

Communication models of civil society organizations in Croatia

Dina Vozab*

* Centre for Media and Communication, Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, Croatia

Abstract

This article will try to explain the relationship of civil society and participation with traditional and new media, based on experiences and attitudes shared through interviews with members of eight civil society organizations (CSOs). After description of civil society in Croatia, the paper focuses on three models of reaction of CSOs to mass media communication that were abstracted and analysed. Emphasis was given to alternative forms of communication (such as alternative media and new media in control of CSOs) and their development.

Keywords: civil society, alternative media, new media, communication practices, social movements

Introduction

A number of authors have contested a decline and disengagement in traditional forms of political and civic participation (Dahlgren 2000; Livingstone & Markham 2008). Lower voter turnouts and a declining trust in political institutions even in countries with traditionally rich political culture seem to support these claims (Dahlgren 2000; Livingstone & Markham 2008). However, citizens might express their discontent by engaging in different spheres of politics or broadening the political realm beyond institutionalized politics. As some authors have discovered, greater political trust is positively associated with voting turnout, while lower trust seems to facilitate political action (Livingstone & Markham 2008). This decline might be a sign of *displacement* (Loader 2007, as cited in Tsaliki 2010, p.152) from traditional, formal politics and establishment of new forms of political expression (Tsaliki 2010, p.152). This could be reflected in actions embedded in civil society, new social movements or the emergence of "lifestyle politics". As contemporary politics is dependent and interconnected with media, it would be interesting to examine this shift in relation to the media, especially in the context of new emerging media platforms and their impact on participation. New forms of civic engagement might require new media outlets and new modes of media representation. Traditional institutionalized politics reaches out for homogenizing strategies to achieve certain political ends. The instrument for this homogenization are mass media that aim to produce public opinion or "collective and homogeneous public will" (Carpentier 2011, p. 20). On the other hand, broader forms of political action and civic engagement are likely to seek new and alternative means to communicate with the public. This article will try to explain the relationship of civil society and participation with relation to traditional and new

media, based on experiences and attitudes shared through interviews with members of civil society organizations (CSOs). CSOs still heavily depend on mass media (as these are still the primary source of information for many; in Croatia, television is the most used source of information)¹ and therefore have to develop successful models of communication with mass media. Interviews will show what models of communication are developed in this kind of communication by Croatian CSOs. However, new models of communication create an alternative public sphere(s) along (or against) the mass-mediated one, or a network of public spheres, as it would probably be the case in today's network society.² As Castells noted: „...if communication networks of any kind form the public sphere, then our society, the network society, organizes its public sphere, more than any other historical form of organization, on the basis of media communication networks“ (Castells 2008, p.79). These public sphere(s) is likely to emerge through communication by new media or alternative media, which will be discussed in this text as well.

The current academic work in this field deals with the relationship between media consumption and civic participation and the emerging trend is seen in exploring the correlation between new media (especially social media) and civic engagement. In searching through the online journals databases under the keywords *media and political participation*, the results bring us to the number of articles that explore the connections between media usage (especially Internet use among young people) and political participation or knowledge. When starting the search with keywords *media and civil society*, the results mostly show a preoccupation with the interrelationship of media, civil society and democracy, especially in new or flawed democracies.³ In the case of this text, papers that analyse the media and civil society in post-socialist Europe are especially interesting. Post-socialist countries experience hardship in developing a rich civil society. This is often a result of multiple factors, such as inherited civic passivity from the socialist regime and incomplete or unsuccessful transition to democratic media system, where new commercial media tend to outdrive the media that ought to be publicly responsible (Klvana 2004).

The relationship between media and political or civic participation is usually studied from the perspective of media malaise and mobilization theories. Media malaise theories suggest that media consumption, primarily television, leads to highly passivized and individualized society, which at the end results in decline of social capital (Putnam 2000, as cited in Livingstone & Markham 2008), and therefore smaller potential for active engagement in public issues. Mobilization theories and research that came out of this model show positive

¹ http://www.gfk.hr/public_relations/press/press_articles/007594/index.hr.html (accessed on: 25.2.2012)

² Habermas was skeptical on the potential of Internet based communication to produce a public sphere, for it creates „enclaves that may threaten deliberative democracy“, as „in complex modern societies such common experiences or *social glue* are often produced by mass media representations“ (Sunstein 2001, as cited in Downey & Fenton 2003, p.189-190). In Habermas's words: “The publics produced by the Internet remain closed off from one another like global villages.” (Habermas 1998, as cited in Downey & Fenton 2003, p.189). However, one common public sphere is impossible in the network society which is connected and disconnected in nodes (an insight made by Zrinjka Peruško, based on the Manuel Castell's theory of network society). In this case, public sphere would emerge out of this network, or alternative or counter-spheres would be created on the network's nodes or dead ends. Habermas himself has made efforts to review his theory on public sphere and to include the impact of counter-publics, which, as Downey and Fenton (2003) argue, overlap with the common public sphere and provide „the opportunity for ideological claims to be displaced, ruptured or contested.“ (Downey & Fenton 2003, p.200).

