

#CivicLenses



# WE ARE THE MEDIA!

A guide through citizen journalism: experiences, opinions, reports...





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**A GUIDE THROUGH  
CITIZEN JOURNALISM:  
EXPERIENCES,  
OPINIONS,  
REPORTS...**

**project: CIVIC  
LENSES**

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A guide through citizen journalism: experiences, opinions, reports...

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**#CivicLenses**



Skopje, April 13, 2016, anonymous citizen journalist



# WELCOME TO THE NEW WORLD!

**TECHNOLOGY** and activism have united in a fierce battle to change the form of one of the most powerful creations of human kind – the media. Their Majesty, the media, are no longer inviolable rulers of the truth, the sole witnesses, more important than the events themselves. Citizen journalism has arrived!

The dilemmas concerning the transformation of the media around the world have been cleared. Those who follow the quantum leaps of communication and information technolo-



gies know that journalism, as we have known it until several years ago - is dead.

Together with the new technologies and the Internet, citizen journalism has changed the media, and thereby, the world. Those who cannot accept that the media have changed profoundly, and that nowadays everyone can be a citizen journalist, better prepare for retirement. There is no room left in the media

hyper space for the arrogant, self-proclaimed masters, who claim to be the only ones who relevantly deal with the facts. Aware and active citizens can explore and report on events and topics that concern their community and society in general.

The “Civic Lenses” project enables that space, for citizen journalists to report and publish without fear and restraints. Their footages may not be as clear and with high quality, but that is why they are direct and represent the reality without any intermediaries. CIVIL opened the possibility for them to publish their stories without censorship, safely and with our support. We encourage all interested citizens to report without fear and without the obligation of having to do someone a favor. That principle, along with the exclamation “We are the media”, has opened a new page in the media and activism in the country.

In this publication, we will try telling the story on citizen journalism that we presented with this project to thousands of people through the Internet and live, with multimedia performances on city squares throughout Macedonia.







At the same time, the monitoring and journalist teams of CIVIL were dedicated to monitoring the situation in the area of human rights and freedoms, the political process and elections. All together they worked on several topics and in this way introduced cooperative journalism, which is well-known in the world, and has now become a reality in Macedonia.



Despite an atmosphere of fear and stigmatization, the brave activists were telling their stories on the turbulent political and social reality of the country. The pressures that we suffer are an additional challenge for us. We respond to every pressure with more work and intensive search for the facts.

I would like here, on behalf of CIVIL and in my own name, to thank all the brave citizen activists, members and supporters of the organization that I have the honor to lead, and all my colleagues for their unwavering efforts for freedom of expression, which they have manifested by participating in this project. I would like to thank National Endowment for Democracy for the support to our and your organization to implement this, according to me, exceptionally significant project.

At the same time, I thank all those who have followed our activities and shared their thoughts and opinions with us. The reaction of several institutions that found the time and courage to react positively to the stories of the citizen journalists, also needs to be noted.

We in CIVIL often express our gratitude also to those who are trying, through pressure and threats against us and our citizen journalists, to hide the facts, because this encourages and motivates us to further action.

Read and share this publication with your friends. And write new pages in it. Keep your lens always prepared to capture and disseminate the truth. We are the media!

**Xhabir Deralla**



# Civic Lenses: A public resource and frontal line in search for facts

**Biljana Jordanovska**

**THE OBJECTIVE** of the “Civic Lenses” project is to promote transparency and accountability in the political processes by strengthening citizen journalism. Through this project, CIVIL – Center for Freedom created a safe place for activists and citizen journalists to identify and report cases of violations of human rights and freedoms in general, and especially of the right to vote. It is an interactive and dynamic activity that has called on all those who are interested to engage in the monitoring and reporting of events related to the current political processes in the Republic of Macedonia.





Pero Arsovski, Skopje, Nov. 1, 2015



Ognen Teofilovski, Strumica, Nov. 28-29, 2015

The contributions of the citizen journalists that participated in the “Civic Lenses” project served as a basis for further monitoring, analysis and reporting on the electoral process and the overall political processes, which are implemented by CIVIL.

The contribution of the citizen journalists is yet to be felt in Macedonian society, and it will be a resource, both for the media and for the research and monitoring activities of civil society organizations. “Citizen journalists”, as Xhabir Deralla writes in his text published in this publication, are the last barricade of the free media, the last line of resistance against the corporative policy of the corrupted potentates”.

