (Kaya, 2008). The content of the media has important functions at all levels of social relations due to the mentioned features. There is no other media product that can replace the news output that requires a particularly important investment. The originality and importance of journalism stems from the power of news in social relations. The fact that the media industries operate in the market systems like any other business has caused the news to turn into a commodity. Regardless of the commodity production relations of the market, the social value of news should not be ignored.

The media has found an important place in the capital accumulation model of capitalism Since the 1970s. Privatization, deregulation- which were the main methods of neoliberal policies- and monopolism which emerged later also influenced the media industries. Structural changes which occurred in capitalism such as globalization, flexible capital-labor relations and digital revolution in the 1980s affected journalism in Turkey substantially. The concentration / monopolization of media ownership that we face today especially is a natural result of the neoliberal principles of capitalism. In parallel with the transformations in the media ownership structure, media organizations operate according to market conditions. This new situation in the media market has shaped the production structure of the media and created new social relations of production in which the traditional news and information transmission function is pushed to the background. In short, the news and information transmission of the media is gradually decreasing. Thus, a new practice in which news and entertainment are intertwined has emerged. All these developments require that the factors affecting news production should be revealed in a holistic manner. This study considers news production in journalism on the basis of political economy approach. Today, the Propaganda Model-which reflects the mergers of commercial media companies, extreme levels of inequality, class conflicts and new forms of authoritarianism- remains valid. On the basis of a critical political economy approach, I propose to plot a broad map of the current theoretical framework of journalism which includes Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model and the impacts of digital technology on journalism.

TRANSFORMATION WITH NEO-LIBERALISM AND NEWS PRODUCTION

The commercialization of the press, the emergence of the mass press and the regression of the workers' press in the 19th century resulted in entering into a period in which news came to the forefront instead of the press with comments and ideas. This historical development would also shape the position of newspapers in social organization. Thus, news would be produced as content that conveyed or framed all aspects of social life, i.e. social facts and events. Consequently, news along with other entertainment and information-based products produced by the media also commercialized in the historical course

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