Imagining a World of Free Expression in the Making:

Romania and Global Media Development

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Draft of introduction to dissertation thesis (in progress)

Note before you read: The following text is one that I have been working on back and forth while writing up ethnographic material and constructing the other chapters. It remains unfinished and should be read as work in progress: thoughts needs to be developed, the title is merely a working title, the English needs to be proofread, references invoked and developed etc and it is not thoroughly wrapped up towards the end. Despite these flaws, the basic concept is there, alongside a number of ethnographic pieces, and I hope you will find goods for reaction.

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This thesis concerns journalism in connection to contemporary Romania. It is not a study of Romanian journalism *per se*, but explores transnational or global aspects of it since the fall of the communist regime in December 1989. It centers on the conceptualization of Romanian journalism and mass media among persons and organizations – to a large extent foreign to Romania – that throughout the 1990s and up until today have been engaged specifically in *developing* this field: having Romanian journalism and the conditions for the mass media align with what is commonly referred to as international or Western standards; commenting on its progress and normalization; researching it mainly by way of quantitative measures; keeping track of the implementation of certain rules, and organizing a plethora of projects, conferences, seminars and networks with the overall ambition to support a process of democratization and modernization of those Romanian societal institutions. This is one manifestation of what I will call the global media development discourse, where global indicates that it is not a strictly Romanian phenomenon, nor a post-socialist matter only, even if the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet bloc – together with development of new and old media technologies (internet, most prominently) – are often referred to as events that intensified and posed new challenges to the spread of democracy, of which media development forms one part. I use discourse to allow an open-ended analytic approach to deal with ethnographic material that has been eclectically collected, while I also see a need to

distinguish between talk, text and some practices that can be connected to them, on the one hand, and other meaning-making social phenomena related to the existence of mass media and journalism, on the other. What I have been after is to study talk about journalism in different settings related to Romania and to weigh this against ethnographic material gathered in Romanian news environment and the development sector. I am a former reporter myself (four years with a local Swedish daily), and during six months in the beginning of the 1990s, I worked with humanitarian aid in Romania. These occupations came together in what I would tentatively like to call a media anthropological cultural experience: having learnt something about another culture than one's own and then rediscovering how that culture is represented in mass media in the homeland (with some knowledge, in my case, about the professional environment in which this is being done). Initial irritation over the obvious tendencies of othering and the reproduction of stereotypes about Romania and Romanians in Swedish media (the overwhelming focus on orphans, the Dracula myth, Ceausescu cult, Romanian backwardness, corruption, "catching up with Europe" etc.) turned into an interest in researching cross-cultural aspects of journalistic report, and later the very idea of journalism itself: whether as cultural production in a well-known form (Ståhlberg 2002, 2) practice of information (Wolfe 2005, xiv), or, in the modernist sense, a central communicational and informational node of institutional structure in modern democratic societies (see Peterson 2003, 187). This, then, is the reason why I find discourse useful: there is a range of ideas about journalism in today's globalizing world. They are articulated in actual instances of communication (fiction, movies, conference talk, journalistic accounts themselves, academia etc). The global media development discourse

is one among others struggling for authority, one that has been overwhelmingly successful to the point of becoming nearly taken-for-granted. The taken-for-grantedness or naturalization of some discourses are topics most famously dealt with by Michel Foucault, where discourse is not talk itself, but rather the system of meanings that allow talk in the first place; principles of ordering, with another term (see e.g. Swidler, 2001) The othering tendencies of Western journalistic accounts of Romania can be related to the writings by Edward Said on Orientalism (Said, 1979), arguing that Western writings about the Orient are more about the self-identity of the West than they are about places in Middle East or Asia.[1] These are research traditions I believe have baring on the global media development discourse. All is not discourse, however, and discourse is not the only factor involved when people are making sense of their personal and public life. A Romanian NGO-activist's talk during interviews with a Swedish journalist, for example, is discourse. His intricate navigating between the civil society sector and the advertisement business sector in which he wants to establish his own company and make money, is not. He is able to draw on established discourses to gain recognition and build up networks, on national as well as more abstract levels. The way he uses this, and what meaning that in turn takes, is an open question that needs to be studied by other means than attaining to discourse.[2] It is one thing what people say, and another what they do – a classic expression that informs anthropological method. Transferred to media anthropological enquiries: it is one thing what journalists write in their articles, another what sense people make out of it, which in turn also depends on what meaning they invest in the journalistic profession. [...]

