

# CHANGE IS IN YOUR HANDS

CITIZENS PARTICIPATE, OBSERVE AND REPORT

**CIVIC LENSES**  
PROJECT FOR PROMOTION OF  
TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY  
IN POLITICAL PROCESSES



СТАТИСТИКА | STATISTIKA

4 ГОДИНИ | VITE  
28 СЕМИНАРИ | SEMINARE  
20 РАБОТНИЦИ | РОВЕТОРИ  
1500+ ПРИЛОЗИ | АКТИВИ  
4 ИЗБОРНИ ПРОЦЕСИ | ПРОЦЕСЕ ЗА ИЗБОРИ  
950+ АКРЕДИТИРАНИ НАБЛЈУДУВАЧИ | ВЕЗИГУЕС ТЕ АКРЕДИТИРАНИ  
1000+ ГРАЃАНСКИ НАБЛЈУДУВАЧИ | ВЕЗИГУЕС КУТЕТАРИ  
110 НАГРАДИ ЗА ГРАЃАНСКО НОВИНАРСТВО | ШРЕВЦИМЕ РЕВ САЗЕТАРИ  
КУТЕТАРЕ  
1000+ УЧЕСНИЦИ И УЧЕСНИЦИ НА СЕМИНАРИ И РАБОТНИЦИ  
РЕСЕМАННЕС ОНЕ РЕСЕМАННЕС НЕ СЕМИНАРЕ ОНЕ РОВЕТОРИ

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CIVIL, 2019

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Publisher: CIVIL - Center for Freedom  
For the Publisher: Xhabir M. Deralla

Editorial Board:  
Xhabir M. Deralla, Biljana Jordanovska, Sinisha Stankovic,  
Maja Ivanovska, Igor Ilievski, Diana Tahiri, Dehnan Muratov,  
Angela Petrovska, Arian Mehmeti, Simona Maneva Zhivkova,  
Arben Zeqiri, Atanas Petrovski

Layout & Design: Arian Mehmeti, Xhabir M. Deralla  
Language provision: Natasha Cvetkovska, Diana Tahiri, Gordana Aceska

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Contacts:  
CIVIL, Maksim Gorki 31/1, Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia  
02/5209176 | civil@civil.org.mk | civil.macedonia@gmail.com

**WWW.CLP.MK**

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

# CHANGE IS IN YOUR HANDS!

In this publication, CIVIL's team that implemented the project "Civic Lenses – Promoting transparent and responsible political processes", made a selection of texts relevant for the topics dealt by the project. Texts on fake news and hate speech prevail, but transparency and responsibility in the political processes is certainly, directly or indirectly, a continuous, transversal topic in most of the contents produced within the project, hence in this publication as well.

This is a collection of different texts that can serve as educational material and encouragement for people who work in civil society organizations, the media, universities and much broader, for all citizens. At the same time, this publication is a kind of a brief guide through the topics that CIVIL deals with in the implementation of the "Civic Lenses" project.

**IN A PERIOD OF POLITICAL TURMOIL, WHEN IN PUBLIC COMMUNICATION THERE IS INCREASINGLY MORE HATE SPEECH AND FAKE NEWS, CITIZEN JOURNALISTS ARE THE ONES WHO CAN CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS A SOCIAL EFFORT FOR A DEMOCRATIC AND ARGUMENTATIVE DEBATE, TOWARDS REVEALING MISINFORMATION, FAKE NEWS AND HATE SPEECH.**

At the same time, this is a publication that is also a continuation of the previous three publications titled "We Are the Media", which CIVIL published from 2016 to 2018.

In a period of political turmoil, when in public communication there is increasingly more hate speech and fake news, citizen journalists are the ones who can contribute towards a social effort for a democratic and argumentative debate, towards revealing misinformation, fake news and hate speech.

CIVIL calls on all citizens to photograph, record and to write reports on what is happening in their surrounding area, at work, in their neighbourhood, in communications, in contact with the institutions. It is only with citizen participation and citizen reporting from the ground that society will manage to successfully deal with clientelism and corruption.

Citizen participation in every segment of social and political life is the right choice for a progressively integrated and sustainable society, without prejudice, without violence, without abuse and without corruption.

Change is in your hands! – calls CIVIL from the very start of the project in October.

**ACTIVISM AND CITIZEN JOURNALISM ARE AMONG THE MOST SUCCESSFUL TOOLS WITH WHICH CITIZENS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE CONTROLLERS**

Activism and citizen journalism are among the most successful tools with which citizens have the opportunity to be controllers of the work of the state and local officials and institutions and to pressure them to work according to the laws, transparently and responsibly.

Like many time before, CIVIL's team takes this opportunity as well, to call on the readers of this publication to share these contents with their friends. This publication is of open character. Write new pages in it. Always keep your lens prepared to capture and spread the truth. We are the media!

**CIVIL Communication Team**

**Civic Lenses is a project for transparent and responsible political processes, through support and popularization of citizen journalism, strengthening public awareness, civic education and citizen activism in regards to human rights, freedom of expression, democracy and free elections.**

This is a project that provides training and opportunities for citizens to participate, observe and report on social and political events and processes, including also elections.

Through Civic Lenses, citizens remind the authorities and officials of their obligation to be transparent and responsible.

## STRUGGLING FOR FREE AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

### XHABIR DERALLA

Populism, nationalism, ethnic and religious hate, anti-Western propaganda, fake news and disinformation, hate speech, violence against women and LGBTI communities, exclusion, xenophobia and anti-migrants campaign advertising wealth and domination in spite of social justice and dialogue – are tendencies and ideas promoted openly and aggressively right through media and social networks.

## DEMOCRACY IS IN CRISIS

With no pretensions to compose a mile-long analysis of the state of freedom of speech and media freedoms, activism and citizen journalism, this article intends to only point out the main issues that are related to the latest developments in these areas, accompanied with a few warning signals. In this regard, this is an attempt to establish several directions for the development of progressive ideas that contribute towards strengthening of the resistance and the fight against authoritarian, nationalistic and discriminatory tendencies in the society.

The Freedom House report states:

*In 2018, Freedom in the World recorded the 13th consecutive year of decline in global freedom. The reversal has spanned a variety of countries in every region, from long-standing democracies like the United States to consolidated authoritarian regimes like China and Russia. The overall losses are still shallow compared with the gains of the late 20th century, but the pattern is consistent and ominous. Democracy is in retreat.*

In an attempt to find out where the major risks lie, at least as far as the Balkan region is concerned, the situation is worrying precisely in the domain of the media industry. Media are the main target of the authoritarian regimes

## THE MOST COMMON "SHIELD" USED BY GENERATORS AND CONDUCTORS OF THESE BACKWARD IDEAS AND SOCIO-POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IS, INDEED, THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH. SO SHIELDED BY "FREEDOM OF SPEECH"...

and political structures that are on a rise and threaten the basics of the democratic institutions in many countries, including the Macedonian society and the state. Populism, nationalism, ethnic and religious hate, anti-Western propaganda, fake news and disinformation, hate speech, violence against women and LGBTIQ communities, exclusion, anti-migrant campaigning, promotion of wealth and power of domination in spite of social justice and dialogue – are tendencies and ideas promoted openly and aggressively through media and social networks.

The most common "shield" used by generators and conductors of these backward ideas and socio-political movements is, indeed, the freedom of speech. So shielded by "freedom of speech", authoritarian and often criminal structures, organized in political parties and foundations, easily penetrate and often dominate the public discourse in a worryingly rising number of societies, including Europe. Particularly fragile is the Macedonian society that is in a process of democratic transformation of the society and the institutions of the state, after a decade of a captured state in the period of 2006-2016.

Even worse, the propaganda does not only attack the fundamentals of free-

**THE PROPAGANDA DOES NOT ONLY ATTACK THE FUNDAMENTS OF FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY, USING THE VERY "FREEDOM" AND "DEMOCRACY" TERMS AS TOOLS AND MESSAGES (THE SHIELD), BUT IT IS HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL IN DISCOURAGING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND CIVIC AWARENESS.**

dom and democracy, using the very "freedom" and "democracy" terms as tools and messages (the shield), but it is highly successful in discouraging citizen participation and civic awareness. More precisely, this kind of propaganda has been diligently working on "killing" the hope of the people. There is, nowadays, a widespread attitude that "all of them are the same" and "nothing can change". Parallel to that, populists and authoritarianists have successfully captured and recycled the best of the prodemocracy activism around the world, using it – against democracy!