³ The search in SAGE Journals Online database in communication and media studies discipline under the keywords *media and civil society* resulted with 1142 articles. With keywords *media and political participation*, 595 articles were found (accessed on 17.2.2011).

correlation between media exposure and participation (Livingstone & Markham 2008; Strömbäck & Shehata 2009). Emergence of the new medium, Internet, and its wide-spreading usage could also be seen in the light of these two opposing models. Internet provoked enthusiastic predictions that it would facilitate new forms of participation, especially in a form of web 2.0. Internet offers interactive communication much harder to regulate and is seen as a medium with potential to produce a global public sphere (Castells 2008). It surpasses geographical obstacles and provides communication which hides actor's race/gender/social status. It enables users to easily create and publish content, not just consume it. Therefore, it is potentially a very democratic medium which could enable the formation of rational debate on public issues. However, inequality in access to this medium brings a sobering effect to these views. Individuals or groups on another side of digital divide lack resources to use this informational and democratic potential. Secondly, most Internet users are from a younger population which shows lower interest in public issues. This brings us to the paradox of interactive audiences (Peruško 2008) - audiences that have greater competences to use interactive media show interest mostly in entertainment content, while the audiences that seek information on public issues lack the technical competence for this new medium. And lastly, Internet is seen as a tool for businesses to expand its activities for it offers new means of advertising- today it is largely used for entertainment and other non-political activities. Audience participation may not have such a democratic form- it can also be commodified and disciplined in order to attract new and strengthen current consumers (Burwell 2010).

Internet and its political implications were in the centre of many media scholars inquires in the 1990s and 2000s. The use of ICTs for mobilization and communication by social movements such as Zapatista movement in Mexico or transnational anti-globalization movements, induced scholars to examine the role that new media have in facilitating political action and social change (Castells 2010; Rucht 2004; Salter 2003). It seems that this trend has returned with examining the impact social media have on political and civic participation in both formal and informal politics. Presidential elections in USA in 2008 showed how social media could be used in institutionalized politics as well. Nevertheless, new media are still seen as a factor of bottom-up mobilization, so a lot of articles engage with the use of media and new media in civil society, building social capital or enhancing political or civic participation (Carroll & Hackett 2006; Downey & Fenton 2003; Kee, Park & Valenzuela 2009; Salter 2003; Livingstone & Markham 2008; Skoric, Ying & Ying 2009; Stein 2009), the broadening scope of political and participation (Carpentier 2011) and the nature of alternative media (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier 2007).

Although a number of works on civil society have been written in Croatia since 1970s (Butković & Ivanović 2008), significant research that studies the relationship between civil society and media only started to emerge during the last decade. As a part of the project CroNGO, Academy for Educational Development

funded research about public opinion on CSOs from 2001 to 2007. As a part of that project, Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences conducted a research in 2005 about how successfully civil society communicates with the public. The results have shown that most citizens (83, 3%) have heard about the term CSO, but almost 40% of those citizens don't understand the meaning of that term. The public gets most of the information on CSOs through mainstream media (61, 4% marked television as a main source of information), while only 4,7% sees Internet as the most important information source. National Foundation for Civil Society Development in Croatia (NFCSD) continued the research in 2007 and 2009. Because of differences in methodology,⁴ it's difficult to determine how much actually the situation changed in that period, but some positive trends in using Internet as a source of information could be seen. According to NFCSD research in 2009, the percentage of citizens whose main source of information on civil society is Internet has risen to 24, 3%. The number of Internet users in Croatia almost doubled⁵ from 2005 to 2010 so this seems as a logical outcome.

Another important step in empirical research of civil society and media in Croatia has been made by Gojko Bežovan (2007) as a part of the CIVICUS index of civil society. The results of content analysis about daily newspaper reporting on civil society issues show that civil society issues are adequately covered and mostly positively represented. However, most of the press articles about civil society are in the form of press releases written by CSOs themselves. Additionally, some well-known CSOs stand out and take disproportionately more space. Labour unions, groups gathered around ethnicity, religion, tradition or culture and groups that supplement social welfare are the ones that are covered by the press at most. Similar problems were noticed during focus groups which were held to explore the issue of civil society and media on a qualitative basis and reveal some aspects hidden by quantitative analysis (Peruško 2008, Popović 2008). The study revealed several problems in media and CSOs relationship. Media representatives resent CSOs disorganized communicative strategies and imposing of topics they perceive irrelevant for Croatian society while CSOs criticize media quality of reporting and sensationalism. The relationship between Internet usage and participation is explained in a study (Bošnjak, Galešić & Kliček 2008) that discovered a range of factors that influence online participation. For example, some of the interesting findings are that Internet users with more experience are more likely to engage in online participation, or that former offline participation is a strong predictor of online participation. A more thorough analysis should be done to examine the potential of new media for citizen mobilization.

The work that has been done so far on the issue of interconnectedness of media, civil society and participation in Croatia opens a lot of questions and provides a basis for future research. Content analysis

⁴ There are rather large discrepancies between results of Ivo Pilar research in 2005 and NFCSD research in 2009 (conducted by market research agency Target). For example, the percentage of citizens who mostly inform themselves through television has risen for more than 20% (84,1% in 2009) which seems as unusually large difference for a 4 years period.

⁵ 1,585 million in 2005 and 2,675 million in 2010 (HAKOM; <http://www.hakom.hr>)

made by Gojko Bežovan (2007) discovered a positive, but imbalanced representation of CSOs in the press. Public's attitudes on CSOs give a hint on media agenda on this issue- poor awareness of the meaning of CSOs in Croatia is perhaps a syndrome of this imbalance. However, research made by Zrinjka Peruško and Helena Popović (2008) that aimed to discover the understanding of civil society by various actors, indirectly opened the issue of relationship and communication between CSOs and media institutions. This text tries to continue here and explore this relationship that CSOs have with mass media and communication strategies they use in order to get support from the public.

Conceptualization and the methodological frame

The idea for this text originates from the COST action's "Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies" call for papers for which the first version of the text was written on the issue of relationship of civil society and the media in Croatia.⁶ The first version was based on only two interviews and revealed only a smaller part of that relationship. The need for broader understanding of this issue was a motivation to expand the scope of the research and the theoretical explanation.