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[1] A way of thinking that has been used in a study about conceptions of the Balkans by historian Maria Thedorova in her *Imagining the Balkans* (1997).
[2] This example draws on ethnography that will be presented and explored in chapter 3.

The study focuses primarily on four situations or sites: First of all, the global media development field or discourse as this has been manifested in connection to Romanian media and journalism. A special concern here is the role of NGOs, through which much of the media development work has been channeled. The issues here are to map the development sector, how more exactly a Western model of journalism could be said to be transferred, and to attend to some other engagements with media and journalism related to media development. Second, the practice and working conditions of Romanian journalists dealing in news during the period of my fieldwork (1999-2002). By attaining to Romanian news environments and journalists through participant observation and interviews, I have been able to study how a Western model of journalism is negotiated in daily professional life, and also to get some grip of whether or not, or in what way, this model is at all relevant to Romanian journalists, from their point of view. Third, reporting in Western media by Western journalists (foremost Swedish) on Romania and Romanian domestic affairs since the changes in 1989 and roughly until 2006. Fourth, debates about journalism in Western media and academia. The two last parts have among other things offered material which can be weighed against the high ideals embedded in the development field, for example the central belief in objectivity as journalism's epistemological ground. A general conclusion here is that there is a gap between the idea of journalism involved in the development discourse and recent media research and debate (in Sweden and elsewhere), where, for example, a more subjectively engaged journalism is sometimes called for. Although rather autonomous fields of enquiry in themselves, these situations are seen as united in the sense of being meaning-making sites of journalism as an idea of professional societal communication and

ordering of complex realities. By taking a closer look at Romanian journalism and its connection to a variety of debates, discourses and practices, the study thus presents some anthropologically informed accounts on journalism in an increased transnationally connected world.

Home news abroad

While still a reporter, I came to Timisoara in the Western part of Romania in mid-January 1990 to cover one of the first private humanitarian aid transports departing from Sweden, organized by the vicar in Degerfors, the Swedish small-town where I was stationed. It was a rather big thing for the paper to have one of its reporters as "crew member" in the transport that carried clothes, medicines, food and other aid material collected by the inhabitants of Degerfors and who had also contributed financially to get the truck on the road. As elsewhere in Western Europe, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent dissolution of the East bloc had been major news material in Swedish media for weeks, and Romania gained special coverage due to the violent riots in Bucharest and in other cities, the spectacular overthrow of president Ceausescu, and, not least but sometime later, because of the disclosure of the conditions at state-run orphanage homes – a theme that involved shocking images of ill-treated children and which has nearly gained status as a gate-keeping concept in Swedish media report on Romania.

Going through some of the articles I wrote during this trip and a few that followed, I depict myself today as situated somewhat comfortably within a certain climate of information where doing journalistic work meant trying to make sense of Sweden in relation to the so-called revolution in Romania, rather than of Romania and

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Romanians themselves. I had little time and space in the editorial environment to problematize things, and the material I collected while in Romania was, at best, fragmentary. It was sufficient, however, for me and the paper to produce accounts of a country and a culture that for many years, I myself stated, we knew little about. The narrative that unfolded in my articles centered on the Swedish aid-activists plunging into this unknown land, partly on a sort of assignment or mandate given to them by the inhabitants of Degerfors. Romania thus became associated with Swedish humanitarian aid work, and my contribution to this scenario was to assist in creating a sense of community among the readers of the paper I was working for. Or, since this kind understanding of community-building tends to slip into functionalist thinking and assign to central a role of the media, this was anyhow the way my own social-professional context was constituted. Using this experience reflexively during the cause of my research, I studied the reporting on Romania by other local dailies in Sweden around the same period and found similar situations and tendencies. Much of Swedish reporting immediately after the fall of communism and during the humanitarian aid boom in the year that followed, could thus be said to have taken a form pertaining to what Hannerz has labeled "home news abroad" (Hannerz 2004: 136, 187). He depicts this in terms of foreign news stories appealing to particular interests of the home audience (e.g. "a sense of wonder" in African wildlife or mythical places such as Timbuktu) or particular connections between home and abroad (e.g. a Dutch correspondent doing a piece on Israeli and Dutch agribusiness). The fall of the Berlin Wall meant that Swedish citizens with an interest in humanitarian aid/international work suddenly had access to a field in which they could personally engage far easier than in the case of development work in