Civil society, media, and civic prodemocracy movements were targeted, infiltrated and partly re-composed that has generated a situation in which many young people now are protesting for the benefit of radical, populist, authoritarian structures, without even knowing it. The Russian style of hybrid war against democracies has either manipulated the people, using a twisted picture of what freedom and democracy represent, or have just pacified large portions of the previously active youth and general population. In other words, fake news and disinformation have become integral part of the media mainstream, framing facts into contexts that lead to a political and other (even more lucrative) benefits of authoritarian and nationalist groups and structures in the society. The other, equally successfully penetrated, target

**FAKE NEWS AND DISINFORMATION HAVE BECOME INTEGRAL PART OF THE MEDIA MAINSTREAM, FRAMING FACTS INTO CONTEXTS THAT LEAD TO A POLITICAL AND OTHER (EVEN MORE LUCRATIVE) BENEFITS OF AUTHORITARIAN AND NATIONALIST GROUPS AND STRUCTURES IN THE SOCIETY.**

are the institutions, particularly the judiciary, from where corruption has never been rooted out.

Citizen journalism, once a tool of the human rights activists and organizations in the Macedonian society, has been partly adopted and re-composed (and corrupted) for the needs of the anti-Western propaganda in the country,



which is highly flexible and complex, based on theft of ideas and messages, which are manipulated to a level beyond recognition. Combination of "they are all the same" messages, a modernized image "borrowed" from the Colorful Revolution (2016), and fake news, is used by the opponents of the Macedonian aspirations towards EU and NATO accession, and is in support

**COMBINATION OF "THEY ARE ALL THE SAME" MESSAGES, A MODERNIZED IMAGE "BORROWED" FROM THE COLORFUL REVOLUTION (2016), AND FAKE NEWS, IS USED BY THE OPPONENTS OF THE MACEDONIAN ASPIRATIONS TOWARDS EU AND NATO ACCESSION**

of the highly abusive, nationalistic and isolationist politics of the authoritarian regime in the country (2006-2016).

To summarize... The end of the 2010s are marked with dramatic shift of the backward ideologies towards more sophisticated methods of manipulation with the public opinion. Freedom of speech is abused for the benefit of the antidemocratic and anti-Western tendencies. Hybrid attacks on democracy are manifested through continuous and aggressive campaigning through fake news and hate speech. Activism and citizen journalism are a abducted as new, redesigned set of tools of nationalist and anti-Western propaganda. Large portions of youth and general population are pacified by the messages "they are all the same" and "nothing can be changed".

What we need is to remobilize the progressive youth and citizens in general, and encourage citizens to regain their position of active participation in decision making processes and making them aware of the new challenges brought by the hybrid war against democracy. So...

It's far from over. It is just a beginning of a new, longstanding battle for a free and democratic society. We have the facts, we know the answers. All it takes now is to urgently take a decisive action of (re)building resilience

**HYBRID ATTACKS ON DEMOCRACY ARE MANIFESTED THROUGH CONTINUOUS AND AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGNING THROUGH FAKE NEWS AND HATE SPEECH.**

against the authoritarianism tide, and defeat it, eventually.





## CITIZEN JOURNALISM – FILTER FOR A HEALTHIER SOCIETY

**SINISA STANKOVIC**

*If you're fine, then never mind...*

When we started with the “Civic Lenses” project, the aphorism “Both on the Moon and in Macedonia – there is no life”, best depicted the situation, and I wanted to try, to the best of my knowledge and ability, to help: the many “trpe-trajce-mirce-spasies” realize how low we had sunk and to loudly shout against the injustices and crime that suffocated the state.

In one of the interviews I had with the extraordinary poet (but above all, wonderful person) Mihail Rendzov, in a poetic way he also recalled on the moments when, during the first big strike of the Skopje Steelworks, somewhere at the end of the eighties of the last century, yesterday's "Trpe", "Trajce" and "Spase", according to him, had "found their voice" for the first time... In the memories of that outburst of pride of his, there was also the unfulfilled wish – for the average citizen of Macedonia to finally create an open society and a democratic and legal state, in which all citizens would live equally...

When I accepted to participate in the "Civic Lenses" project of CIVIL – Center for Freedom, four years ago, the aphorism "Both on the Moon and in Macedonia – there is no life", best depicted the situation, so I had precisely that goal in front of me: to try, to the best of my knowledge and ability, to help the many "trpe-trajce-mirce-spasies" realize how low we had sunk and to loudly shout against the injustices and crime that suffocated the state.

Even though I knew that it was also about trying to overcome the centuries-old "poisoning" with sayings according to which "the sword will not cut a lowered head" and "advices" that even before the gallows it is better "to keep silent, because it can always be worse", I saw in the project an opportunity for change. The anecdotes about the mentality, because of which the victim asks whether the hangman has his own rope to hang her, or if she herself should go home and bring some kind of rope (and there, at home, underneath the floor, along with the last coin, she keeps "for black days"

ON THE OTHER HAND, AS A COVER-UP FOR THE CRIME, FOR ALMOST A DECADE, A HYSTERIA OF QUASI-PATRIOTISM WAS BEING CREATED ("A DOUBLE SHOT OF BRANDY AND WE WILL DIE FOR MACEDONIA!"), A WITCH-HUNT ("TRAITORS" AND "SPIES" – ACTUALLY, ALL THOSE WHO THINK DIFFERENTLY), BUILDING NEW NATIONAL IDENTITY...



Workshop for citizen journalism during CIVIL Fest, Skopje  
11 December 2018

both the pistol and the knife, which, isn't it so, they kiss in videos and revolutionary films) just doesn't manage to make anyone smile anymore... But the fact is that the citizens of Macedonia have been convinced for centuries that it's better to sit still, and even in songs, the Macedonian person addresses himself with a diminutive, so as not to anger the tailors of his fate... Not to surge, to endure, but also to keep quiet, to be still and to be silent, in order to be saved..., are advices passed down from one generation to another, which

**HONESTLY, I DON'T REMEMBER HOW MANY SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS WE HELD IN THE CITIES THROUGHOUT MACEDONIA, IN CULTURE HOMES, IN HOTELS, IN YOUTH HOMES, BUT ALSO OUTDOORS – IN PARKS, SQUARES...**

unfortunately, have torn the spirit and have created the subordinate mentality.

On the other hand, as a cover-up for the crime, for almost a decade, a hysteria of quasi-patriotism was being created ("a double shot of brandy and we will die for Macedonia!"), a witch-hunt ("traitors" and "spies" – actually, ALL those who think differently), building new national identity... And because of all this, despite my knowledge about civic video-activism, for decades popular around the world, in the chaos that ruled in Macedonia, but also because of the characteristic "push me, to move", I was sceptic about the success of the idea of citizen journalism.

Honestly, I don't remember how many seminars and workshops we held in the cities throughout Macedonia, in culture homes, in hotels, in youth homes, but also outdoors – in parks, squares... Normally, I don't remember the faces of the hundreds of participants, even though with some of them we debated and socialized wonderfully.

But I do know that CIVIL awarded over 100 prizes for the best contributions of citizen journalists, students, unemployed, redundant workers, dismissed, retired – citizens, but also professional journalists, dissatisfied with the situation in the media – megaphones of the government... Still, most importantly,

**CITIZENS FROM THE "NEIGHBOURHOOD" WERE MOBILIZED, THOSE WHO PERHAPS HAD NOT EVEN BEEN PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN THE NEWS OR TRADITIONAL MEDIA, UNTIL SOME INJUSTICE HAD AFFECTED THEM AND WERE ENCOURAGED TO SPEAK OUT ABOUT IT, BELIEVING THEY HAD NOTHING MORE TO LOSE...**

"ordinary" people, which for the most part never even thought they would photograph, record videos or report on an event.

Citizens from the "neighbourhood" were mobilized, those who perhaps had not even been particularly interested in the news or traditional media, until some injustice had affected them and were encouraged to speak out about it, believing they had nothing more to lose... Yes, a good part of those who received prizes, still wished to remain anonymous for the public, and the project for citizen journalism did fulfil that goal.

And the goal was education on human rights in the broadest sense, and involving as many citizens as possible, aware of their rights and obligations, in the decision-making processes at the local and central level. According to the clear and brief rules: 1. – Do not do to others what you do not want them do to you, and 2. – I do not agree with your claim and argued counter-views and I will oppose it, but I will always fight for you to freely express your opinion. And that's all.