Considering the dispute over defining civil society and the broad understanding of the term, I will try to develop a working definition for the purpose of this text. Throughout the history, the meaning of the term has been substantially narrowed (Reese-Schäfer 2004). The earliest thinkers didn't see civil society as separated from the state. The first distinctions could be traced in the work of Montesquieu, and then Hegel who clearly separated civil society from the state. Antonio Gramsci then defined civil society as a space between the state, market and private realm (Reese-Schäfer 2004, p.67). This distinction is mainly used in defining civil society today. As Reese-Schäfer (2004, p. 66-67) noted, civil society today is discussed from four different perspectives- In Eastern European countries it is seen as an instrument for taking back some power from ubiquitous state, in Western countries it was a convenient term to unite and legitimize new social movements, liberal theorists see it as a society of citizens, whereas the fourth meaning of the term is reserved for all non-governmental and non-economic forms of collective action. Some theorists presume civil society to be emancipatory and consist of groups that advocate issues important for wider community, whereas others, such as Putnam in his book "Bowling Alone", think that groups gathered around non-political issues are also developing a civil society patchwork (as cited in Reese-Schäfer 2004, p.72-73).

However, this text will focus on a narrower view of civil society and use the definition developed by Habermas which will help to explain the sample of CSOs whose representatives were interviewed. In deliberating the public sphere, Habermas sees communication as one of the main functions of civil society.

⁶ The text was published on the COST action „Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies“ website, <http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/system/files/Interview%20Essays-final14-12-11.pdf>

He feels that the public sphere should be grounded in civil society, as civil society, embedded in non-governmental and non-economic voluntary associations anchors "the communication structures of the public sphere in the society component of the life world"(Habermas 1996, as cited in Salter 2003, p.124). On the other hand, civil society cannot perform without the public that legitimizes and values the issues brought up by civil society associations and serves as a filter through which certain issues will pass as valid (Habermas, 1992, as cited in Reese-Schäfer 2004). Habermas states that "civil society is made up of more or less spontaneously created associations, organisations and movements, which find, take up, condense and amplify the resonance of social problems in private life, and pass it on to the political realm or public sphere" (Habermas 1992, as cited in Reese-Schäfer 2004, p.69). Therefore, when thinking about CSOs that will share information through interviews, only those who are political in a way that they act to facilitate social change or bring up issues important to the wider public were taken in mind. These organizations could fit into a scheme provided by Offe (1985, p. 827) as socio-political movements, which are binding and recognized as legitimate by political community. The issues that these CSOs deal with are also typical of new social movements that Offe conceptualized: environment, human rights and peace. Therefore, these CSOs would correspond to the Reese-Schäfer's second meaning of the term civil society, or the Western countries perspective- civil society presents unified space where new social movements could take up permanent activities and campaigning (Reese-Schäfer 2004, p. 66-67).⁷

It is hard to define the status and understanding of civil society in Croatia. From 2003 to 2006 an extensive analysis was made as a part of the CIVICUS index of civil society project. The analysis has shown that civil society in Croatia faces problems such as low active membership in CSOs and low civic engagement. CSOs are loosely interconnected and mainly situated in larger urban areas. The influence of CSOs is mostly felt in building a new institutional infrastructure in social policy and human rights issues, as well as in educating and informing public despite of the fact that the support from the media is often lacking (Bežovan & Zrinščak 2007).

Civil society in Croatia is regulated through Law on Associations, that defines these associations as non-profit and voluntary that act to protect their individual goals or to promote social or professional goals- such as human rights, environmental, educational, technical, medical etc.(Law on Associations, 2001). According to Association Register, 44791 associations are registered in Croatia (accessed on: 25 November 2011), out of which 10244 are registered in Zagreb. However, as it is defined by the Law, the Register includes a wide range of associations, from those concerned with human rights, to associations of entrepreneurs or

⁷ As Croatia is a post-socialist country, Reese-Schäffer would probably rather fit Croatian civil society into another meaning of the civil society concept- the one sustained in Eastern European countries. However, Reese-Schäffer probably thought of civil society movements such as Solidarity and Charter 77 that aimed to directly criticize the oppressive government. Although CSOs selected for the interviews put much effort into criticizing and influencing government institutions, their primary goals and missions are connected to specific causes typical of new social movements. In critically assessing the civil society in Croatia, Paul Stubbs speaks of Croatian NGOs that were created as a part of the "globalised new professional middle class" and whose activities were attuned with Western peace movements (Stubbs 1996, p. 10 - 13). Therefore, the CSOs chosen for the interviews could be seen as a part of the civil society from the Western perspective.

associations of stamp collectors. If the latter types of associations are excluded, the number of associations is significantly lower (for example, there are 170 human rights organizations and 769 environmental organizations in Croatia according to Association Register (accessed on: 21.2.2012)).

CSOs were chosen considering their goals and issues they are dealing with- only the "political" and "progressive" CSOs that advocate social change, that act in favour of public interests and deal with issues that promote democratic culture and human rights were chosen for this research. Although the definition of civil society might not exclude associations that have non-democratic or intolerant values, for the purpose of this text only democratic and progressive CSOs were chosen, based on Habermas's normative definition of civil society which excludes intolerant or populist groups. Civil society is thus understood here only as "civilized" society (Habermas, as cited in Reese-Schäfer 2004, p. 71), from which conservative and reactionary groups are excluded.