for example African countries, in sheer geographical terms and in that it required no special education. During the first years after 1989, a large number of private aid initiatives were launched. Typically[3], a nurse at a local or regional hospital used her (it was often a female) professional network and collected medicine and medical equipment. She got hold of a storage room and gathered clothes. People and organizations donated money to cover for the costs of hiring a truck and making transport possible. Five days of holiday were often enough for traveling back and forth to Romania alongside the truck. The destination was usually established beforehand, for example via contacts with Romanians living in Sweden. Upon arrival, the material was usually unloaded at an orphanage in a village, and a couple of days of mingling with the locals followed. This endeavor had its close links to the local Swedish media, partly because the people organizing the aid transports were skilled in using the media to draw public attention to their projects, partly because there was an interest on behalf of the local media to address an issue that was on many people's mind at the time.

On a larger scale, the Romanian revolution[4] is sometimes referred to as "TV-revolution". It stems from the fact that the central building of the public television in downtown Bucharest turned into a multidimensional battlefield and came to constitute one of the major arenas of the revolution. Right after president Ceausescu and his wife Elena had fled, revolutionaries took hold of the main studio in the TV-house, went on air

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[3] The characterization builds on studies of articles in 10 local and regional Swedish dailies during 1990-91 (see reference list for details).

[4] Some Romanians talk about the December 1989-events as "the revolution". Others use "coup d'etat", and yet others suggest "stolen revolution" to be a more proper term, implying that although initially a spontaneous and public uprising, the revolution was soon occupied and used by members of the former political elite to gain power (see e.g. Narti 1993). Timothy Garton Ash (1999) coined the term "East European *refolutions*" to characterize the events generally as partly reform from above, partly revolution from below. He focused on Central Europe though, and mentions Romania only briefly as a different case and the one country where the events in fact contained bloodshed.

and started broadcasting live not only calls to people to assist in the demonstrations, but also a long series of declarations. It was an image of a chaotic situation with people crowding in the small studio trying to make their way, physically and electronically, to the people[5]. Several kinds of discourses and positions were manifested. Staff from the TV wanted to apologize for all the years of lying, former members of the nomenclature wanted to declare their innocence and others were keen on presenting themselves as the interim authorities and leaders of the organization of the post revolutionary future (an agenda that proved successful in the years to follow). The presence of former dissidents added flair of public legitimacy to the whole setting. Regardless of what message was sent from the various speakers, and whether the whole thing was staged or not by Ion Iliescu (the president-to-be) and his associates, the situation could be described as that of a genuine and somewhat spectacular public sphere in Jurgen Habermas' sense: people of various classes and backgrounds coming together to discuss issues of common interests, materialized through audiovisual image in front not only of Romanian citizens across the country, but of citizens of the world since the footage were spread across national and continental borders; a live image of the fall of something which at the moment were deemed universally evil, something that concerned the whole world; a fall that was realized through an uprising of "the people". It was a manifestation of freedom of speech, set simultaneously within the framework of a national and global public sphere and extremely well fit to run through broadcasting systems across the globe since it depicted the dissolution of an ideological struggle that had organized the world during most of the 20th century. It could thus be said to be an example of situations or events where the globe can be imagined as a single community (see Hjarvard 2001), and which in turn

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[5] This is most interestingly shown in Harun Farocki's film "Videogram einer Revolution" (1992).

stimulated people across borders to take action in different ways, and to imagine that the Cold War was now over (they had seen it on TV).

A world of free expression in the making

An initial period of catastrophe-like aid and support to Romania soon turned into more long-term involvements on institutional level. One sector was free press and independent media. While the first years of the 1990s saw the establishment of institutions such as BBC Radio Journalism School in the Romanian capital Bucharest and programs for visiting lecturers from abroad (mainly USA) at the state-run journalism faculty at Bucharest University – both aimed at hands-on teaching in reporting – the mid 1990s and onward was characterized by a growing number of local NGOs working in close relation with international partners. These relations formed a cluster of local and international actors that comes close to what Kekk and Sikkink (1998) have labeled transnational advocacy network, characteristically occupied in raising awareness on certain issues and putting pressure on national governments and their institutions. The main issue advocated in this case was freedom of expression, a UN-declared universal right that every person around the globe ideally should be able to enjoy and which practically speaking is a matter of concern especially for journalists, compiling and publicizing information and opinions on an everyday basis as they are. Alongside freedom of expression, focus in this network was consequently put on protecting journalists, wherever they may be working. At the time of my fieldwork in Romania (1999-2002), this network of media development actors had grown large and complex. BBC was just about to close office, but others were present in various constellations, for example Reporters Without Borders