Until we come to the level where the ethics and morals of the holders of public functions will be an integral part of their personality, and will not be "awakened" only under the public pressure, or when caught with their hands

FOR "CIVIC LENSES"  
WE MIXED RESEARCH,  
ACTIVISM AND MEDIA  
WORK THROUGH CIVIL  
MEDIA'S MULTILINGUAL  
PORTALS AND THE  
PROJECT'S SPECIAL-  
IZED WEBSITE

[WWW.CLP.MK](http://WWW.CLP.MK).



*CIVIL team records, takes  
photos, interviews... Often  
image through the whole  
country.*

*(Skopje, 8 February 2019)*

in the treasure. And until fear and humility do not give way to criticism and to putting the general interest before one's own interest, and the standards and values are not differentiated. To have an observant public, always ready to react, and to have open media with professional journalists, with editors – defenders of honour and dignity of the profession and with socially responsible owners...

For "Civic Lenses" we mixed research, activism and media work through CIVIL Media's multilingual portals and the project's specialized website [www.clp.mk](http://www.clp.mk). We tried to motivate the citizens to be alert observers of all areas of so-

WE ALSO WANTED TO,  
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CESS OF THE MACE-  
DONIAN SOCIETY.

ciety, of practicing policies at any level, of abuses, of election manipulations and all obstructions to the legal state – through corruption, nepotism, complete partisanship of everyday life...

We also wanted to, as much as possible, to strengthen public awareness and to promote the maturing process of the Macedonian society. At the wave of protests of high school students, students, environmentalists and "park-defenders", freelancers (journalists, writers, painters, architects, translators...), the "colourful" revolutionaries form the streets of the cities across Macedonia, and citizen journalists fought for their place. As a corrective, especially at the local level – everyone in their own community, neighbourhood, village...

We also tried to help in raising the level of media literacy of N.V Consumer of media contents, who for over a decade was poisoned and seduced with spins and pure lies, in order for him to recognize fake news, discrimination, the language of hatred... But also in raising media and general literacy also among some professional journalists, who left at the mercy of the raging and greedy politicians and business elites who were conducting pressure also on some corrupt media bosses and editors with an elastic spine, simply, did not know it could be otherwise. And what they do on a daily basis has nothing to do with

AT THE SEMINARS WE USUALLY TALK ABOUT THE JOURNALISTIC CRAFTSMANSHIP, PRIMARILY, ABOUT HONESTY, MORALITY, DEDICATION, RESPECTING STANDARDS, THE NECESSARY INFORMATION...

the noble profession – journalism.

That is why at the seminars and workshops, in addition to the “technicalities” (instructions for using “smart phones, cameras, recorders..., manner of sending recorded material and publishing on the Internet, along with the basic rules for news as the queen of journalism and for the overturned pyramid with the well-known questions 5W + 1H), we usually talk about the journalistic craftsmanship, primarily, about honesty, morality, dedication, respecting standards, the necessary information...

I have never thought that citizen journalism should be the only alternative to traditional media, nor that citizen journalists should be saving the profession of journalists in Macedonia, who they themselves, had to and have to settle accounts with the intruders (hypocrites or paid minders, whatever) among their lines. But in a situation in which professional journalism in Macedonia is seriously ill, every remedy is welcomed, and every motivation injection from activists, aware citizens, even in the role of journalists, can only be of help. Especially since in addition to certain claims that finally “life has come”, I’m still not sure.

I haven’t been to the Moon...

IN A SITUATION IN WHICH PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM IN MACEDONIA IS SERIOUSLY ILL, EVERY REMEDY IS WELCOMED, AND EVERY MOTIVATION INJECTION FROM ACTIVISTS, AWARE CITIZENS, EVEN IN THE ROLE OF JOURNALISTS, CAN ONLY BE OF HELP.



**Даниел Јошески**  
13 min · 45

ВО АВТОБУС 63 СЕ СЛУЧИ СЕРИОЗЕН ИНЦИДЕНТ ВЛЕГОА 30 АЛБАНИЦИ ШВЕРЦЕРИ И ГИ ТЕПАА СИТЕ ПАТНИЦИ ГО КРШЕА АВТОБУСОТ ГИ ПЦУЕЈА МАКЕДОНЦИТЕ, ОЛИВЕР СПАСОВСКИ ШТО СЕ СЛУЧУВА НЕМОЈ ДА СЕ ОБИДЕШ ОВА ДА ГО СОКРИЕШ ОВА Е СЕРИОЗЕН ИНЦИДЕНТ ИМА ПОВРЕДЕНИ ПАТНИЦИ!!!

## FROM FAKE NEWS AND HATE SPEECH TO BLOODY ATTACK AT THE ASSEMBLY

**BuBe Risteski** Беп ден да не видите. Семето да ви се сотре.

**Bistra Mitik** Grom da ve utepa kako so si odete gubrina

**Zoran Janevski** Да ци се сотро семката до седмо колоно продавници

**Petar Miovski** U usta da ve ebam i vas i razum i dialog ima edna vistina ima edna MAKEDONIJA I



Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia, 27 april 2017

**Citizens contribute to creating free and independent media, and advocate for transparent and responsible political processes in delicate times. Since CIVIL introduced citizen journalism in monitoring human rights and elections, the public has become alert, as well as the perpetrators. Violation of human rights and freedoms is no longer invisible – the public can easily and immediately find out about this, through reports of citizen journalists.**

## **ORDANOSKI: CITIZEN WILL JUDGE PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM**

Political analyst and professor Dr. Sasho Ordanoski talks about citizen journalism and whether and how such journalism can contribute to more transparent and accountable processes.

Today it is illusory to talk about or against citizen journalism because we all carry in our pockets a television studio.

**WHEN YOU GET SICK  
YOU DON'T VISIT A  
CITIZEN DOCTOR,  
BUT RATHER A  
DOCTOR WHO HAS  
FINISHED MEDICAL  
SCHOOL.**

In absence of a better term, what is happening today is what we call citizen journalism. Otherwise, it has nothing to do with journalism. In principle, when you get sick you don't visit a citizen doctor, but rather a doctor who has finished medical school. As skills, like in the physicians' profession, are likewise important in journalism.

However, today it is illusive to talk for or against citizen journalism, because all of us are carrying a television studio in our pockets. The problem is that journalism has strict standards that need to be learned. Journalism is a profession that is not science, but workmanship that one needs to know. When these standards and craftsmanship rules are not known, then we have total cacophony that is transferred to the social media and usually instead of helping democracy, it hinders it.

That is why today we are dealing with who was sitting in which café bar, how much his bill was when he left after he had eaten the peanuts, and this gets 300.000 likes and I don't know how many views on the social networks, while the serious debate on the reform of the education has 3.000 viewers. People have already lost the need for context, because this so-called citizen journalism does not deal with the context, which is the essence of the journalist profes-



**WE HAVE COME TO A POINT WHERE THE NEW GENERATIONS ARE NOT ONLY NOT SEEKING FOR THE CONTEXT TO BE SEEN AND THE SECOND PAGE, BUT RATHER A PHOTO TO BE SEEN, AN ILLUSTRATION OF SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED, AND THAT DOES NOT SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH IT HAPPENED.**

sion, but with who is faster in placing the “news”.

We have come to a point where the new generations are not only not seeking for the context to be seen and the second page, but rather a photo to be seen, an illustration of something that happened, and that does not say anything about the circumstances in which it happened.

The question as to what I think about citizen journalism is pointless, it's not journalism, but is something that is happening, that cannot be avoided. Something that I am sure will rule out to professional journalism. Because people no longer have the time, or the need, to deal with contexts, and the essence of the journalist profession is to explain the contexts on the photos that you see.

I think that because of this, journalism is a profession in danger of extinction and the question is how many more years will it be able to survive. On the one hand, we will get used to this exceptionally high frequency of insignificance, of wasting time...Then, this on the other hand, has an additional feature that means that responsibility will be lost about what is discussed and how certain events are discussed. This is probably the new standard to which we are increasingly more getting used to.

**POLITICS ARE NOT UNSKILFUL. IT WILL START MANIPULATING SUCH CITIZEN JOURNALISTS IN A WAY IN WHICH IT SUITS POLITICS.**

This will then be reflected on how politics will be made. Because politics are not unskilful. It will start manipulating such citizen journalists in a way in which it suits politics. And for politics it's always more easy to manipulate a citizen journalist than a journalist who understands politics and knows how to ask the real questions.





