

Why Democracy Needs Media Monitoring



Conceptualizing the Media for
Democracy Monitor (MDM)

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Media & democracy

- « Mass media are essential elements of all forms of democratic societies. »
 - MDM looks at
 - freedom (distribution, use, diversity, rules, influences; selection)
 - equality (ownership, format, price, diversity, monitoring, ethics, participation, pluralism)
 - control (independence, transparency, professionalism, access, watchdog function)
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Media for Democracy Monitor vs. Press Freedom Index

Press Freedom Index (Reporters without Frontiers)	Media for Democracy Monitor	
178 countries	10 Western countries	
43-item questionnaire	27-item questionnaire	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Violation of press freedom - Self-censorship - Investigative efforts - Regulation - Ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media use - Ownership - Diversity - Prices - Minority media - Professionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution - Regulation - Ethics - Self-regulation - Transparency - Job security
Highest scores: Nordic & Western countries; lowest: Iran, Eritrea, Burma, N. Korea, ...		
Focus on violations	Broader focus	

Media for Democracy Monitor

- 10 countries: Australia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, Portugal, Lithuania, UK
- To what extent do the structures and conduct of leading news media correspond with their specific democratic role?
- Focus on media use, ownership (national and local), diversity, prices, minority media, distribution, regulation, ethics, self-regulation, transparency, professionalism, job security, access to public information
- Extensive interviews with experts; more detailed analysis, countries compared and rated on democracy scale
- Each country assessed by local team: impact on inter-coder reliability, comparability of country scores

Indicators MDM

Freedom	Equality	Control
F1 Geographic distribution of news media	E1 Media ownership concentration national level	C1 Supervising the watchdog 'control of the controllers'
F2 Patterns of news media use (news consumption)	E2 Media ownership concentration regional (local) level	C2 Independence of the news media from power holders
F3 Diversity of news sources	E3 Diversity of formats	C3 Transparency of data on media system
F4 Internal rules for practice of newsroom democracy	E4 Minority/Alternative media	C4 Journalism professionalism
F5 Company rules against internal influence on newsroom/editorial staff	E5 Affordable public and private news media	C5 Journalists' job security
F6 Company rules against external influence on newsroom/editorial staff	E6 Content monitoring instrument	C6 Practice of access to information
F7 Procedures on news selection and news processing	E7 Code of ethics at the national level (structure)	C7 The watchdog and the media's mission statement
	E8 Level of self-regulation (performance)	C8 Professional training
	E9 Participation	C9 Watchdog function and financial resources
	E10 Rules and practices on internal pluralism	

Example of Indicator MDM (F5)

(F5) Company rules against *internal* influence on newsroom/ editorial staff

Question	What is the degree of independence of the newsroom against the ownership / management? Are there rules on the separation of the newsroom from the ownership / management? Are they implemented?
Requirement	The more journalists decide independently on editorial matters, the more democratic freedom and the higher the potential that democracy is promoted.
Points	3 full independence on editorial decisions by the newsroom journalists 0 no participation in editorial decisions
Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – formal rules to separate newsrooms from management including the Board in both private and public service media – Are such rules actually effective in daily practice? – representation of journalists in the management – representation of journalists in the board – presence / absence of advertising department in newsroom meetings – Is editor-in-chief or publisher the formal leader of newsroom work? <p>In case of public service media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Does the public service remit provide for independence from the state/ the Government? – Is the selection procedure for the Editor(s)-in-Chief of public service media independent from the Government? – ...
Data sources	Interviews + desk research

Example of Indicator MDM (F6)

(F6) Company rules against *external* influence on newsroom/ editorial staff

Question	What is the degree of interference by external parties (e.g. proprietors, advertisers etc.)? Do news media receive revenues from a multitude of sources?
Requirement	The higher diversity of revenue streams, the more democratic freedom and the higher the potential that democracy is promoted.
Points	<p>3 no single large advertiser, no effective political influence</p> <p>0 strong policy interventions, dependence on large advertisers/sponsors</p>
Criteria	<p>In the case of mixed financed media companies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> –multitude of income streams (sales, advertising, license fee, others) –multitude of advertisers, each having only minor share of total –sponsoring agreements with influence on content (such as “infomercials” etc.) <p>In the case of single revenue financed media companies (e.g. some public service media):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> –formal rules and practice of distance between revenue source (e.g. State/Government) and news media –Are public service media financed over a short/long period? Can financial provision be changed from one year to the next? –...
Data sources	Interviews + desk research

Example of Indicator MDM (C2)

(C2) Independence of the news media from power holders

Question	How strong is the independence of the news media from various power holders and how is it ensured?
Requirement	News media's watchdog function requires a high degree of independence. More independence means more control of those in power, thus enhancing democracy.
Points	<p>3 no formal or ownership related influence from power holders on leading new media</p> <p>0 strong formal or ownership related influence of power holders on leading news media</p>
Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are there shield laws in place to protect journalists? – Are sources protected by law or other professional rules? – How important is party affiliation among leading news media? – Are powerful business interests present in the Boards of leading news media? – Are non-media companies such as financial investors, political parties, churches, etc. among news media owners? – If yes: Rely on existing data: Ownership share of such non-media companies of total circulation/audience – Is such diagonal ownership concentration transparent? – ...
Data Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal provisions, public service remit, corporate information (investors' relations) interviews •