Citizen journalism has proved to be an exceptional tool, much needed in the efforts for the public to learn about the events that are actually happening, as well as for channeling and formulating public demands for transparency in the political processes.

Prior to the early parliamentary elections scheduled for December 11, the date of which elections has been postponed twice, Macedonia deeply entered a permanent election campaign.

The subjects involved in the electoral process itself treat the public only from the perspective of utilizing the media



with the purpose of achieving as much as possible greater impact on the public opinion.

CIVIL, on the other hand, while always having the interest of the citizens and their fundamental human rights and freedoms as a first priority, introduced a different methodology in the recognizing and public exposure of the true picture of the events and processes related to the political crisis in the country, in the exposing of cases of abuse and violation of the right to vote, but also in the presenting of views and the attitude of the citizens, as they have been recorded, without interventions from the editorial staff or from the centers of power.

In its openness and transparency, CIVIL even went as far as to publish and award a material from a citizen journalist who speaks with a citizen who fiercely attacks and disqualifies CIVIL, as well as the entire civil society.

CIVIL's project team, through its websites and Facebook Page, practicing online activism, at the very beginning prepared contents through which it invited all citizens to take active participation in the process of promoting citizen journalism. All activities within the framework of the project, such as seminars, trainings, public events, statements, publishing of citizen journalist's videos, photos and written articles, were not only followed through CIVIL's on-

## PUBLIC EVENTS ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH

CIVIL held six outdoor public events for presenting the "Civic Lenses" project. The main contents of the presentations were the video materials of the citizen journalists that were awarded during the implementation of the project.

Representatives of CIVIL spoke before the public and local media about citizen journalism, while CIVIL's team, in individual and direct contacts with those who were interested, presented the conditions for participating in the project.

The program at these public events also included music with DJ sets and concert performances, poetry performance and open microphones for citizens who were present to ask questions or to give comments.

Two public events were held in Skopje and one public event in Bitola, Strumica, Kumanovo and Tetovo. The events were attended by several hundred citizens, but also by local media, NGOs, political parties and citizen activists.

An especially successful presentation of the project was the one held in Bitola, on May 15, 2016. In cooperation with the Bitola Association "It's about us", CIVIL attracted the attention of several hundred citizens.

There were also about a thousand present at the public event "We are the media! Citizens observe, record, publish", which CIVIL organized in cooperation with the Organization of Women of Strumica, on May 25.

This event's program was enriched with poetry performances by Suzana Miceva, Gorgi Kalajdziev and Xhabir Deralla, along with speeches by prominent citizen activists from Strumica.

The multimedia event "For Freedom of Expression" was held in Skopje,



Public event in Skopje, June 1, 2016

near the Monument of Mother Teresa, on June 1. The event was addressed by professional journalists, citizen journalists and activists: Tomislav Kezarovski in Macedonian, Dehran Muratov in the Roma language, Ermin Klimenta in Bosnian, Arbana Kjerimi in Albanian, Hadis Sulejmani in Turkish and Sinisa Stankovic in Serbian. Each in their own native language, showing the colorfulness of Macedonia, which should

line channels, but also by many local media, some national media outlets, as well as by many independent portals.

In the first phase of the project implementation, CIVIL conducted seminars on the topic "Be a citizen journalist". Participants at the seminars received theoretic and practical knowledge in the area of journalistic research, video activism, electoral systems, election observation, though ethics in reporting and citizen engagement were also discussed.

According to internal reports of the organization, which were in most part prepared by Goran Naumovski, five regional seminars have been held, as follows: Skopje (October 31 and November 1), Veles (November 7 and 8), Bitola (November 14 and 15), Strumica (November 28 and 29), whereas the concluding seminar was held in Veles (December 19 and 20), at which participants from throughout Macedonia took part.

In addition to the expert team of CIVIL (Xhabir Deralla, Sinisa Stankovic, Goran Naumovski and Ermin Klimenta), the seminars were also lectured by eminent professionals, photo reporters, journalists, artists, professors, experts on media and journalists, human rights experts and producers: Uranija Pirovska, Saso Ordanoski, Robert Atanasovski, Zlatko Origjanski, Tomislav Kezarovski, Gjorgji Kalajdziev, Petrit Saracini, Petar Arsovski, Gjoko Lecoski, Sinolicka

Trpkova, Boris Grdanovski, Dusko Gruevski, Tomislav Georgiev, Martin Kocovski, Ognen Teofilovski and Suzana Miceva.