## FROM “CRANES” TO “MANHOLES” – FAKE NEWS BETWEEN ETHICS AND PUNISHMENTS

**IGOR K. ILIEVSKI**

“Fake news”, as manipulation with information is called nowadays, from dosing information to pure disinformation, are neither new, nor rare. On the contrary, they are daily. And they are not even that discreet, from the “Bulgarian crane” (Alexander is leaving “Macedonia”: A crane has arrived for execution from Bulgaria) to “bowing before a manhole”, or the July snow in Argentina.

**"FAKE NEWS", AS MANIPULATION WITH INFORMATION IS CALLED NOWADAYS, FROM DOSING INFORMATION TO PURE DISINFORMATION, ARE NEITHER NEW, NOR RARE. ON THE CONTRARY, THEY ARE DAILY.**

"You remember the news that claimed that, imagine, a "Bulgarian crane has entered Macedonia, the monument of Alexander the Great to be removed" – after which a small group of citizens gathered on the Skopje Square to defend the monument from the Bulgarian crane. Today we are witnessing that all those so-called news – were false. They had the purpose to manipulate, to disturb the population. This is how Prime Minister Zoran Zaev illustrated the need for protection from fake news at the consultative meeting of the Action Group for Coordination of State Institutions for Combatting Disinformation and Attacks on Democracy, which on Thursday was held at the Government's initiative.

"Fake news", as manipulation with information is called nowadays, from dosing information to pure disinformation, are neither new, nor rare. On the contrary, they are daily. And they are not even that discreet, from the "Bulgarian crane" (Alexander is leaving "Macedonia": A crane has arrived for execution from Bulgaria) to "bowing before a manhole", or the July snow in Argentina.

The goal, as with all other news, is to reach as much of the public as possible,

**THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED A BROAD AND COMPREHENSIVE DEBATE WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS, THAT IS, WITH THE "MEDIA, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS, JOURNALISTS AND INDIVIDUALS COMMITTED AGAINST THE EVIL CALLED FAKE NEWS",**

be it from a political motive, such as the "crane" and the "manhole", or, simply from "economic" motives, such as the clickbait with the discovery of winter in the southern hemisphere.

The Government announced a broad and comprehensive debate with all stakeholders, that is, with the "media, media and civil society organizations, journalists and individuals committed against the evil called fake news", through which it is to define proactive measures against deliberate, intentional disinformation.

In anticipation of a result from future debates, what are the tools that can currently be applied against "fake news"? In general, they can be divided in two categories, with a police vocabulary, "soft" and "hard".

The first are measuring the fulfilment of professional standards when reporting, especially the Codex of Journalists, or assessing the truth of the news and the ethics of the reporting.

The two main tools in this category are the Internet websites for checking the

**THE CRIMINAL CODE, WHICH SANCTIONS "SPREADING OF MESSAGES", BUT ONLY IF IT CAUSES OR "CREATES DANGER OF COMMITTING" ACTS LIKE "TERRORISM", "CAUSING NATIONAL, RACIAL OR RELIGIOUS HATRED, DISCORD AND INTOLERANCE"**



*(March, 2018) Photos have appeared on the social networks of the crane having arrived from Bulgaria to dislocate the monument of Macedonian King Alexander the Great, called "Warrior on Horse" from the "Macedonia" Square. Citizens say this crane will remove the monument in honor of tomorrow's visit of Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias.*

truthfulness of the news and the compliance to professional standards, such as the already established "Truth-meter"

*(March, 2018) Photos have appeared on the social networks of the crane that arrived from Bulgaria to dislocate the monument of Macedonian King Alexan-*

**THE TWO MAIN TOOLS IN THIS CATEGORY ARE THE INTERNET WEBSITES FOR CHECKING THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THE NEWS AND THE COMPLIANCE TO PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS, SUCH AS THE ALREADY ESTABLISHED "TRUTH-METER"**

*der the Great, called "Warrior on Horse" from the Macedonia Square.*

*Citizens say that this crane is to remove the monument in honor of tomorrow's visit of Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias.*

*and "Crithink", but also a few newer ones, as well as the Council of Media Ethics, whose Complaints Commission acts upon all claims of violation of professional and ethical standards in the media.*

*However, even when the Commission does determine violation of standards, it can impose only a "soft", namely, moral sanction – to request for the "disinformer" to publish the decision of the Commission at the same place where the text/article violating the Codex had been published.*

*Last year the Commission had made 38 such decisions.*

*The second, "hard" category, are the possibilities for legal sanctioning violation of journalistic standards. One of the possibilities is the Law on Civil Liability for Insult and Defamation, in which application there have been cases of lawsuits by journalists against journalists or media outlets, but mainly because of personal concern in regards to the news published in the media.*



From fake news and hate speech to violent protests. Protests of opponents to the process of overcoming the Macedonian-Greek dispute, February 2018. / PHOTO: A. Stamatou

**FAKE NEWS CONTINUE AT AN UNABATED PACE AND ENTHUSIASM, FROM MANY SIDES AND BECAUSE OF VARIOUS MOTIVES, WITHOUT REAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE UTTERED WORD.**

*In this sphere would also be the application of the Law on Copyright and Related Rights, as a tool for “forced” application of journalistic standards.*

*Ultimately, here is also the Criminal Code, which sanctions “spreading of messages”, but only if it causes or “creates danger of committing” acts like “terrorism”, “causing national, racial or religious hatred, discord and intolerance” or “spreading racist and xenophobic material via information system”.*

*While the efficiency of the application of this “hard” category of measures is debatable, the “soft” measures are undoubtedly efficient. Both the sites and the Commission react quickly and timely to manipulations with information and to violation of professional standards in journalism. They are undeniably efficient, but not effective. Their work, even though it does significantly raise the visibility of “fake news” and public awareness about this phenomenon, nevertheless, does not prevent them.*

*In the meanwhile, fake news continue at an unabated pace and enthusiasm, from many sides and because of various motives, without real responsibility for the uttered word. Unfortunately, there has still been no act, such as “verbal terrorism” for instance, for which the public can sue those poisoning with fake news.*

Censorship and self-censorship have become worthless tools of those who want to control information and the public opinion. Citizen journalism has torn down the boundaries set by political and financial structures of power and has opened a new era in the dissemination of information through the media and civic space. If a particular editor decides to prevent the publishing of a certain text, that same information prepared by an activist can become viral in just a few seconds.

INTERVIEW | Zoran Ivanov, journalist

## IVANOV: CITIZEN JOURNALISM IS A DYNAMIC MATERIAL THAT SHAPES POLITICS

Media and journalism are subject to dynamic changes in the context of the development of communication technologies, and in the context of the political systems, both in the positive sense (speed, accessibility, democratic public...), and negative sense of the word (false news, hate speech, manipulations, domination of the business and politics...). Starting from the thesis that citizen journalism can contribute to social and political changes, in a conversation with Zoran Ivanov, we started discussing the questions what actually is most important for journalism today, the impact of citizen journalism and activism, in the fight against false news and hate speech in the given positive and negative contexts.

**CIVIL MEDIA: What is most important for those who would like to be involved in journalism nowadays to know in the given contexts?**

**IVANOV:** Anyone who wishes to become a journalist, to be dedicated to this profession, should first of all know oneself. To get to know oneself. To scan oneself as a person with one's entire interior.

The journalist profession, as an unwritten rule, demands this from every journalist as a foundation of the profession. Just as some who do not have the natural predispositions to be top athletes, for instance, or talented football players, a journalist, and certainly a potential journalist, needs to have a special human trait. To be a person of character. To be humane, to be a fighter for fairness, to be courageous enough to look even the greatest authorities in the eyes. Not to have an inferiority complex, and even less a superiority complex.

Journalism is a responsible profession, very responsible, and this profession demands a person of character. It demands a person with high moral values that make a person with dignity. Only such characters will become authoritative journalists. Today, everyone is literate. If there is a will, journalistic skills can easily be learned. Every young person is educated. But this is less needed to be a journalist. Even less to be a good journalist. And the least to be an authoritative journalist.

The latter is important because journalism is a public profession. The most public profession. There is not a more public profession than journalism. Not even the politicians or those in show business. A journalist can be present in the public every day, through the media in which he or she works in, or individually as a journalist authority, through their journalistic products. People read what the journalist wrote,



**ZORAN IVANOV:**

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or listen to him or listen and read. Their reactions are stressful for the journalist even when they are positive. However, the constant presence of a journalist among the journalistic audience makes the journalist socially most present, and at the same time, socially most responsible. Both as a journalist by profession and personality.

