

Chapter 10

The Political Economy of Media in Turkey: An Infrastructural Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the infrastructural features of the media industry in Turkey in the 2000s. The study posits that the analysis of the inner workings of the media as an industrial-social institution is a way of understanding how the media is related with the overall system it is a part of. In order to do that, it is crucial to undertake the infrastructural mapping of the media. In this study, the dimensions of the media industry such as the branches of economic activity, geographical distribution, corporate structures and scales, employment, wages, gender distribution, and unionization levels are discussed as the basic indicators forming the infrastructure of the media industry. The datasets which the study is based on are taken from the NACE codes, which are used in the statistical classification of economic activities in Europe and are also valid for Turkey. The boundaries of media industry are defined through six basic branches of economic activity classified in NACE 18, 58, 59, 60, 63, 73 codes and these fields of activity are discussed both by themselves and as a relational whole.

INTRODUCTION

This study is an attempt at an infrastructural analysis of the media industry in Turkey in the 2000s. For the purposes of this study, media is not restricted to print and/or audiovisual press activities, but treated as a holistic industrial institution along with its associated subsectors. In this extent, the study examines the basic economic structural indicators of media. These include basic dimensions such as the economic development of the media industry in Turkey, the sub-branches of economic activity, geographical distribution and concentration, corporate structures and scales, the state of employment, wages and gender distribution. By looking into these dimensions, the study attempts at revealing the internal structure of the

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media.¹ The manifestation of these dimensions is important as it would reveal the ecosystem within which the relations of production and class in the media industries are formed. Media occupies a significant place within both the symbolic and the economic production chains and forms an important part of the political and ideological reproduction as well as the cycle of production and distribution. In this aspect, the infrastructural analysis of the media paves the ground for a combined analysis of both the area of physical economic production and the area of symbolic content production. Hence, the infrastructural analysis of the media is one of the basic elements of the political economy of the media.

Media is quite an extensive and complex industry which includes many different yet interconnected fields of activity, ranging from news production to programme broadcasting, from advertising to printing services, from agency activities to film production. For the purposes of this study, this extensive field forming the media industry will be demarcated through the NACE² codes which are used in Europe for the statistical classification of the economic activities. In this context, the NACE codes of 18, 58, 59, 60, 63 and 73 are determined as the branches of economic activity that form the content of the media industry. The codes respectively denote: Reproduction of recorded media (18); Publishing activities (58); Motion picture, video and television programme production, sound recording and music publishing activities (59); Programming and broadcasting activities (60); Information service activities (63); Advertising and market research (73).³

This chapter will begin by discussing the question of locating the media industry among various economic activities. After this discussion, the processes of capital accumulation and production through 1980s until the present will be reviewed and Turkey's position within this transformation will be identified. In the following section, the sub-sectors that constitute the media industry in Turkey will be evaluated both with a focus on their individual features and as a relational whole. This evaluation will lay the ground for discussing the current situation and limitations in the media industry in Turkey along with its future tendencies and potentialities.

LOCATING THE MEDIA INDUSTRY: COMMUNICATION INDUSTRIES, CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

A determining moment for media analysis is the step of analytically locating the various circulating concepts such as media industry, culture industry, communication industry etc. and demonstrating the interconnections between these concepts.

In accordance with such an attempt, it would be correct to conceptualize media industry as part of the more extensive "communication industries". Communication industries encompass a broad field of activity consisting of many sub-fields and sectors that produce any kind of product, services and content of communication. These industries include many fields of activity, ranging from call centres to technopoles, from computer factories to software and data mining firms, from press activities to internet applications, from the production of cultural goods to journalism.⁴ The industrial rise of communication activities throughout 20th century and their central position within the capitalist system has led both to the gradual broadening of the scope of these industries and to the intertwining of many activities involved in this broad scope.

In order to analyse communication industries, we can distinguish three major sectors within the field, with the help of the NACE classification: a) Media Industry, b) Telecommunications Industry, c) Information and Computing Industry. As can be noted, these sectors incorporate both the material infrastructure

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