Eight interviews were held from September 2011 to January 2012 with representatives of acknowledged CSOs in democratic/ human rights realm whose activities get good media attention⁸. Information was gathered through semi-structured taped interviews. Representatives of the following CSOs were interviewed: B.A.B.E., Center for Peace Studies (CMS), Documenta, GONG, Odras, Pravo na grad, Transparency International Croatia (TIH) and Zagreb Pride.⁹ Several of these CSOs emerged out of initiatives and with efforts of activists that acted during 1980s and 1990s. During communist Yugoslavia, this type of CSOs had a certain influence, although their impact was weaker than in Central European countries of the Soviet Block. During 1990s, civil society development acted upon the constraints of nondemocratic government and negative public opinion (Bežovan & Zrinščak, 2007, p.35). Most of these CSOs cooperate in common initiatives,¹⁰ only Odras is somewhat an exception in this group. Although funded projects are something that all of these CSO base their activities on, Odras hasn't got the similar activist background and is based on funded projects from the start. All eight chosen CSOs are situated in Zagreb and registered in Association Register. Each of these CSOs develops a small network through their employment structure (the largest one is Documenta with 20 employees according to their website), membership or regulatory and advisory boards.

⁸ If CSO's public recognition is taken as one of the indicators of media coverage, results of a survey conducted by Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences could serve as a good reference (Franc, Kunac, Lalić, Šakić & Šalaj 2006). Although war veteran's CSOs are recognized the most (39, 2%), human rights CSOs are also well recognized in public (15,1% of the respondents mentioned human rights CSOs). Survey was taken on national representative sample of 1008 adults in 2005.

⁹ B.A.B.E. (Be active, Be emancipated) is a woman human rights group, established in Zagreb in 1994. Center for Peace Studies was established in 1997 by anti-war activists and deals with education and public policy. Documenta is a centre for dealing with the past (war crimes and other war incidents between 1941-2000 in Yugoslavia and post-Yugoslavian states). GONG is a CSO that started with promoting political participation and transparency in public institutions in 1997. Odras is a CSO that deals with environment and rural development since 2000. Pravo na grad deals with protection of public spaces and before it was formally established as a CSO in 2009, it acted as an informal network of groups in youth culture. Transparency International Croatia is founded in 2000 as a locally established branch of Transparency International. TIH deals with governmental accountability and suppression of corruption. Zagreb Pride is a CSO that aims to protect LGBT rights and annually organizes a gay pride in Zagreb.

¹⁰ For instance: Human Rights House, monitoring the reforms on the basis of Chapter 23 in Croatian accession to EU, Platform 112, Appeal for the credibility of HRT's public function

The interview questionnaire consisted of three main types of questions. Interviewees were asked about their general views on civil society and media in Croatia and then they were asked to share their concrete experiences in communicating with media and the public. The last type of questions focused on opinions on and uses of new media. The following text attempts to explain the insights gained in this research about the relationship between CSOs and mass media institutions, the role and significance of alternative media in their communication and the role that new media in control of CSOs (like websites or social networking sites) have in CSOs communication.

CSOs and their relationship with mass media institutions

Mass media are unavoidable partners to many of CSOs and an important instrument to legitimize their actions and bring the issues they deal with to the public. However, as many of the interviewed CSO representatives stated, the media are not always inclined to them. Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993, as cited in Carroll & Hackett 2011, p.87) call this a relation of asymmetrical dependency: "movements rely on the media for access to publics much more than media rely on movements for copy (Gamson & Wolfsfeld 1993, in Carroll & Hackett 2011, p. 87). The logic of media organizations, market pressures and ownership interest make their causes and activities uninteresting or even unwanted to most mainstream media. Although some interviewees emphasized that they don't see systematic policy in public or commercial television in their relationship with civil society (it depends more on the individual journalists and editors that work in these media institutions), they feel that their stories are marginalized and mainly covered by daily programs, while the "hard" informational news is very rarely reserved for CSOs and civil society issues. CSOs often have to struggle with media sensationalist bias and tabloid formats unfit to present complex issues and compete with trivial content and other sources of information. CSOs that are ideologically in conflict with mainstream media or whose actions threaten their interests are often ignored. In these circumstances, CSOs have to have certain models of adaption or find another ways to spread influence.

Rucht (2004) has shown the shift in relationship and attitudes of social movements towards media from 1960s to anti-globalization movements in 1990s. In the past, social movements had taken a negative stance toward the media, seeing them as opponents, as media had often negatively represented them. He states that social movements have since then adopted various techniques to react to this media neglect or distortion and that many movements now use the media in similar ways as political parties and institutions, using the impact of mass media on public opinion to improve visibility and promote and legitimize their actions. He recognizes „quadruple A“, four different approaches that social movements take towards media-abstention, attack, adaptation and search for alternatives (Rucht 2004). In summary, groups that had only

negative experiences with media are likely to withdraw from communication with mass media, misrepresented or ignored groups could also try to critique or take action against mass media institutions, the more established groups will adopt mass media strategies, while some groups will create their own media (Rucht 2004, p.37).

Caroll and Hackett (2011, p.88) draw on resource-mobilization theory to extract forms of action, *the repertoires of collective action*, to democratize communication. Actions made to democratize communication and open up spaces for otherwise marginalized voices could be directed at media institutions (advocating reform or influencing content) or at civil society by creating independent media or educating audience to be more critical of mainstream media (Caroll & Hackett 2011).

Out of the interviews with CSO representatives, three models of adjustment to mainstream media behaviour could be abstracted, (1) adjustment to mass media logic by adapting communicative techniques, (2) influencing mass media institutions and (3) creating alternative forms of communication. The last model of adjustment, creating alternative forms of communication, is very relevant, especially in the form of alternative media produced by civil society actors which will be additionally discussed in the text. This is also important for establishing media diversity and pluralism and therefore a step to improved media system (Peruško 2011).