(based in Paris), International Federation of Journalists (Brussels), human rights organization Article19 (London), Independent Journalism Foundation (New York), Council of Europe (Strasbourg), World Association of Newspapers and International Press Institute (both with headquarters in Vienna). The agendas of these organizations and others differed by concentrating for example on teaching, the strengthening of journalist organizations, rules of business or legal matters. They were more or less united, however, in their explicit or implicit reference to international, Western or European standards and by pointing out the need for an autonomous and professional community of journalists as a prerequisite for democracy to prosper in Romania. Several of them regularly published and continue to publish reports on the current state of Romanian journalism, as part of more thorough reports that concern all or most countries in the world, reports that are indicative of an act of imagining a world of free expression in the making (for example "World Press Freedom Review", by International Press Institute, "World Press Trends" by World Association of Newspapers, and "Worldwide Press Freedom Index" by Reporters Without Borders). Today, as Romania has become a member of the European Community, one can hear in Swedish mass media comments by EU-correspondents that there is still work to be done in areas connected to the Romanian mass media; that several problems still has to be solved. Corruption is said to be perhaps the most problematic area, alongside legal security. Harassment of journalists is sometimes mentioned on a more detailed level. Romanian authorities need now report to the EU every half year about the progress in various sectors of society to receive the funding they are entitled to, if progress is judged to be heading the right way.

Let me dwell on one of the reports I mentioned: "World Press Freedom Review", issued by International Press Institute, a global network of media executives, editors and "leading journalists". The front page of the year 1999-issue is illustrated with four photos, one of them depicting two male person with pieces of tape covering their mouths. It is not clear where the photo is taken, nor the nationality of the persons, although it is obvious that that it is some kind of public demonstration. The symbolic silence they represent, an act of violence, thus suggest anywhere-ness (or everywhere-ness). The report, some 250 pages long, documents press freedom violations and media developments all over the world. Divided into specific regions, each report provides an overview of the year's events and comparisons are made with events of previous years. Discursively, there is an underlying idea or principle of normalization here, of a given role of journalism wherever journalists may be working. In ways similar to Michael Billig's concept of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995), a number of symbols and concepts are used in this report which together with mapping, categorization and quantification of journalism around the world – central modern principles of ordering and knowledge production – allows or build ground for an imagination of the globe as a mutual working place for a profession implicitly put forth as transcending national and cultural borders. It produces an image of a global community of journalists and of free press as a global concern. Significantly, there is a lot of focus on violence. By placing the journalistic profession against various forms of institutionalized or criminal violence, poor legislation etc occurring in any society around the globe, the idea of a universally valid model of journalism is strengthened.[6]

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[6] As an example of how this focus on violence and protection took more concrete form, chapter 3 includes ethnography on the so called "Surviving Hostile Regions"-course that took place in Romania in 2000,

Sending the script

As for the conceptualization of journalism involved in the global media development discourse, after the fall of East European communist regimes, speaking with Meyer and his colleagues (1997), a Western-style journalism model could be said to have arrived in the shape of a "script" handed out from the "world society" to be adopted locally. Western teachers and experts were judged to be unquestioned providers of journalistic know-how related to this model, while the experience and knowledge of East European journalists, editors and media executives often reckoned as near irrelevant a-priori (see Boyer 2000, writing on the East German case). This was merely one example of a more thorough export of models (in Sweden, especially child care gained much attention, a theme that produced lots of humanitarian work) basically aimed at having Western modernity expand eastwards. This was discursively backed up by representations in scholarly reports and Western media on the poor conditions of East European private and public life. Countries in the former East bloc were deemed and portrayed as in great need of assistance in the process of transforming institutions of society, including the communist propaganda apparatuses: of replacing totalitarian tradition with Western forms of mass media of communications; of replacing opacity with transparency. In addition to "catching up", expressions such as "normalization" and "leaving tradition behind" were frequently used in Western media and academia to describe this process, summoned up by the general label "East European Transition", referring to the processes

where journalists from several countries in the region were taught how to behave in situations of war and other conflict situations. The course was financed with money from Council of Europe and organized by International Federation of journalists together with Center for Independent Journalism, a Romanian NGO (mainly US-funded). The trainers were former officers of the British army, indicating another link between different engagements with the existence of mass media and journalism in society.

of transforming the former socialist societies into market economy-based liberal democracies. No doubt, transition has been used to describe societal changes in other geographical areas and at other times (for example from military rule to civilian government in Latin America). According to Leslie Holmes (2002), however, in the case of Eastern Europe the concept gained a near myto-poetic character.