The tool that we all own, and which we call "cell phone", is the new multimedia wonder, a journalistic tool with many possibilities, Zoran Ivanov, journalist / Photography: D. Muratov  
Hence the fact that not everyone can be a journalist. Anyone can be called a journalist, but a journalist can only be someone who can understand, recognize the power of the public word and the power of the media. Who can from the beginning of his or her journalistic engagement understand that journalism tools such as the pen, now the keyboard, the microphone, camera and everything else that is especially offered by information technology, are weapons. Dangerous tools that can only be in the hands of responsible journalist professionals.

**ZORAN IVANOV:**

TODAY, THANKS PRECISELY TO THE INTERNET AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TOOLS, SEEMINGLY EVERYONE CAN BE A JOURNALIST. LITERALLY EVERYONE WITHOUT EXCEPTION. THE TOOL THAT WE ALL OWN, AND WHICH WE CALL A "CELL PHONE", IS THE NEW MULTIMEDIA WONDER, A JOURNALISTIC TOOL WITH MANY POSSIBILITIES

From the simple reason that if they are used incorrectly and in an ethical non-standard and morally unacceptable way, they can harm the truth that is the elementary point of reference for the journalistic work. Additionally, by abusing the journalistic power, the media and editorial position, they can unjustly upset, hurt, traumatize and dismay someone.

On the other hand, it is precisely the journalist and the journalism, the editorial office and the media outlet that are the subjects for correct factographic informing of the public, for authentic presenting and interpreting of events and for registering incidences. For the audience, for the public, for the consumers of journalistic information to be accurate, timely and verified, and thus also authoritative. New technologies give journalism new opportunities, new, practically, unlimited possibilities. Today, thanks precisely to the Internet and information technology tools, seemingly everyone can be a journalist. Literally everyone without exception. The tool that we all own, and which we call a "cell phone", is the new multimedia wonder, a journalistic tool with many possibilities. With it, everyone can create news, information with text and video from any event where

one happens to be intentionally or by accident. At an unusual, unordinary happening from where we can create news and present it publically.

To convey it quickly and efficiently to an editorial, to a portal or just to our profile on our social network. Then, depending on how attractive it is to the narrower or wider public, precisely through these new Internet possibilities, it quickly becomes accessible to everyone. And it not only quickly reaches many news consumers, but it also quickly forms single or collective views in society.

Furthermore, specifically the Internet and the ever greater active presence and participation of the wider public on the social networks, also forms the social democratic public. Meaning all of us as citizens are at the same time able to create news and comment news and to take certain positions in regards to their contents. To participate in the public social life and to form our own judgements for every event, for every information.

That is the one, nice, democratic side of the medal of opportunities that technology offers. Now with its help anyone can place authentic and argued news and other press information.

However, at the same time, everyone can be in the role of a manipulator as well, to convey false news, to create false pictures, doubts, to lead to untruths, to sow hatred, to be in a mercenary or at least in a cheering function and mission of certain political or business centers whose intentions are to come to bare power for privileges, or to indecent profit at the expense of the decent citizens.

But that is why journalists are here. Editorials and the media, and journalists and editors with their responsibilities towards the public. With the power of the profession that is a profession of the truth

and a profession for the truth. Exactly because of the fact that everyone can be a “journalist”, but also because of the fact that everyone can be an “anti-journalist”, professional journalists have the additional obligation to fight for the truth in the overabundance of information. To verify the news, to support them with facts, to damask false news and to unveil the intentions of their creators and their controllers and distributors.

It is exactly because of this that it is a responsible role of the journalist, of editors and editorials. They are the main pillar against false news. Against news with insulting contents, with hate speech, with intentions for chauvinism, xenophobia and various kinds of frustrations.

But in order for the journalist and journalism to be that protection to the public, to the democratic public, primary, as persons of character, they need to possess the features from the beginning of the text. Otherwise, the danger is in that they will become part of the authorship of false news, participants in hate speech and instigators of various frauds.

And because journalism is the most public profession, accordingly, also a very responsible profession, journalism demands from journalists to be bold and honest people.

**CIVIL MEDIA: Can citizen journalism and activism contribute to improving the situation in the area of good governance and respect for human rights and freedoms at the local and national level, and how?**

**IVANOV:** Citizen journalism is that journalistic and editorial approach that is most directly turned towards the citizens. According to their daily needs in their place of residence, in the city, neighbourhood. Born in



**ZORAN IVANOV:**

EXACTLY BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT EVERYONE CAN BE A “JOURNALIST”, BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT EVERYONE CAN BE AN “ANTI-JOURNALIST”, PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS HAVE THE ADDITIONAL OBLIGATION TO FIGHT FOR THE TRUTH IN THE OVERABUNDANCE OF INFORMATION.

the most democratic European countries, the Scandinavian countries from just over a quarter of a century, it justifies its function every day and confirms it with the many undertaken activities and results from them.

With its persistence, with the opening of editorials for the citizens, for their topics of their everyday lives, for their needs, with public addresses and calls to the competent authorities for what has not been done, to the responsible for the situation and for the needs of the people, citizen journalism has transformed into a dynamic material that shapes politics and forces it to descend among the citizens, and to put in the most direct function of their everyday life.

And particularly, with the strength and engaged journalism, to open the institutions, to force them to do their job, to understand that they themselves are not the ownership of themselves, but of the citizens. To make them accessible in the everyday life of the people and to give their dues for the quality of life.

Citizen journalism is breathless journalism. It initiates actions and does not give up, within what is possible and realistic, until it moves politics and the competent bodies in the real sense of the word. To

truly be dedicated to life.

Citizen journalism is a reflection of reality. The people are its preoccupation, while it pushes politics and the institutions on their real track to work in a committed and responsible manner for and whom they have been created and paid by.

**CIVIL: Can the battle against hate speech and false news be won, and how?**

**IVANOV:** Only with a true and an extremely professional journalistic approach towards the responsible journalist profession, and with journalists adhering to the journalist standards of truth and impartiality, and especially with moral values and ethical standards, can journalism justify its participation in public life and journalists their engagement in the journalist profession.

Every contradiction to these familiar principles, journalism, the journalist profession and journalists will only include them in accomplices in the ever growing production of false news and hate speech. It will promote them into ordinary collaborators of the public and secret centers of various political and business powers to whom positions, privileges and money are important, and to whom the truth, democracy and the public judgement are unknown categories.

**Biljana Jordanovska**



**WE ARE THE MEDIA!**



Seminar on strategic planning, education and building partnerships:  
 "Transparency and responsibility in the political processes", Veles 2019



"The state for the citizens, or the citizens for the state",  
 public event of CIVIL, City Park, Skopje, 2019

## SARACINI: CITIZEN JOURNALISM IS A RESPONSE TO THE LACK OF CREDIBLE AND INDEPENDENT INFORMATION

Journalism is quite clear in its definition. It is information in the service of the public interest, or everything that citizens want to know. Citizen journalism, on the other hand, is when a citizen produces such content that is accurate, relevant and touches the public interest.

We simply must not limit journalism only to professionals who work in the media, but can be performed by any citizen, as long as that person is working according the journalistic standards.

Why is this important at the moment? It is important because we see that the traditional, big media have quite narrowed their circle of activity, and this is not just now. They are not working solely in the way the profession should be in the interest of the citizens, but often serve other interests, political and, above all, economic ones, that is, the interests of their owners. This has led to greater demand for information that is independent of the centers of power, everywhere around the world.

The digital age enabled creation of many media outlets that produce information, but many of



**PETRIT SARACINI:**

THE DIGITAL AGE ENABLED CREATION OF MANY MEDIA OUTLETS THAT PRODUCE INFORMATION, BUT MANY OF THEM HAVE ONCE AGAIN STARTED TO SERVE THE INTERESTS OF CERTAIN CENTERS OF POWER, AND NOT THE INTERESTS OF THE PUBLIC AND TO BE PROTECTORS OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

them have once again started to serve the interests of certain centers of power, and not the interests of the public and to be protectors of the public interest.

That is why citizen journalism is emerging. It is a response to the demand, to citizens around the world, for information that is true and accurate and that protects their interest as sovereign, or holders of political rights in each state. As long as that natural connection between the citizens and the media is disrupted, it will be important for citizen journalism to exist and to develop. As long as the media are not structured as they are supposed to, the public will be looking for ways to respond. Citizen journalism is simply a response to the lack of credible and independent information.