1) Adjustment to mass media logic by adapting communicative techniques

Rucht provided an example of Greenpeace as one of the "established" organizations that succeeded to achieve positive media coverage by professionalizing its media work and by means of "acceptance/exploitation of the mass media's rules" (Rucht 2004, p.32). Such organizations might hire professional journalists or establish their own public relations unit (Rucht 2004) or even change their organizational structure and activities they pursue according to the demands of mass media in order to be visible or to sustain a positive image (Rodgers 2009). In general, the basis of this model is to change or design one's own behavior that would result with wanted media coverage, without influencing media institutions.

According to most of the interviewees, media sensationalism is still a big problem in communication. However, different communication techniques might be a way to avoid these problems. Documenta representative revealed interesting ways in which Documenta makes its communication more successful. They realize that the messages they publish ought to be understandable to the wider audience and in suitable form, so that media would be more ready to publish them- the press releases they produce are short, interesting and in accordance to current issues interesting to the public. Flexibility, fast reactions and recognizing the right moment to get media coverage is also seen as important part of successful communication. The similar story is told by Pravo na grad representative. They realized that with shorter messages they could decrease the possibility of distortion through the editing process. Additionally, media

are much more inclined to publish shorter texts. They have also discovered the potential of strong, emotional and attractive messages rather than providing complex and argumentative texts. Pravo na grad also "produced" events that were tailored to be visually interesting, to provide an image or an illustration for the media. As Pravo na grad representative stated: "... our strategy is to produce events for the media, things that media simply can't ignore. This are mostly actions that come as a surprise in a way... that there's no complete information... that they actually create... an illustration... that is later on used as a visual...". This is a very clear example of what Rucht calls a reaction of adaptation- "exploitation of the mass media's rules and criteria to influence coverage positively" (Rucht 2004, p.37). Although Rucht primarily thought of "established" groups that take actions such as hiring a public relations unit and professionalizing communication in that way, these are also the techniques that ignored groups use to adjust to the mass media logic and use mass media sensationalism as a weapon to react against media neglect.¹¹

Perhaps this is a sign of improved communicative strategies in Croatian civil society. Studies of civil society and media in Croatia showed discontent with CSO's communication strategies both from the perspective of CSOs and the media (Popović 2008). Media representatives criticized the CSO's „heavy“ discourse not understood by the wider public. On the other hand, CSOs saw a problem in media's misunderstanding of the role of civil society and in a sensationalist bias. The results of a survey among CSOs (NFCSD 2009) showed that about half (49, 2%) of CSOs has a public relations strategy. Understandable ways of addressing the public and good media coverage are seen as most important factors of creating a public image. Almost all CSOs (97,6%) had some form of contacts with media and a third (30, 2%) communicates with media on a regular basis. This also indicates that social movements, institutionalized in civil society organizations, have professionalized their communication and developed public relations techniques in order to gain positive media coverage. CSOs have now adapted the techniques of communicating with public similar to those of political parties. They „have provided the 'permanent secretariats' of movements that are in charge of the organization of events and actions, and of media relations“(Garcia-Blanco 2006, p.98). This trend of focusing on media and campaigning has undoubtedly helped CSOs to establish a certain status and legitimacy with public, but has also brought to question the independence of their activities (Garcia-Blanco 2006; Rodgers 2009). Some authors have shown how the forms of organizing and practices in international social movement organizations (SMOs) changed according to various institutional actors such as funding bodies (Haines 1984; Jenkins 1989; Bartley 2007- as cited in Rodgers 2009) or

¹¹ Similar strategies were, according to Rucht (2004), used in the New Left student movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s in USA. Students often staged spectacular events to gain mainstream media attention. For example, one of the tactics was „to turn an established procedure, for example a trial incourt, into some sort of a political theatre by behaving in unconventional ways or trying to switch roles so that the situation became absurd.“ (Rucht 2004, p.37). These strategies were later on used by new social movements and anti-globalization movements and described in various „movement handbooks“. These techniques could be illustrated by the words of Tony Schwartz :“Use the media to fight and remember that it is a fight and it's guerrilla warfare“ (as cited in Rucht 2004, p. 41)

global media (Rodgers 2009). Some SMOs have transformed their internal organization and attributed an aggressive media strategy and in this mode of operation tend to choose in the more limited scope of effective methods or issues on which to bring social change (Rodgers 2009).

2) Influencing mass media institutions

Carroll and Hackett discussed the ways media activism points to "the main forms of institutional power over communication— the corporate media and the state" (Carroll & Hackett 2011, p.88). They either try to influence the content of mainstream media or to influence media through proposing regulations or change in media policies. Documenta and B.a.b.e. realize the importance of educating not only the public but journalists as well. To achieve this, they held various workshops for journalists on issues of civil society and issues their CSOs deal with. B.a.b.e. also produced content that was broadcast on the public television and "pushed" otherwise marginalized issues to the mainstream and therefore influenced this media institution's programming policy. B.a.b.e. led projects that aimed to improve representation of minorities in mass media programs by producing content and monitoring broadcast programme.¹²

Another important action directed towards influencing media institutions was made in 2012 when a number of CSOs (among which was the Croatian Journalists Association) sent an "Appeal for the credibility of HRT's public function".¹³ With this appeal CSOs requested greater transparency and commitment to public interest of this media institution, as well as greater inclusion of civil society and experts in defining the programming policies.

Groups that are able to pursue this kind of model of communication are most likely the ones who are in a way already institutionalized and who have gained certain public legitimacy. These actions are directed toward elites, toward the state or mass media institutions and therefore couldn't be taken successfully by marginalized groups with little political power.