The contents of the "script" I am focusing on in this study are well-known: The model is based on the supposed objectivity and neutrality of journalism in Western Europe and North America. It builds on positivistic and empiricist epistemologies and the claim that knowledge may be value-free. "Free press" is a central and oft-used word here, to connote the role of media and journalism in society. It suggests that an independent media sector ensures the free flow of information vital in a democratic society: it holds government leaders and politicians accountable to the people; publicizes issues that need attention; educate citizens so that they can make informed decisions, and connects people with each other in civil society (Hume, 2007). While "mass media" or just "media" are used in this kind of declarations, it is rather journalism one talks about, or even "journalism proper" – dealing in news about matters of a strictly political dimension, closely related to political-economic power in society (Hartley 1996), on both domestic and international scale. Journalism in this understanding thus attain something of a privileged role in comparison to other media practices (such as soap opera or blogging), in the sense that it purports to be true. The truthfulness of journalism builds on the principles of fairness and accuracy in reporting; fairness in the sense that all parties represented in news stories (usually two: for and against) should have their say, and accuracy in the sense that it should correspond with what actually happened or what is

actually at stake. More generally, it builds on the well-known concept of objectivity. Mark Peterson (2003, 188) writes that the notion of objectivity insists that there is "a world of objects out there apart from experience of them, a world of things that are real and can be known, as opposed to things that are merely believed or felt. News stories are factual insofar as they accurately map the object-world to which they refer." The operational side of this implies that the journalist "must put aside [his or her] own feelings, beliefs and interests so that one can 'see things' objectively in order to produce accounts" (Ibid). There is a highly modernist trait to the link between journalism and objectivity. Cultural studies scholar John Hartley (1996) suggests that journalism grew out of, developed alongside and promoted the emergence of modernity and modern life in the 18th and 19th century and onwards: "Journalism was the product and promoter of modern life /…/ the sense-making practice of modernity" (1996, 33). By way of modern division of labor, it is the individual journalists that carry out the work any citizen could do but, simply speaking, do not have sufficient time or knowledge to do. The individual journalist is thus worthy of respect since it is he or she that supplies much of the material which constitutes and uphold a democratic public sphere, basically what makes the rest of us citizens in the first place. In a world in which democracy has become increasingly the ideology that most countries subscribe to (even if some of them are still trying to – or need to – catch up), and also in which humans across borders are ever-more connected and entangled with each other (calling for "transnational public spheres", a topic I will get back to), protecting the journalist becomes something of a global concern.

As mentioned, a central aspect of this field, as in Eastern European transition on the whole, is that a certain East-West politics of expertise quickly emerged after 1989,

one that has guided the relationship between supplier (West) and receiver (East) of knowledge throughout most of the 1990 decade. It offered ground for defining each part's relation to the concept of international standards and universal values. It produced hierarchies of developed and underdeveloped societies with free and not so free climates or cultures of information, and thus, among other things, feeding into processes of identity-making in the post Cold War era, on an individual as well as more abstract levels. As for the focus on media and journalism, this epistemological configuration resembled an earlier discourse connected to development in/of Third World countries during the era of decolonization. Independent media and a professional community of journalists were in both cases seen as necessary means to achieve democracy. In the case of decolonization, it was leveled upon a context of national independency in a postcolonial world of nation-states. One example of the kind of normative accounts produced here was that each nation ought to have its own news agency to connect to the news flow of the world information and communication order. Measures were taken to realize this in several African nations, under the supervision of Western expertise. The so called NWICO-debate that sprung up within UNESCO in the end of the 1970s showed, however, that the high ideals embedded in this pedagogical situation did not correspond fully with how the actual international news flow looked like, or at least how it appeared to some[7]. Representatives of African nations criticized what they perceived as an unequal balance upheld by Western-owned international news agencies (AP, Reuters etc) with a near monopolistic position on the market, focusing to a large extent on conflicts, tribal wars, famines, and natural disasters on the African continent as they were. In the case of Eastern Europe, independent media and a professional journalism have been viewed as a

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[7] New World Information and Communication Order, further discussed in...

kind of equipment or institutional forerunner to boost a quick transformation from communism to market economy and liberal democracy, set more against an increasingly deterritorialised, post-national and global context.