Example of Indicator MDM (C9)

(C9) Watchdog function and financial resources

Question	Are there specific and sufficient resources for exercising investigative journalism or other forms of power control?
Requirement	If sufficient resources for the scrutiny of government and business are given, it is more likely that democratic control will be guaranteed and thus that democracy will be promoted.
Points	3 highest priority given to well-funded investigative journalism 0 relevant news media rely on agency material only
Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• output composition (agency material, own material)• funds / time / money for investigative journalism• ad hoc provisions by the news medium for in-depth investigation• foreign correspondents• ...
Data sources	Interviews + desk research on available reports

Grading: Selected Indicators

	AU	AT	FI	DE	LT	NL	PT	SE	CH	UK
F5	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
F6	3	2	2	2	1	2	1	3	1	2
C2	2	1	2	2	0	1	2	3	2	3
C9	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	2

Ranking: All Dimensions

%	AU	AT	FI	DE	LT	NL	PT	SE	CH	UK
Freedom/Information	62	62	71	67	57	81	62	86	67	71
Equality/Interest Mediation	57	50	70	83	63	80	67	70	57	73
Control/Watchdog	63	59	67	63	48	63	59	78	63	70
Total	61	57	69	71	56	75	63	78	62	72

Case: The Netherlands

No need for dramatization, though
vigilance is required



Watchdog function & financial resources

- Worldwide financial crisis no effect on time & budget for investigative journalism
- Before crisis, economies had been imposed (shrinking revenues & recent take-overs)
- BUT regional newspapers cope with shrinking budgets for investigative work
- Past decade: less investments, less records in economics, regional & local politics; shifts away from solid research to cursory revelations
- Association of Scientific Journalists
- Fund for Special Journalistic Projects

Concluding remarks

- Although media and democracy in Western countries are generally regarded as going hand in hand, our research has revealed substantial differences, between countries, and areas of concern in terms of media freedom and independence.
- Examples:
 - Australia: thin legal framework
 - Austria: discrepancy between formal rules and practice
 - Finland: positive conclusion, close circle of highly professionalised journalism
 - Germany: positive conclusion, especially with regard to watchdog function
 - Lithuania: rigid hierarchical structures in media outlets
 - Netherlands: positive conclusion, but: concentration, conflicts between newsroom and economic interests
 - Portugal: economic pressure due to recession
 - Sweden: top score on all scales; yet there is room for improvement in investigative journalism
 - Switzerland: quality press and PBS under increasing pressure, lack of distance to power holders
 - UK: high quality, but under economic pressure

EDITED BY

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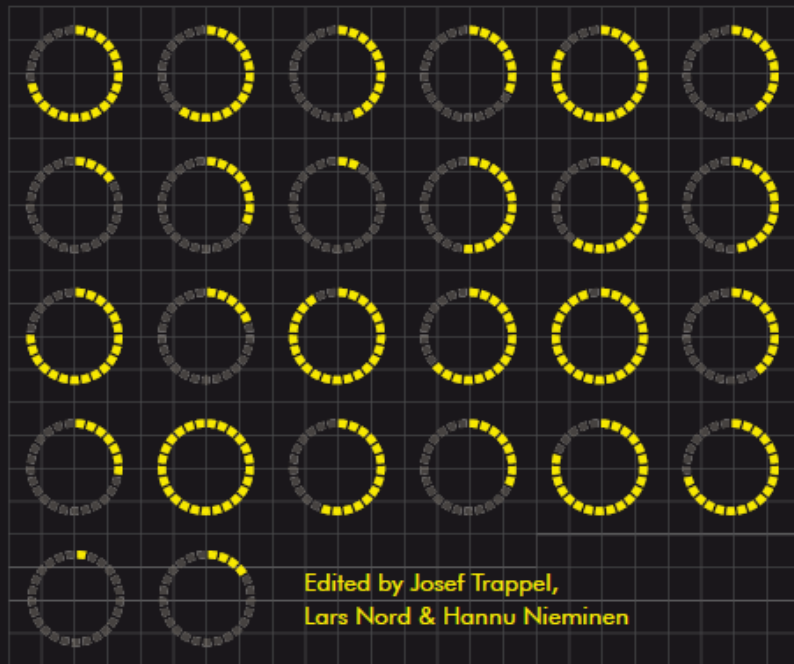
ON Media Monitoring

*The Media and Their
Contribution to Democracy*

Trappel, Josef & Meier, Werner A. (eds.) (2011): *On Media Monitoring. The Media and Their Contribution to Democracy*. New York: Peter Lang.

MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY MONITOR

LEADING NEWS MEDIA COMPARED



NORDICOM

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news media.*

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