After the seminars were completed, CIVIL formed a three-member commission that selected the contributions of the most successful citizen journalists in nine cycles and awarded 45 prizes for citizen journalism in one year. The awarded participants presented themselves with videos, photos, scans of documents and reports on the problems the citizens face every day at the local and central level.

All the materials that were received by CIVIL, including those that were not awarded, underwent a procedure for determining the consistency and for verification of the facts, which was conducted on the ground by CIVIL's project team. The awarded materials were reviewed in detail by a three-member commission.

Several of those who were awarded wished to remain anonymous due to fear of repercussions. Nevertheless, in two of the nine awarding ceremonies, in February and September, two participants were encouraged and stepped out of the shadows of anonymity, wanting to collect their prizes publically.

bring together, rather than destruct, and by using the human right to free expression, expressed their views on the need for the media to be freed and for restoring objective and unbiased informing of the public.

Poets Aleksandra Spaseska, Maria Jones and Xhabir Deralla presented themselves with poetry performances, while the Amon Mra Band held a

concert before the hundreds of people that were present.

Public events were also held in Tetovo on May 12, in Skopje on September 15 and in Kumanovo on September 16, 2016.



Public event in Strumica, May 25, 2016

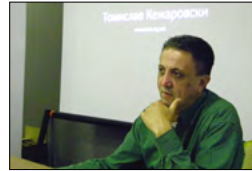
With the rich program lasting several hours, filled with video screenings, DJ sets, poetry and concerts, CIVIL encouraged many citizens to become active, to record and to publish materials on violence of human rights and freedoms in the electoral context, and thereby to contribute to the development of citizen journalism in the country.



Dr. Saso Ordanoski



Sinolicka Trpkova



Tomislav Kezarovski



Boris Grdanovski



Uranija Pirovska



Zlatko Origjanski

However, in the meanwhile, due to great interest, CIVIL held nine more workshops, as follows: in Skopje, Prilep, Tetovo, Kumanovo, Strumica and Veles. The workshops were in the form of one-day intensive theoretical and practical trainings for 10 – 15 participants. A total of 79 young people participated in these additional workshops, interested in learning about the basics of citizen journalism. The workshops were led by members of CIVIL's team.

The visibility and effectiveness of this training and activation method was an additional motivation for the team of CIVIL to continue promoting citizen journalism, which opened additional opportunities for the stories of citizen journalists to reach a greater number of citizens.

CIVIL held six public outdoor events, two in Skopje and one in Tetovo, Kumanovo, Bitola and Strumica. About a thousand people saw these events, and were covered by seven local television stations.

The challenge to overcome the fear and to publically speak out about the abuses, pressures and violations of human rights and freedoms in general, but especially in the electoral context, was immense. CIVIL's team undertook decisive action to strengthen public awareness on human rights and freedoms, and to involve its constituents and the general public in that action. Citizen journalists came to grips with the media dreariness in the country.





Despite exposure to pressures and threats, the “Civic Lenses” project caused positive reactions in the public and increased interest for overcoming the political crisis through public exposure of the problems and by opposing the distortion of facts in the media. The publishing of the stories of the citizen journalists without censorship, contributed towards the strengthening of citizen activism and journalism. This project has become a public resource, but also a frontal line in the search for the truth and the facts about life in Republic of Macedonia.

Photo: Public presentation of the ‘Civic Lences’ project, Bitola May 19, 2016



impact

# Citizen journalism that contributes to positive changes

Marija Tegovska

**CIVIL has awarded 45 prizes for citizen journalism. The stories that have been awarded describe the reality in which the citizens of Macedonia live in. They speak about violations of human rights, pressure and mobbing at the workplace, abuse of state resources and of the administration, about unfulfilled pre-election promises, about the protests, social injustice...**

**The awarded contributions come from twenty different municipalities from throughout the country, prepared by citizen journalists and journalists from all ethnic communities in Macedonia, in Macedonian and Albanian language.**

**The prizes for citizen journalism were awarded in nine cycles of five awards. CIVIL held a ceremony for each awarding, which were attended by the winning authors, the media, NGOs and interested citizens. The prizes consisted of vouchers for computer, photo/video and telephone equipment in the amount of 25 to 110 US Dollars.**

Photo: Branko Geroski, editor and journalist (Plusinfo and Sloboden Pecat -Free press), spoke at the first awarding ceremony.