3) Creating alternative forms of communication

According to Rucht (2004), some civil society groups either withdraw from communication with mass media and concentrate on "inward-directed group communication" or create their own media and forms of communication (Rucht 2004, p.36). This "inward-directed methods" in regard to mass media are most likely to emerge when CSOs have extremely negative experiences with mass media institutions, either in misrepresentation or constant ignoring. Rucht (2004) made an example of nineteenth century European labour movements that were seen as a threat to the establishment that controlled the media and had no chance of gaining coverage for their actions. Because of that, they had to create their own media to spread their ideas to the public. Carroll and Hackett (2011) recognize two forms of media activism that develop within civil society and don't address mass media institutions. Media activists create independent media

¹² "Bridging Troubled Waters on Air: Listening to Minority Voices" and "Women and the media"

¹³ HRT- Croatian Radiotelevision, the Croatian public service broadcaster.

that incorporate participatory democratic practices into their work and provide a counter-hegemonic discourse opposed to state and corporate controlled media. Another form of action is to change the relationship between audiences and the media by media education or culture jamming (Carroll & Hackett 2011, p.89).

Interviews with Croatian CSOs have shown a similar situation that coincides with this explanation. Groups that are either in conflict or pose a threat to the establishment, or are not welcomed to mass media because of their ideology will move on to alternative forms of communication. An example could be made with groups that deal with LGBT rights. Zagreb Pride and CMS representatives expressed discontent with mainstream media unwillingness to cover LGBT issues. This is especially manifested in public television's attitude towards these issues. The public television shows its conservative bias and makes it almost impossible for LGBT rights groups to impose these issues and reach public television's public. In these circumstances, it's not unusual that, out of the interviewed CSOs, Zagreb Pride representative showed the most enthusiasm with new media, especially with social networking sites. This CSO really experienced a greater benefit that these media brought to establishing communication with the public or even facilitating social action. As Zagreb Pride representative noted: "What seems to me is that they act in an emancipating and mobilizing way, at least in this segment (LGBT rights- author's note)... the key is to spread the information."

Pravo na grad had similar experiences and reactions to coverage in mass media. Pravo na grad deals with protection of public spaces and resources- these interests often collide with private sector's interests. Because of this, media that heavily rely on advertising or whose interests for some other reasons collide with theirs will be reluctant to cover their stories. Pravo na grad also sees social networking sites as a positive instrument in their communication with public. They used their Facebook page to inform and invite the public to protests and similar civic actions. Social networking sites have proved not only useful in disseminating information, but for receiving information as well from the active supporters of their action. Another type of this "inward-directed" communication is used by Pravo na grad and Zelena akcija, that is, concentration on face to face and mobile telephones communication that is used to "snowball" new supporters. Zelena akcija had a circle of supporters that were spreading information to new followers and this was the way to mobilize new people. Pravo na grad used text messaging service to inform a larger number of supporters about their actions. This strategy could be useful in actions that have to be organized quickly and in situations when early media coverage could block these activities.

Although alternative forms of communication have proven beneficial for some of the CSOs, mainstream media, such as television that is still the medium with the most influence in Croatia, still remain an important place to become visible. These media are also hardest to reach. As the interviews showed,

coverage in mainstream media is important for alternative forms of communication as well. As Zagreb Pride representative says, activity in social networking sites always grows after coverage in traditional media. In these terms, the development of alternative forms of communication is something that's important to be discussed and researched in the future.¹⁴ The usefulness and reach of alternative forms of communication will be explored below through two examples- the alternative media and media and communication in control of CSOs (i.e. websites and social media).

Alternative media

The existence of the third sector media beyond public and private sector is recognized as an important asset to media democratization (Bailey et al. 2007; Caroll & Hackett 2006; Peruško 2011). In Croatia, there's no clear term definition that would clearly distinguish this media sector. Croatian Law on Media and Law on Electronic Media introduced the term non-profit media without clearly defining it. Zrinjka Peruško (2011) uses the term community media when describing this sector as a part of Croatian media system, based on UNESCO and AMARC (World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters) definition of community media. The AMARC definition states that community media act "not for profit but for social gain and community benefit; it should be owned by and accountable to the community that it seeks to serve; and it should provide for participation by the community in programme making and in management" (UNESCO 2006, as cited in Peruško 2011, p.73).

In the wide array of terms that represent a part of the third media sector (non-profit, community, grassroots, alternative, civil society, radical media...) and that have overlapping meanings it's important to distinguish the most suitable one in the context which is being dealt with. When explaining the media that are based in civil society and that follow CSOs activities, it seems that the most suitable term would be alternative media. The relation to community (as in the term community media) is just one of the aspects of this kind of media. Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2007) use four approaches to delineate alternative media: in terms of serving the community, in their relation to mainstream media, their embeddedness in civil society and their rhizomatic character. Communities that are served by this media don't have to be confined to geographical or ethnic communities and the authors expand this notion to, for example, "communities of interest", "communities of practice", "virtual communities" or "imagined communities". Alternative media also serve their communities by providing greater and deeper possibilities

¹⁴ One of the reasons for this discussion is not just the need of development of this kind of progressive counter publicity that could impact the dominant public sphere, but the problem of what is often neglected-for example, the alternative models of media communication are also often being used by extremist right-wing groups (Downey & Fenton 2003). This is especially the problem in Germany, where the neo-Nazi sites are in increase despite being banned by the Constitutional Court (Downey & Fenton 2003). This could also be a problem of normative definitions of civil society that overlook the "uncivilized" aspects of civil society and are therefore less able to provide solutions for these problems.

of participation, both by access to content and to content production. Another important aspect in distinguishing these media is their relation to mainstream media- "alternative media are seen as a supplement to mainstream media, or as a counter-hegemonic critique of the mainstream" (Bailey et al. 2007, p.15). The concept of alternative media as the third sector media is rather similar to the concept of civil society, as it is also seen as a sphere separated from the state and the market. The fourth approach to alternative media which uses a metaphor of a rhizome¹⁵ to describe the nature of alternative media is the most interesting perspective that could provide the comprehensive theoretical basis for the alternative media research. This approach encompasses the more complex and fluid dimension of alternative media that, although based in civil society, clearly engage with both market and the state from either antagonistic or partnership position, which makes them "transhegemonic media" (Bailey et al. 2007, p.28).