Imperial order or "doing good"?

Anthropologists of post-socialism have generally been critical of policies based on the transfer of Western models, which according to Chris Hann (2002, 5), "overlook institutional contexts and the strong threads of continuity that mark even the most dramatic of social ruptures". There is a neglect of the cultural dimension and the concept is overly teleological, argues Katherine Verdery (ibid.), "[in that it assumes that] the future condition of the former socialist countries can be read off from the development path followed by Western capitalism." By 2007, the concept seems to have lost some of its initial legitimacy or widespread usage, partly because representatives of one former East bloc country after the other have declared that their transition is now over. The epistemological grounds it built on still remains, however. Generally speaking, I sympathize with the view purported by anthropologist of post-socialism. Concerning the mass media and journalism field in Romania, however, I find it difficult to sustain it fully, on the basis of what people involved in this field told me, on both sides of the East-West divide, and what I could observe by hanging out in situations where the talk about journalism was flourishing. "Western standards" was frequently used by Romanians to indicate a high and much-wanted level of professional environment, although the origins of a Western model were often downplayed and the matter viewed as more a question of common sense. NGO-projects were sometimes formulated and carried out on the

initiatives of the Romanian part. One example is the attempt by Romanian NGOs to break the tendency of media development to focus on and connect major cities and people working and dwelling there, and instead make an effort at involving journalists from the provinces and move focus to the often more precarious conditions they were working in. Educational centers thrived on their respective connections to teachers and scholars abroad and many students of journalism took it for granted that after a course or an apprenticeship abroad they would stand better prepared for work in the Romanian branch of news production. Although it seemed to me that the East-West divide tended to make less and less sense rather early on during my stay in Romania, there were incidents and environments in which the dichotomy and the possible ingredients of domination and marginalization seemed to be present and cause provocation. One example is the ambition by the so called Romanian Press Club to launch a special Balkan Press Agency in order to counter what the board members of the club believed was poor and, more important, discriminating information about the region produced by large international news agencies such as Associated Press and Reuters. The resemblance to the NWICO-debate is clear. The development activity thus bears the potentials of being both liberating as well as imperialistic. It can be interpreted as on the one hand "doing good", on the other as yet another version of Western domination of non-Western cultures; as a new kind of imperial order, in the sense that Romanians are forced to accept principles and routines modeled on foreign traditions and knowledge, and in the sense that the relationship tends to marginalize the knowledge of the receiving part.

Media anthropology

[this last sections remains to be worked on quite much]

What does the growing body of media anthropology tell us here? A general aspect involved in media anthropology is, first of all, the insight that cultures and societies of today is so intricately bound up with mass media that it becomes more or less impossible for an anthropologist no to take media into account, nearly whatever one studies. The identity of a given society or community is among other things tied to international storylines produced by international media, which is exemplified with the abovementioned NWICO-debate and reactions within the Romanian Press Club in Romania. Second, that one cannot take the role of the media in a society for granted but has to go out among people and study their uses of various media during a long period of time to get an idea of how for example newspapers or soap operas are used and talked about and how they relate to other engagements with mass media and journalism (see Couldry, 2004). Even if journalism has not been studied much within media anthropology (see Boyer and Hannerz, 2006, however), one can say that a general idea is likewise that journalism is hardly a universal activity. British-American anthropologist Elisabeth Bird (2003) says the following: "we need to be aware that "journalism" isn't some kind of universal phenomena, a taken-for-granted reality that transcends national and cultural boundaries. Issues that are important to journalism in one context may be irrelevant in another". And if one follows another anthropologist, David Machin (2002), there is something of the same. He studied the role of daily newspapers in Spain and the message he sends is that to be able to say something about this role, one has to closely study how people actually use them and how they talk about them. He suggests further that a full picture of the role of the media is in practice impossible to reach, but by choosing a

section of it and studying this through long term ethnographic methods and ethnographic gaze we can tease out parts of the cultural repertoire that the individual in a certain society uses to understand his or her own culture and him or herself, place herself within that society.