Critics of citizen journalism are mostly suggesting that people who are not trained and do not know how to make news, often can misinform the public, whether from negligence, from ignorance or lack of other information. I will again mention what I said at the beginning, journalism is a standard. People who work in serious editorials break this standard every day. What can we

**PETRIT SARACINI:**

AS LONG AS THE MEDIA ARE NOT STRUCTURED AS THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO, THE PUBLIC WILL BE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO RESPOND. CITIZEN JOURNALISM IS SIMPLY A RESPONSE TO THE LACK OF CREDIBLE AND INDEPENDENT INFORMATION.

say now, that they are not journalists? Well that is the truth...That people who do not work according to journalistic standards, are not journalists. As long as the situation is as such, we cannot, and the international conventions do not give us that right, to limit anyone the freedom of expression. That is why that criticism needs to, primarily, have in consideration the right of man to freely express themselves, to freely produce and receive information. And because the situation is as such, then those who work in professional editorials should strengthen their standard, to adhere to these postulates of journalism, in order not to enable space for someone else to enter where they had given up or failed.

It is very simple. People demand to hear the truth. That is why it is important for the media to be organized and to work in the interest of the public.

As to hate speech, the online sphere and the social networks are the main producers of hate speech. Much less comes from organized editorials. The function of citizen journalism here would be precisely what it often does, to indicate actions that are

against hate speech, to deconstruct a lie that could cause hate speech and similar.



## BACOVSKA: DO WE HAVE THE FEELING THAT WE ARE DECIDING IN THIS SOCIETY?

Professor Jasna Bacovska at the debate “The citizens for the state or the state for the citizens”, spoke about the beginnings of citizen journalism, about the need from citizen journalism in countries like Macedonia, about democracy and citizen participation.

“The concept of citizen journalism emerged in the US in the 80s when there were no social networks, and when the democracy in the US fell into crisis. It is then that citizen journalism emerged in the US, in conditions when there is no public service. That concept, that idea like the title of this journalism, originates from there. It is now very beneficial in countries such as Macedonia, but unfortunately my country is a country in which doctorates are defended on competitive authoritarianism, to see such actions”, said Bacovska.



**JASNA BACOVSKA:**

THE CONCEPT OF CITIZEN JOURNALISM, THAT IDEA LIKE THE TITLE OF THIS JOURNALISM, ORIGINATES FROM THERE.

She added on to Professor Najcevska, who considers that democracy in Macedonia is slow.

“In my country, it's as if though democracy is not moving at all. For 27 years we just cannot obtain democracy. Democracy is not that formal moment. Today modern political science does not measure whether you have division of power. Division of power is a formal criterion: executive, judicial, legislative...Individual's feelings is what is measured. Three elements are important for democracy: do I as a citizen trust the institutions, do I tolerate the other person, and citizen participation in the decision-making process. Or this is also called political efficiency – do I have the feeling that I am deciding in this society”, said Bacovska. Professor Bacovska believes that activism in this sense can help greatly, but also that at the same time activism is one of the most difficult things.

“It's a matter of universal human values, and the Europeans call them European values, regardless of whether they are rightists or leftists. We are talking about universal reasonable values of a country, and that is why we must work also on the conventional



#### JASNA BACOVSKA:

THREE ELEMENTS ARE IMPORTANT FOR DEMOCRACY: DO I AS A CITIZEN TRUST THE INSTITUTIONS, DO I TOLERATE THE OTHER PERSON, AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.

system of education. We must teach people from an early age to be rational and what kind of attitude they should have towards the country and the common funds. Which means we have much work", she concluded.

Text and editing: **Maja Ivanovska**

Photo: **Biljana Jordanovska**



## ZEKIRI: CITIZEN JOURNALISTS CONTRIBUTE IN ALL SPHERES OF SOCIETY, ESPECIALLY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

"Citizen journalism is indeed important because citizens are the first and best source of information for good governance and for cases of violation of human rights and freedoms, as they are most affected in both matters. They are the first who will feel good or bad governance, corruption, injustice, especially when someone ignores and violates civil rights and freedoms", said journalist and CIVIL associate Arben Zekjiri about citizen journalism and its role in society.

Zekjiri thinks that citizens are most directly affected by all the problems a society faces, and that is why precisely they can contribute the most, especially in the most forgotten spheres that national media do not deal with, and these being the local developments and the work of the local authorities.

There should primarily be education of citizens on what is citizen journalism, what is news, what is a journalistic article, how they should report a case of hate speech, and then to continue cooperating with the media, institutions, NGO sector...Citizens need to be explained, through various forms,



**ARBEN ZEKIRI:**

IF WE SUCCEED TO EDUCATE CITIZENS TO RECOGNIZE FALSE NEWS, THEN THAT WILL BE THE BEST DEFENCE AGAINST THEIR SPREADING", CONSIDERS ZEKJIRI.

what is false news, how to recognize it...for them to be capable not to consume false news, spins and various manipulations... If we succeed to educate citizens to recognize false news, then that will be the best defence against their spreading", considers Zekjiri.

As to CIVIL's work, Zekjiri said that the organization that has managed to respond to the challenges of time, always responding to current issues and challenges in society, and to contribute towards the public interest in every segment, should continue doing so in the future.

**Biljana Jordanovska**

Camera and photography: **Dehran Muratov**

## MAKSUTI: THE CITIZEN IS JUST A RHETORIC, AND NOT AN AIM OF SOCIAL CHANGES

“Unfortunately we are witnessing a continuation of some old practices and reforms are not easily implemented in some captured institutions. The state, the executive government, has to understand that they are here for the citizens, and not the other way around. The rule of law is the most important tool for me. I am an architect, but I think that this need of the rule of law is reflected in all possible spheres of society”, stated Merita Maksuti, architect and civic activist at the panel discussion “The citizens for the state or the state for the citizens!?”, organized by CIVIL.

“I think that the state should not be provisionally committed to reforms at all levels, but rather essentially. In a society that strives to be a society for all, you cannot dose justice and access to information because that suits you for political bargaining. I say this with the greatest legitimacy and as a member of the Albanian nation I want to say that currently in the Albanian bloc there is no critical mass and critical thinking. If it is present, it is unnoticed and self-censored. Unfortunately, people are distancing themselves, excluding themselves and feeling different. The reality is that our society is fragmented. The long-standing distrust in the system, selective justice, nepotism, unreformed education and political clientelism have contributed for the young people to massively



**MERITA MAKSUTI:**

THE LONG-STANDING DISTRUST IN THE SYSTEM, SELECTIVE JUSTICE, NEPOTISM, UNREFORMED EDUCATION AND POLITICAL CLIENTELISM HAVE CONTRIBUTED FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE TO MASSIVELY LEAVE THE COUNTRY”

leave the country”, said Maksuti.

“As an environmental activist, an activist for higher urban culture and for human rights, I encounter more and more people who are literally leaving the country, and not because of economic reasons. Honestly, I personally feel like am listening to U2's song “Stuck in the Moment”, which lasts and lasts... I have to say that the same trend continues, where the citizen is just a rhetoric, and not the aim of social changes”, considers Maksuti.

Maksuti sees the non-existence of a functioning democracy that closes, primarily, the local authorities that are never ready for constructive criticism, as a major problem.

Text and photography: **Biljana Jordanovska**

Citizen journalism is an alternative form of informing, based on activism, as a citizen response to the shortcomings of the traditional media space. It is based on journalistic practice, but uses alternative forms of expression, and draws its legitimacy from personal or group experiences and views of witnesses or participants in events and processes.

## IVANOVSKA, SCPC, ON TRANSPARENCY AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

Ivanovska says: "We must change our awareness on the fight against corruption. First of all, every one of us needs to be clear in the fight within ourselves, first not to pay for a service that we are entitled to, and not to demand a bribe for what we are doing. The fight is in us, it just needs to surface".

**B**iljana Ivanovska, President of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interests, as one of the speakers at CIVIL's seminar "Transparency and responsibility in the political processes", defined the fundamental obligations, but also the expectations from the SCPC, as well as the need for cooperation with the civil sector, the media, institutions, and, of course, with every citizens individually. Through specific examples, openly, transparently and responsibly, Ivanovska brought the most important institution in the fight against corruption closer to the citizens.