The contributions were evaluated by a three-member commission (Biljana Jordanovska, Marija Tegovska and Ermin Klimenta), whereas at the ceremonies, the prizes were awarded by representatives of CIVIL among which Marija Tegovska, Sinisa Stankovic, Xhabir Deralla and others. The ceremonies were also addressed by well-known figures such as actor Pero Arsovski, journalist Branko Geroski and Tomislav Kezarovski and many others.

The thing that makes this project different, in addition to the promotion of citizen journalism, is the opportunity it gives to citizens to use CIVIL's platform, and by transferring their own personal experience to contribute to breaking the media darkness in the country.

Texts that spoke of pressures on professionals in their field, just because of their party affiliation, sparked reactions from the institutions immediately after they were published. In some cases, the pressure did stop. After the text was published on the socially endangered family of Veles, which did not receive the promised social assistance, there was a reaction from the mayor and the situation changed and the family received the promised financial assistance.

The problems on which the citizen journalists wrote about, in terms of the landslide in a municipality and a landslide on a road that nobody wanted to rehabilitate, caused the institutions to finally take action and to finish their work, thus to improve the conditions of the residents of these municipalities.

All these seemingly small changes that were caused with the publishing of the 45 papers of the citizen journalists and journalists, are an excellent start, not only in the direction of improving the media sphere in the country, but also for the democratic processes in general.



The contribution titled “On thin ice” is an emotional testimony of the Zekiri family from Veles, which lives in extreme misery. The story on this family’s troubles, on the labyrinths of the social and health care institutions through which they have to go through, caused a reaction also by the local authorities. The municipality of Veles, following the publication of the article, sent a letter to CIVIL with information that the family had been approved a one-time financial assistance.

The residents of the Kicevo village of Knezino are now living better and safer after the text on the “Landslide near Knezino takes out half of roadway!” was published. The concerned citizen journalist from this region sent information accom-

panied with photos of the landslide on the local road, and conveyed the reactions of the distressed local residents facing the risk of being cut off of civilization. CIVIL’s project team verified the information and communicated with the competent institutions and with the local authorities. Immediately after the article was published, the construction firm “Granit”, under the pressure of the public, extended the road at the most critical points where the landslide ripped off half of this local roadway.

An employee of the Public Enterprise “Streets and Roads”, sent information on the pressure that is made on employees to drive unregistered company vehicles. After publishing the material titled “Employees in Street and Roads under pressure to drive unregistered vehicles”, the vehicles were registered the following week. CIVIL’s team, in co-



“On thin ice”, Veles, 2016

operation with citizen journalists, continued reporting on the situation in this public enterprise. In doing so, several cases of violation of workers’ rights and political discrimination were revealed.

Most of the published texts in “Civic Lenses” testify to the abuse of the socially disadvantaged categories, to political discrimination, corruption, infrastructural problems, unfulfilled election promises...Still, some of the stories have a happy



ending.

Such is the contribution of citizen journalist Goran Trajkov “Makedonska Kamenica: Textile workers have fought for their rights”, which speaks of the perseverance, collective and cooperative spirit of the textile workers who are on strike for improving the working conditions, and managed to fight for their workers’ rights. The citizen journalist was the first to publish this story, which was downloaded by all the independent media in the country.

The reactions that were caused by the texts of the citizen journalists were different, but none of them went by unnoticed. The article: “Water surfaces under the Archeological Museum!” of an anonymous citizen journalist, reveals that the Archeological Museum in Skopje is sinking in water and feces after each heavy rainfall. Immediately after the text was published, there were many reactions on the social networks, and a sharp denial came from the Archeological Museum with a threat of a lawsuit if the article was not withdrawn. The reaction of CIVIL’s team was to continue to investigate. The result was a series of articles that spoke of even greater problems that these structures face, which were built by the government with the Skopje 2014 project.

The “Civic Lenses” project opened space for the citizen journalists who from among the first lines of the Colorful Revolution protests were recording, taking photos and were reporting. Video testimonies from the first days of the protests against the President Ivanov’s abolition of high officials and politicians who were under investigation of the Special Prosecutor’s Office, reached several hundred thousand views on CIVIL’s YouTube channel, from which one was awarded that received almost 80,000 views.