Within media anthropology there is however a slightly different standpoint, although one should perhaps talk about different levels of enquiry or analysis. This focuses more on what one might call thin principles, the diffusion of models and theories about a cosmopolitan culture. Per Ståhlberg, for example, in his study of Hindi journalism (Ståhlberg 2002), reasons about what he sees as a fact, namely that journalism and Hindi press looks very much like the one he was use to in Sweden (being a former reporter himself). He writes: "journalism is a cultural production in a universally well-known form". What bearing does this have when studying Romanian journalism and the global media development discourse? One can start from what Elisabeth Bird says and go and study Romanian journalism in its cultural, social and historical context. One then pays more attention to thick accounts. One looks at historical background, social structure, and concrete usage of media messages in relation to people's concrete life situation. One can, on the other hand, focus on thin principles that stand in the center of the more abstract development discourse. Here, one ends up in a discussion concerning for example diffusion of global human rights and models of society and cosmopolitan culture etc.

My own stand point, as I see it today, is that both Elisabeth Birds and a more cosmopolitan perspective are right or useful in their different ways. I aim at bringing up both these levels or perspectives in that I focus, on the one hand, on individual Romanian

journalists, their working conditions, their views of the job and on how a western model of journalism is diffused to Romania through transnational advocacy networks and how this is weaved into Romanian journalism, on the other. A third step combines the two and involves an attempt to analytically find points, contexts, settings, or events where these meet in one way or the other. This, then, would be in line with what George Marcus has written about as new conditions or challenges for contemporary anthropology, in which one moves away from a traditional definition of the ethnographic object, away in this case from "Romanian journalism per se" and even away from the phenomena of "diffusion of models" since these approaches. Let me finish with an example to indicate what I am after:

Trans-public journalism

In 2001 a few Romanian investigative journalists got together and formed an autonomous network called "Romanian Center for Investigative Journalism". These journalists where already members of an international network called "Global Investigative Journalism". Since the start they have carried out a number of projects that in many cases have been financed by foreign donors, for example EU, American USAID, the Danish state and a British organization called International War and Peace Reporting. The work consists of investigative journalistic reports on themes of a transnational character, for example trafficking, smuggling, organized crime, and border issues. A series of articles about Romania's border towards Moldavia and Ukraine, that is to say EUs outer eastern border since January 2007 (the articles I refer to were written before the EU-membership, however), were carried out as joint projects with journalists from these countries and

coordinated by a British journalist. The texts were published on the internet but also in several regional newspapers and in Western European ones. Several of the journalists had been trained in Western European countries and in USA. Parallel to their journalistic activities at their respective work places and in the network, the members often took teaching assignments, for example through a local NGO sponsored with American money. On their homepage, they make the page visitor aware of the working conditions for journalists in Romania. They write for example that Romanian journalism has a problem of credibility due to widespread corruption, and for instance that it happens that investigative reports are not published but rather used by editors to pursue blackmail against companies or certain individuals. The work in the network can therefore be seen as a way of reaching beyond these local restrictions, beyond the local media production culture if you will, to reach a wider and transnational audience on topics of transnational concern.

In this example, one can see how several of the themes I have brought up come together. Elisabeth Bird's view of journalism as something that is contextually bound is legitimate since one of the reasons these journalists started their network was as a kind of critique of the existing local conditions, or simply as a way of getting around the obstacles. What is reckoned journalism in Sweden, for example, may be an individually risky act in Romania. The same holds for the idea that there are certain common principles or grounds for a trans-border kind of journalism. If journalism earlier or conventionally has meant "writing society" with a national audience in mind, in this example it is more about "writing transnational society" and it is reasonable to suggest that this demands another terminology, another language than that which was the case

before. Hence, the need for global media development. A crucial factor is of course the possibility to publish their work in media that are not limited to national conditions, and this is something that recent technology development has produced. At the same time, it would not have been possible if there were no financial suppliers that were interested in these kinds of problems. To conclude then, if the original thought from NGOs was to engage in the development of Romanian journalism, in assisting in the establishment of a democratic Romanian public sphere, which to some extent looked like an imperial situation with the knowledgeable Westerners teaching the backward Easterners, then one can perhaps talk about a byproduct here, namely a kind of journalism where NGOs and journalists across the East-West divide are working together towards a trans-public sphere.

[...]

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