"These are our first modest beginnings in the cooperation with the civil sector, but every success is due to the beginning. Success requires mind in the head and a heart in the chest, a sense for justice. I am not a lawyer, but I have a strong sense of justice and fairness, and that is why I will fight. Thanks to the participation of the civil society, significant changes have been made in the laws, including the Law on Prevention of Corruption. The first significant change made under the pressure of citizen associations is the manner of electing the Commission, as a first factor that enables non-political, decisive and non-selective action. Primarily, people who do not owe anything to parties. Furthermore, transparency of the Commission has increased because of civil society organizations. All of our sessions are transparent, it publishes its decisions publically and transparently on its website – everything it does is public", said Ivanovska at the beginning of her speech, pointing out that the new law has also given them the possibility, should they have pressures, to turn to the Parliament, which is especially important as a tool for achieving transparency and inde-



**BILJANA IVANOVSKA:**

"CORRUPTION VIOLATES THE RULE OF LAW, IT VIOLATES HUMAN RIGHTS, MORAL VALUES. IT HAS TO BECOME CLEAR TO EVERYONE THAT WE HAVE TO CONDEMN IT, DISGRACE IT, SPIT ON ANYONE WHO WILL ALLOW THEMSELVES TO ACQUIRE SOMETHING IN A DISHONEST MANNER..."

pendence, but also as a form of public pressure.

"We all know that combatting corruption, not only in our society, is a difficult and dangerous task. A systematic approach and inclusiveness is necessary, primarily, of citizens, civil society organizations, the media and us. What we bring as a decision, the media are here to publish, what we initiate, they are here to ask, to follow up how far along the procedure is. I think that together we will succeed to arrive to results!", Ivanovska was categorical.

She also spoke about awareness. We must change our awareness on the fight against corruption. First of all, every one of us needs to be clear in the fight within ourselves, first not to pay for a service that we are entitled to, and not to demand a bribe for what we are doing. When everyone would be clear with themselves that they will neither demand, nor will give, the first step is a change in awareness. The fight is in us, it just needs to surface. Something that everyone can do in strengthening citizens' awareness. That should be something that is shameful to do. When it will be condemned as

**BILJANA IVANOVSKA:**

"WE MUST CHANGE OUR AWARENESS ON THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION. FIRST OF ALL, EVERY ONE OF US NEEDS TO BE CLEAR IN THE FIGHT WITH- IN OURSELVES, FIRST NOT TO PAY FOR A SERVICE THAT WE ARE ENTITLED TO, AND NOT TO DEMAND A BRIBE FOR WHAT WE ARE DOING

something shameful, then we will have a fight against corruption. Some time ago, if you were in office, it was embarrassing if you didn't have a car, if you didn't have privileges. We have to change that", explained Ivanovska.

"Corruption violates the rule of law, it violates human rights, moral values. It has to become clear to everyone that we have to condemn it, disgrace it, spit on anyone who will allow themselves to acquire something in a dishonest manner...We have to create a healthy tissue, every single tissue begins with one cell. If we are a critical mass, from here on we will continue to do and behave as such, to build a healthy tissue", stressed Ivanovska.

"Corruption violates the rule of law, it violates human rights, moral values. It has to become clear to everyone that we have to condemn it, disgrace it, spit on anyone who will allow themselves to acquire something in a dishonest manner...", Biljana Ivanovska, SCPC

"Much information is being sent to us and many people have responded, for which we are truly pleased. We have opened fronts on all sides. People constantly come to us, and we haven't reject-

ed anyone. No one has been left without a reply. People are literally dissatisfied with this country, the anger is felt in the text, the way the complaint is written. We changed the rules of procedure in order not to put all such complaints in a session, but to check them, whether they are grounded or not, and to put the decisions in a session. Because we were abused, political parties quarrelled through us with complaints. That is why we will be more among the citizens, in the institutions, to tell people not to sell themselves, real human destinies are being traded", stated Ivanovska, referring to education of citizens and their effort to be more among them and in their service, to continuously strengthen citizens' awareness, to encourage them that they don't owe anyone anything.

"You know that the Law on protection of whistle-blowers has been in force since 2016. There were no reports until the Commission (SCPC) started to function. There were two in the Ministry of Defence, which, after the whistle-blowers had reported to institutions, came out on Facebook. And you know that whistle-blowers make big changes in the country. In these six months, we now already have 12 cases, some in the final phase. With that procedure (for whistle-blowers) they receive full protection from the state. It's enough for them to just say that they are going to the person for protection of whistle-blowers. It's enough for them to say that they are going to Irena Popovska, who is the contact person for whistle-blowers in the SCPC. They are not allowed to even identify them. That is a big step", says Ivanovska, urging for citizens not to be afraid, and that the SCPC has taken the obligation to encourage them not to keep silent in the face of injustice.

"We have 20 people out of 51 employees according to a systemization made under the old law, when the Commission didn't have so many competencies. Now it has two pages of competencies. The budget has been made according to the previous year, when the commission wasn't functioning. We function with donors, and we will tell this for the next budget. All essential things are from donors. We had a meeting with the Prime Minister, we were required to say that as a state we do not have money to provide software that costs twice our budget. You are putting that as a strategic goal, on the one hand, it is humiliating to say that you do not have the money. On the other hand, the budget is prepared, you can't just ask for a rebalance. This means that we will lose half a year until we get that software. Out of 20 people, 9 work with the Commission, that is, they are advisors, and they need to do everything. It's very difficult from that aspect", Ivanovska explained the structure and financing of the SCPC, in the concluding part of her speech, after which there was a two-hour discussion on the topic corruption, and how to combat it.

**Biljana Jordanovska, Igor K. Ilievski, Maja Ivanovska**

photography: **Biljana Jordanovska**

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**Citizen journalism is led by motives and ideals that stem from citizen demands for democracy and freedom of expression. It is journalism in the hands of citizens who have an active role in the process of collecting information, analysis and disseminating news and opinions.**

## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, A STEP TOWARDS A REAL DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

**BILJANA JORDANOVSKA**

In search of the truth, citizens are the first who demand accurate, timely, objective information on what is happening in their immediate surrounding, in the city or municipality in which they live in, and up to information of public interest in the social and political discourse.

CIVIL, in the interest of the citizens, always promoting and protecting human rights and freedoms, launched the "Civic Lenses" project, among else, also with the goal to create a safe and prominent space for active participation, not only in the identification of problems in society and their monitoring, but also in publishing information and views about what is happening, without censorship. Civic participation is a step closer to a healthy democratic society in which precisely the citizens have the main say in its creation.

**CITIZEN JOURNALISM,  
AS AN INFLUENTIAL  
TOOL THAT CAN CON-  
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TIVE PARTICIPATION  
OF CITIZENS**

CIVIL conducted popularization of citizen journalism, as an influential tool that can contribute to social changes with active participation of citizens, through strengthening of public awareness, citizen education, activism, application of technological tools, media literacy, as theoretical preparation and through practical, field work, where acquired knowledge was used. At the same time, having in consideration the shortcomings of citizen journalism, CIVIL's team is always available to help in checking and verifying facts from the ground, to consult all stakeholders on an issue or story, and to give additional qualities and a professional level to what is being published on the media platform.

This way, the media receive a different and innovative thread that differs from traditional verification of information from the ground, which often due to the different hierarchical set-up can take too long, and every so often is subject to censorship and additional processing of contents. CIVIL enables citizen journalists a faster and easier process of verification, leaving their materials in the original form regardless of their quality, as long as they convey the original message that needs to reach the public and the competent bodies, which are usually also the cause of the problems that are being reported.

**WE ARE ALL CITI-  
ZEN JOURNALISTS.  
WE ARE THE MEDIA.  
THESE ARE OFTEN  
REPEATED SLOGANS  
DURING THE PROJECT.**

By combining activism, basic journalism skills and the courage to be an active factor in creating democratic processes in a critical period, especially in the media, for our country, CIVIL gives power to citizens who boldly step on the front lines in conquering the media space through their active commitments for freedom of expression, human rights and freedoms, democracy and for the right of the citizen to be loud, but also informed objectively and without manipulations.

We are all citizen journalists. We are the media. These are often repeated slogans during the project. CIVIL's team is constantly repeating that it is good to always be prepared to use the phone, to record, take pictures or to write a message on one of the online forms for reporting irregularities, abuses, hate speech, fake news, corruption, violation of human rights and freedoms, social injustice, environmental problems, endangering basic living conditions...