# Everyone can be a citizen journalist!

## Seminars on citizen journalism



Seminar on citizen journalism, Veles Dec. 19-20, 2015

AT THE “Civic Lenses” seminars, the team of CIVIL had the task of encouraging participants to think freely and creatively, and to understand the fact that nowadays everyone can be a citizen journalist, regardless of one’s profession and status in society. Most often, only a mobile phone is needed.

Video and photo activism have become a reliable part of media informing, and also a way to break the darkness that covers the traditional media, which have greatly betrayed the public’s trust. The technological revolution and the development of the Internet media have helped for video activism to become a significant tool for human rights fighters worldwide.

The seminar program included introduction to the basics of the electoral system, human rights and freedoms, video activism, citizen journalism and journalistic writing.

In addition to theoretical work, the seminars also included field-work, where participants could apply the knowledge they acquired, which was followed with an evaluation of the video and photo materials that were brought by the participants from the field.

Many of the practical advices that the citizen journalists received were in terms of the five basic journalistic questions: who, what, where, when, why, the sequence of which can be changed depending on the news that is being conveyed and the assessment of the journalist that is reporting.

In the electoral context, the issue being observed was not difficult to answer. We presented the citizen journalists with a long list of irregularities from the longtime election observation of CIVIL: threats, blackmail, violence, corruption, hate speech, discrimination, pressure, abuse of public resources and of the administration, violation of election silence and others.

Regardless of where their story was from, the citizen journalists always had the regional monitoring teams at their disposal (coordinators, members and supporters, partner NGOs, informal groups), the mobile teams of CIVIL (researchers, observers, activists) along with the journalistic team of CIVIL Media.



Seminar on citizen journalism, Veles, Nov. 7-8, 2015

The goal of the seminars and of the lecturers was, primarily, to point out that citizen journalists without the entire logistics and professional support that the media possesses, but also without fear, free, knowing their right to inform and be informed, are legitimate and real indicators of the truth and the facts, in spite of the lies and manipulations that are part of their everyday lives.

Citizen journalist, through photos, videos, texts and audio recordings reveal to the public everything the media are trying to hide, not allowing pressures and threats to influence the commitment to freedom of expression.

**Biljana Jordanovska**



## A FEW PRACTICAL TIPS

### Photography

- Get to know your device.
- Enter the situation. A good photography is the subject and the context. And nothing else. Absolutely clear photos do not necessarily mean they are always the best photos.
- Avoid the clutter in the frame. Throw everything out of the frame that is not part of your message.
- Get closer or zoom in as needed, or as much as the performance of the device allows it.
- Avoid the use of a flash, even when taking night photos. The flash destroys the intimacy, the mood and the trustworthiness of the situation. A side light should be used, instead of a front one. A flash is used when there is counter-light.

### Video – most frequent mistakes

- Empty battery
- Full memory card
- Recording when you do not want to record and stopping when you want to record (REC/STBY)
- Too much zoom or pan, especially when shooting from a distance with zoom, which results in a blurry image
- Too much empty space above the object
- Accidentally turning on effects
- You missed the action because you were shooting something else
- Recording with a date on the image
- Turning off the camera immediately after completion of the action
- Forgetting to distribute the material



# New times demand new approach!

Excerpts from transcripts

IN my photographs I try to struggle with the analogue approach to photography, which the older journalists have. In general, if the topic is central heating, newspaper editors look for photos with radiators. I try to work differently. It is, however, a new time, and their approach is very single-layered.

For my master's degree I worked in Kosovo, on a subject that is very difficult to illustrate, in particular, on the contamination of soil, air and water, and how it all affects people. It is very difficult to illustrate this, you cannot photograph something you do not see, how can you take pictures of a disease, cancer...Here it is important to have multi-layer thinking. I worked in the camp that the French army had built during the conflict. The French realized it was toxic after tests were conducted for six months and regular examinations were made on soldiers that lived there. The iron level in their blood was very high. Because of this, they concreted the surface of the entire camp and built containers half a meter above the ground, so as to avoid the pollution, but without any effect. After six months, the level of intoxication was even higher. They sent all their soldiers home with a remark for them not to have children for at least a year...There are different approaches. In this case, it was about documentary work that takes up much time, but that is why it has greater meaning. Within a period of six months, I was there from Thursday to Sunday. You cannot do the whole story in just two days...

