Does Indian civil society have a voice?

November 28-29, 2013, Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Brussels
Official languages of the conference: English and French

This conference aims at exploring the Indian Information, Communication and Media Scene through the prism of its Civil Society.

Does the "Right to Information" or the capacity built in legitimate media advocacy lead to a more transparent and democratic resolution of civil society issues, or does it raise more questions regarding the darker aspects of lobbying and political influence mongering? Where does advocacy end and lobbying start?

What are the roles, rights and duties of journalists, bloggers or civil society activists in this debate?

Does media advocacy eventually results in any change in behaviours, cultural values or just perceptions and what are the potential and unintended consequences? The issues at stake are the following: how is civil society mobilised and organized in India?

Contributions to the conference can focus on the following themes:

1 – Perceptions and debates around the notions of advocacy and lobbying: the definition of the limits of advocacy and lobbying are still vague. If, in Brussels, these two are often equivalent, in India, lobbying is mainly connected to the actions of the industry or to politicians and civil servants' bribery. Advocacy is still related to social, urban or rural movements. This theme is going to precise the key lines of these terms comparing Europe with India.

2 – Protagonists facing a regulating state: numerous stakeholders from the civil society have understood that they have to develop a communication strategy towards public opinion and politicians in order to be heard. This theme is trying to understand the role, rights and duties of protagonists like journalists, bloggers, activists against the State, which is hesitating between binding regulations and the right to information.

3 – Citizenship representations and practices: Indian society is a society in transition, which evolves between the demands of the middle class, the identity claims related to the different religions and the social and cultural conservatism of the rural areas. This theme is going to discuss representations, understandings and confrontations conveyed by the stakeholders who give birth to these different conceptions of citizenship.

4 – Law, medias and democracy: Indian law includes a right to information and an Internet regulation. However, in a society that claims to be democratic, journalists and medias have to cope with diverse pressures forcing them to moderate their comments. This axis is going to study actions taken by medias and journalists in order to acquire new spaces of expression or to professionalize the processes, especially when the fight against raping cases or corruption are becoming national causes.

Call for papers

Abstracts about the theme of the conference can be sent in English or French (max. of 500 words) to oarifon@ulb.ac.be and Sybille.De.Poortere@ulb.ac.be before May 31, 2013.

Calendar

Diffusion: March 28, 2013.

Deadline for abstracts: May 31, 2013.

Acceptance communication: June 24, 2013.

Deadline for full papers: October 28, 2013.

Organised by:

ReSIC: Centre de Recherche en Information et Communication (Université Libre de Bruxelles).

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Organising committee

Olivier Arifon (Université Libre de Bruxelles), Sybille De Poortere (Université Libre de Bruxelles), Marie-Soleil Frère (Université Libre de Bruxelles).

Scientific committee

- Olivier Arifon (Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium)
- Biswajit Das (Jamia Millia Islamia University, India)
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