Precisely their contributions bring about key changes and impacts, their taking to the streets using the right to protest against bad policies in all spheres of society, their voice as opposed to the silence of the media, institutions and the state itself, their struggle for a democratic and fair society is the only way to succeed in the interest of all citizens.

**ALL OF US ARE CITI-  
ZEN JOURNALISTS.  
WE ARE THE MEDIA!**

And that is why it is far from necessary to promote civic participation, activism and their meaning in the context of citizen journalism, whose power remains inviolable in modern social order.

**Biljana Jordanovska**



## TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ARE A CLEARLY DEFINED OBLIGATION, ABUSE OF OFFICE DURING ELECTIONS IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED

MAJA IVANOVSKA

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19) guarantees the basic right to access to public sector information. In that sense, transparency is a means for improving public sector management. Apart from the Universal Declaration, this matter is also regulated with numerous international legal norms and standards, also part of national legislations of many member states of the United Nations.

Transparency strengthens the voice of citizens, helping them to directly influence decision-making, through their elected representatives in parliament and through political processes. Creating information that shows the intentions, activities and consequences to the public sector is also necessary, but not enough for achieving a satisfactory level of transparency and accountability. In that

TRANSPARENCY IS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT FOR EFFECTIVE PUBLIC RESOURCES MANAGEMENT, IT HELPS IN BUILDING PUBLIC TRUST IN THE WORK OF THE PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

context, transparency is necessary for the work of the state institutions, and in the sense of the needs and opportunities for citizens to demand accountability from the institutions.

Transparency is an important element for effective public resources management, it helps in building public trust in the work of the public institutions and contributes to sustainability in the implementation of public policies.

Transparency has two different dimensions. The first one is access to information related to the processes and procedures based on which the public sector undertakes and implements decisions. The second one is access to information in the ownership of the public sector. For the citizens it is important that higher level of transparency can be achieved only through citizen participation in decision-making and creating public policies.

Therefore, if we want transparent and accountable institutions, then we as citizens have to be actively involved and be socially responsible citizens.

### *Abuse of office during elections*

Abuse of office is any act of an official person with which they use their authorization, exceed the limits of their authorization, or do not perform their

**IN AN ELECTORAL  
CONTEXT, ABUSE OF  
OFFICIAL POSITION  
IMPLIES USING THE  
POSITION OF THE OF-  
FICIAL PERSON FOR  
ELECTION PURPOSES.**

official duty in order to acquire some kind of benefit.

"An official person who, by using his official position or authorization, by exceeding the limits of his official authorization, or by not performing his official duty, acquires for himself or for another some kind of benefit or causes damage to another, shall be sentenced to imprisonment of six months to three years", is stated in Article 353 of the Criminal Code, the first Article in Chapter 13 – Crimes Against Official Duty.

In an electoral context, abuse of official position implies using the position of the official person for election purposes. Another chapter of the Criminal Code, Chapter 16 – Crimes Against Elections and Voting also refers to such abuses. Such abuse of official position most often refers to pressuring or an attempt to pressure employees in the public and state administration, in other institutions or institutes that are financed by the state budget, the budget of the municipalities, as well as companies and enterprises with state capital.

Furthermore, abuse of official position for election purposes is related to threats to employees and citizens, in regards to their employment and social security, as a result of their support or non-support to a certain political party or candidate.

Precisely because of these reasons, political parties and candidates participating in the election processes in the country are obliged to sign a Codex for fair and democratic elections with which they publically and unambiguously commit not to exert any pressure.

Abuse of office can also refer to official persons who participate in an election campaign in an official uniform, for which, for instance the Electoral Code anticipates a fine in the amount of 1000 to 3000 euros in denar counter value.

## TRAJKOV: CITIZEN JOURNALISM IS A TOOL FOR DEALING WITH SOCIAL PROBLEMS!

**G**oran Trajkov, civic activist, lawyer and music artist, spoke for CIVIL MEDIA about his experience with citizen journalism and activism. He says that through citizen journalism he has had the opportunity to meet wonderful people and professionals, who are always dedicated to their tasks, that is, to help in regards to the problems the citizens have.

“What I can say is that if I had not attended the training for citizen journalists, organized by CIVIL, I would not know the basics about how to compose a story and how to articulate a problem of the citizens”, says Trajkov.

According to Trajkov, if his story had not been published in CIVIL's media platform, accessible for citizen journalists, the problem would have never reached the public.

“With that story we raised an avalanche of questions about solving the problems that the citizens of the Eastern region faced, in particular about social justice, namely, the textile workers. When



**GORAN TRAJKOV:**

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CAPACITIES FOR THE FIGHT FOR  
SOCIAL JUSTICE.

this story was published, none of the commercial media wanted to publish this type of journalistic stories and that is why I think that citizen journalism, supported by CIVIL, gave a new dimension to the citizens and a new tool on how they can deal with solving certain problems in society. Through our activists and through the visibility we received from CIVIL, we have contributed to the rule of law and to strengthening the capacities for the fight for social justice. I believe that this is an excellent way to enable citizens to exercise the rights they are entitled to in our country”, concluded Trajkov.

**Angela Petrovska**

## MANEVA ZIVKOVA: CITIZEN JOURNALISM IS A POWERFUL TOOL FOR INFLUENCING THE INSTITUTIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT

Citizen activist and defender of human rights, Simona Maneva Zivkova, says that if we want changes to take place in society, we must begin from ourselves, that is, for us to cause the changes we want to happen. Citizen journalism is a powerful tool that gives opportunity for the red lines of traditional journalism to be overcome and for the situation on the ground to be conveyed to public realistically, truly, in the raw form, as it really is.

"Citizen journalism is a powerful tool for influencing the institutions and the government, but also for discovering crime and abuses in all segments of society, both at the national and local level. Each one of us has witnessed violation of someone's right, of abuse of power, of the institutions failing to act, of the truth as opposed to fake news. Citizen journalism enables us to document that testimony and to convey it to the public, and thereby show how important and how powerful our participation is in causing changes and in creating policies that concern us", says Maneva Zivkova.

"I have an interesting and wonderful experience with CIVIL, both as a citizen journalist and a



**SIMONA MANEVA ZHIVKOVA:**

IF WE WANT CHANGES TO TAKE PLACE IN SOCIETY, WE MUST BEGIN FROM OURSELVES, THAT IS, FOR US TO CAUSE THE CHANGES WE WANT TO HAPPEN.

collaborator, and as their supporter. Through CIVIL's platform, I have shared with the citizens sad stories about violations of the basic rights of citizens.

I have reported information from the ground about violation of laws, about the institutions failing to act, documented hate speech, denied fake news and so on, in the original form, precisely in the way I had wanted for the citizens to hear. And I hope that together with CIVIL we have given our contribution through speaking, alerting, acting, to improving the situation in society and to promoting human rights", said Maneva Zivkova.

Text editing: **Arian Mehmeti**

Photography: **Biljana Jordanovska**

## END NOTE

# CITIZEN JOURNALISM IS ON THE FRONTLINES

Citizen journalists are on the frontlines in disclosing irregularities in society, in the exercise of power, in the abuse of official position and public resources. The same also goes for observation of election processes.

Citizen journalists give us the best, fastest and most relevant information from the ground, as they are on site. These are the people who can expose hate speech, bribery, corruption... All they need is a telephone with them and record, take photos or write a message on our online tools for reporting irregularities or abuse.

**CITIZEN JOURNALISTS  
GIVE US THE BEST,  
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THEY ARE ON SITE.**

They can follow and detect hate speech or fake news on the social media, and afterwards they can deny that fake news by going on the spot and recording or taking photos of the situation that has been falsely conveyed, while we can publish it.

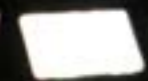
What citizen journalists can do, robust teams of traditional media cannot.

CIVIL guarantees the anonymity of citizen journalists. If you are uncomfortable and fear repercussions, we will publish your material anonymously and will keep the anonymity of the author.

All one has to do is write an email, message on Facebook or send a video and write short information on what is happening.

We will publish that without censorship, without calculations or compromise! Through the engagement as a citizen journalist, you have space to be involved in the work of CIVIL – Center for Freedom and in other projects and activities.

**WE ARE THE MEDIA!**



CIVIL National Endowment for Democracy

# CIVIC SENSES PROJECT

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[WWW.CIVIL.ORG.MK](http://WWW.CIVIL.ORG.MK)

HUMAN RIGHTS SUSTAINABLE FREE SOCIETY  
CITIZEN ELECTIONS PARTICIPATION JUSTICE

MEDIA PLATFORM

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