Croatian Law on Media defines that government is to protect the pluralism and diversity of media by stimulating new local and non-profit media and media of non-governmental organizations. The Law on Electronic Media also deals with non-profit media and regulates its program, production and ownership. The Fund for promoting Pluralism and Diversity of Electronic Media was created in 2003, and later became part of the new Agency for Electronic Media. Non-profit media in Croatia are also stimulated by NFCSD that funds non-profit media projects.¹⁶

However, when analysing the existing state of alternative media, a lot of problems are revealed. Alternative media in Croatia are usually identified with online news portals that are sustained through volunteerism of its developers and journalists. There is no alternative television and only one non-profit radio in Croatia.¹⁷ According to B.a.b.e. representative, CSOs made an attempt to establish a non-profit radio, but this initiative failed. Some of the reasons for this are high entrance costs and unfavourable conditions in competition for concession.¹⁸ Non-profit productions struggle for their acceptance and inclusion into the mainstream media program. In this area some absurdities emerge, such as that some non-profit productions pay the local media to broadcast their program (this is the case with Cenzura.hr).

According to interviewees, the alternative media in Croatia form an underdeveloped, closed scene with some attempts of breakthrough to the mainstream.¹⁹ Although the role of the alternative media is clearly

¹⁵ The rhizome metaphore is opposed to the arbolec structure which is „linear, hierarchic and sedentary“ (Bailey et al. 2007, p.26) and could describe the philosophy of the state (Deleuze & Guattari, as cited in Bailey et al. 2007, p.26). The rhizome structure is, according to Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, „non-linear, anarchic and nomadic“ (2007, p. 26), and „unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point“ (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, in Bailey et al. 2007, p.26).

¹⁶ For detailed information on Croatian media system and media policy, see Peruško, Z. *Assessment of Media Development in Croatia based on UNESCO's Media Development Indicators* (unpublished), at the: http://cim.fpzg.hr/uploaded/UNESCO_Media_Development_indicators.pdf

¹⁷ Radio Student at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb

¹⁸ Although Law on Electronic Media (2004) allows non-profit media concessions. The conditions for the concession are: limited advertising, lower state taxes and all the profit reinvested into media development (Peruško 2011).

¹⁹ The interviewees mentioned H-alter (<http://www.h-alter.org>), Cenzura plus (<http://www.cenzura.hr>), Queer.hr (<http://www.queer.hr>), ZaMirZine (<http://www.zamirzine.net>) and Kulturpunkt.hr (<http://www.kulturpunkt.hr/>). All of these are online news portals.

In 2011, as a reaction to the decreased funding of non-profit media, seven alternative online news portals (Booksa.hr, H-Alter.org, Kulisa.eu, Kulturpunkt.hr, Lupiga.com, Teatar.hr and Queer.hr) gathered in a network called Alternet. The aim of the network is to protect and promote "the independent... media approach to relevant issues..." and to provide "an alternative to sensationalism... and to economic and political influences to editorial policies" (<http://www.kulturpunkt.hr/i.php/alternet>)

recognized, most of the interviewees were sceptical in assessing the impact that alternative media have on other media and on the public. The mentioned alternative media in Croatia really are alternative to mainstream media because they give a voice to CSOs and otherwise marginalized issues and therefore provide a supplement of issues to those provided by mainstream media, or create the counter-publicity. These media are also community media, as they serve a community, in these cases the communities of practice, who "share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis." (Bailey et al. 2007, p. 9). Another example of this close embeddedness of these media within the community and the civil society is that CSOs also actively contribute to the production of content. One of the interviewed representatives is one of the founders of H-alter.org, while another respondent founded Queer.hr. The content of these media is often produced by volunteers out of civil society. These media are also not hierarchized and professionalized as the mass media. This organizational structure also makes them an alternative to mass media and more open to the community.

A reason why these media should be developed is that in some cases they achieve to reach out of their "ghetto". As TIH representative, also one of the H-alter founders said: „H-alter tried from the beginning to break the barrier of „preaching to the choir“... to interest the wider public...“. On the other hand, in opinion of some interviewees, H-alter is doing exactly that- reaching a very narrow audience. CMS representative that has a direct experience with news portal Queer.hr tried to push its news to other media and wider public. However, he admits that mainstream media are not as interested as he had expected, except for the stories that have a sensationalist potential. Although not systematically, H-alter sometimes succeeds to be recognized by mainstream media, mostly news portals that transfer their news. Other important feature of H-alter could be that, as GONG representative pointed out, even though its reach is limited, a lot of its readers are opinion makers.

More detailed analysis of these media surpasses the scope of this article; however this underdeveloped²⁰ and under-researched part of Croatian media system is important to be further examined. The four approaches to alternative media (Bailey et al. 2007) could provide an extensive theoretical basis to this research. Theory that describes these media as a rhizome reveals the complexity of this issue, the entanglement with other sectors and the range of factors that should be taken in mind.

²⁰ Association called NEMEZA deals with promoting non-profit media and some progress was made in raising these issues, however the public reaction was weak (Peruško 2011).

New media in control of the CSOs – websites and social media

As for the new media that are in control of CSOs, that is, media through which CSOs can produce and edit content and communicate with public without intermediaries, it seems that they have not grasped all the possibilities these media offer, although most CSOs point out the importance and potential they have. New media in control of CSOs could be used as a platform to disseminate information by avoiding traditional gatekeepers and fill in a "communicative gap" left by mass media that "lack the communicative capacity to facilitate an informal public sphere" (Habermas 1996, as cited in Salter 2003, p.125).

The new medium could provide many uses for CSOs. Stein (2009) recognizes six functions of SMO communication, especially on the web: providing information, assisting action and mobilization, promoting interaction and dialog, making lateral linkages, an outlet for creative expression and promoting fundraising and resource generation.

All CSOs whose members are interviewed have websites and profiles/pages on social networking sites, but most of them see them as an addition to traditional forms of communication. When looking at the websites, almost all are transparent in a way that they provide information on the CSO's goals and mission, projects, new activities, organization structure and contacts of employees (or a contact form). The exception is seen on the Pravo na grad's website- there's very little and sparse information about the CSO and no information on the organization structure.

Interviews showed that CSOs in this sample mainly use web based communication outlets for providing information. For instance, Documenta goes on the web only after releasing messages through traditional media. TIH uses social networking sites only as another space to publish content and a reminder for the public to visit their website for news. Documenta uses the Internet much more actively and emphasizes the importance of new media in providing greater support for their initiatives, the potential it has in transgressing geographical boundaries, and new forms of civic participation it provides (online petitions, Facebook groups). However, they don't see Internet as an important place to foster discussion on certain issues. Some authors have noticed the trend in political campaign websites that moved from using websites as a digital version of the print material to taking greater advantage in interactivity the Internet offers (Janack 2006). It seems that interviewed CSOs still haven't found the way to fully explore this medium's interactive potential.

As it was already said, Pravo na grad, Zagreb pride and Zelena akcija were organizations that used social media in assisting action and mobilization. They saw these social media useful in spreading the information on their activities, getting to the new supporters and mobilizing for action. However, traditional media are still proven to have the greatest effect- when certain cause gets to the mainstream media, it could be expected that the support from the public will be stronger. Pravo na grad representative emphasized the

importance of the public to interact through social media and provide information as well. GONG is the only organization that plans to use the interactive potential of the new medium and input the two-way communication into its communication strategy. GONG uses the web to provide information, to comment on certain issues and very rarely facilitates discussion. Lack of resources is the main problem in facilitating this form of communication.

Lateral linkages function is seen as useful in communication across national borders with partner groups or organizations. Zagreb Pride representative recognized this function in promoting partner organizations, initiatives or issues through social networking sites. He sees this function as useful not only for cooperation between CSOs on certain projects, but for sharing values between different CSOs to their publics. Stein (2009) tried to explain why the majority of SMOs showed low activity in all communication areas except information providing. Communication type depends on organizational orientations, resources and resource sharing between organizations. According to interviews, lack of resources is the main obstacle to improvements in communication- as GONG representative noted, for now there are no CSOs that could have enough capacity to actively engage in a two-way communication with its public. Another reason would be in different opinions on efficacy of this kind of communication. Although CMC can prove useful in sharing information quickly and across large spaces, it cannot replace non-mediated communication. This is how B.A.B.E. representative sees this: "That speed... I could get to a woman in Africa in 15 minutes, I communicate with the whole world, but this is useful only for basic information, for quality information not yet." Social networking sites address only a narrow audience, a "tribe" in words of GONG representative- this is not a suitable media for addressing publics that weren't initially interested in these issues. Some of the interviewees expressed disbelief in the quality of CMC discussion. Anonymity hasn't got only a positive effect by hiding social, racial, gender or other differences and therefore reducing bias in communication, but can also serve as a shield and remove inhibitions which usually prevent actors from hate speech. And finally, CMC provides an illusion of participation in forms of discussions, "likes" and "followers", but which stays online. CMS representative feels that anyone could get an illusion of being active by clicking, but this brings little real effect.

Conclusion

Civil society organizations still heavily depend on mass media communication. Coverage in mass media is more likely to legitimize and bring greater support for CSO's activities. However, mass media institutions are not always inclined to cover these issues as extensively and positively as CSOs would want. In these circumstances, CSOs have to find ways to gain the wanted coverage or react differently to these obstacles.

Out of the interviews with CSO representatives, three models of adjustment to mainstream media behaviour could be abstracted: adjustment to mass media logic by adapting communicative techniques, influencing mass media institutions and creating alternative forms of communication. This behaviour depends on how powerful, institutionalized or subversive CSOs are.

Alternative forms of communication could create counter-publicity and that would impact the dominant public sphere if not left in a "radical ghetto" (Downey & Fenton 2003). According to interviewees, the alternative media in Croatia form an underdeveloped, closed scene with some attempts of breakthrough to the mainstream. New media and social networking sites could become a platform for creating this counter-publicity as well. Interactive component of the Internet could have a role in creating new networks and social capital and influence political and civic participation (Kee, Park, Valenzuela 2009; Skoric, Ying 2009). More importantly, enabling audiences to participate and give feedback reduces the control on messages and makes the communication more accountable (Janack 2006). Interviewed CSOs use new and social media mainly for providing information and lateral linkages. Some CSOs used social networking sites for assisting action and mobilization, although traditional media are still proven to have the greatest effect. Lack of resources is the main problem in facilitating discussion and interaction on the web based communication platforms. It seems that Croatian CSOs still haven't grasped all the possibilities these media offer.

As some authors have suggested, the engagement with traditional media demands a lot of resources and could put in question some of the CSOs independence (Garcia-Blanco 2006; Rodgers 2009). Developing alternative forms of communication through web based communication or alternative media could be crucial for enhancing civil society communication in Croatia

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