**Tomislav Georgiev**





**There are two groups of consideration for the processing of photos. One of them is the one that is promoted by Reuters, according to which, you are not allowed to make any interventions on the picture. Recently, they have even come up with a program with which the only thing you can do is to minimally correct light, nothing else. You are not allowed to manipulate with a news/documentary photo.**

**I am in favor of having your own stamp on the photo, to have your own opinion, because, you, however, are a political figure, you have your own opinion on the matter, because you are living it. If you exaggerate the moment and do something that will change little in the minds of at least 10 people, then, according to me, it is all right.**

**This was the case with the picture with the vulture. The photographer who took the picture committed suicide because of the criticism he received! The angle was incredible, a child behind which in the background lied a vulture, but it was one meter away from the tent of UNICEF, who are there to help. If that could have been seen, the picture would have been much easier and less dramatic, but because of that photo the UN General Assembly held a meeting, and one picture helped to end a war and to save thousands of people from certain death. Hence, I agree with it.**



# What is more important – water or the internet?

**Dr. Saso Ordanoski**

**JOURNALISM** does not deal with the truth, but rather with establishing of facts, and after that, with contextualizing of facts in a manner in which they can become relevant.



Culture is the essence of how people in a society build the value system, in order to come to a position to be able to say that something is true. We live in a relatively tragic time, as the old definitions (sociological, political scientific, anthropological) on culture have become increasingly less valid.

If you were to receive a letter from the municipality tomorrow, stating that starting from Monday the water and Internet would be turned off, what would be more important to you – water or the Internet? Many would say that the Internet is more important to them.

Values have changed in the world in which the new generations live, you are on the edge. I am an immigrant in this new time, in the age of the internet and mobile communications.

We live in a world in which people are not aware of the elementary things about the way they live. There are dozens of key servers in the world that enable a network, some servers are located on ships and sail in international waters, so as not to fall under anyone's jurisdiction, some are in America, some are in Europe and in other places.

Theoretically and practically it is possible to turn off the Internet. However, politically it is practically impossible. I was in Pakistan some time ago, and there the army was having a big celebration on a Monday, so the internet was shut down on Friday and turned back

again on Tuesday. That is Pakistan. Justification – danger from terrorist attack.

Knowledge is not taught at the faculty, just as journalism does not deal with the truth, but rather it teaches the methodology on how to get to knowledge.

The virtual world is increasingly more diminishing our and your opportunity to learn the methodology, and is increasingly more offering us end products.

We are only confirming our stereotypes on the Internet. None of you are searching for the truth on the Internet, you are searching for your truth, when you open Google you are searching for something that confirms previously determined stereotypes.

If you go to Vienna, visit the City Museum, there you will see that in 1850 they knew what the city would look like, while we found out about “Skopje 2014” this morning when we woke up.

In Vienna, the horse was very significant and was an unavoidable component in society. A hundred and seventy years ago it was used for transportation, for fighting wars... Life could not be imagined without the horse.

Today, even if the last horse were to die, it would not mean anything to anyone. That is you, the journalist, you will not mean anything to the future generations. Journalism is becoming an unnecessary profession!

In the future there will be increasingly more escalated

statements. For example: if someone makes an accident, there is no need to have their statement, because they will not tell the truth), but today this is something that is required. You will not go looking for an expert to come and to say how the accident exactly happened.

Contrary to such a statement, you can take a statement in which the interlocutor will say: “Look, while I was driving, he came right in front of me, and because I couldn’t stop I ran over him”. We all know who Kim Kardashian is, but when I surveyed my students at the faculty, only 20 percent of them knew who Churchill is. Today’s culture is a culture of Kardashians.

Walter Lippmann is the most important publicist and journalist from the beginning of the twentieth century, and is the originator of communication science sociology, who, 90-100 years ago, stated one of the best definitions on the audience.

He says that we need to assume that the public has no expert knowledge on the subject of its curiosity. Hence, the public is curious, but does not know why it is curious. It is inconsistent, it changes its views, it awakens slowly, but directs itself quickly... There are always problems in getting the public’s attention, which afterwards loses its interest quite quickly. The public always wants to take sides, it personalizes every experience, the public wants to hear personalizing. “Well yes, it was my aunt yesterday”, “tomorrow it will rain, so I will carry an umbrella” ... The public is melodramatic and wants to watch more emotions.



# A photography can be dangerous, if published out of context!

excerpts from transcripts



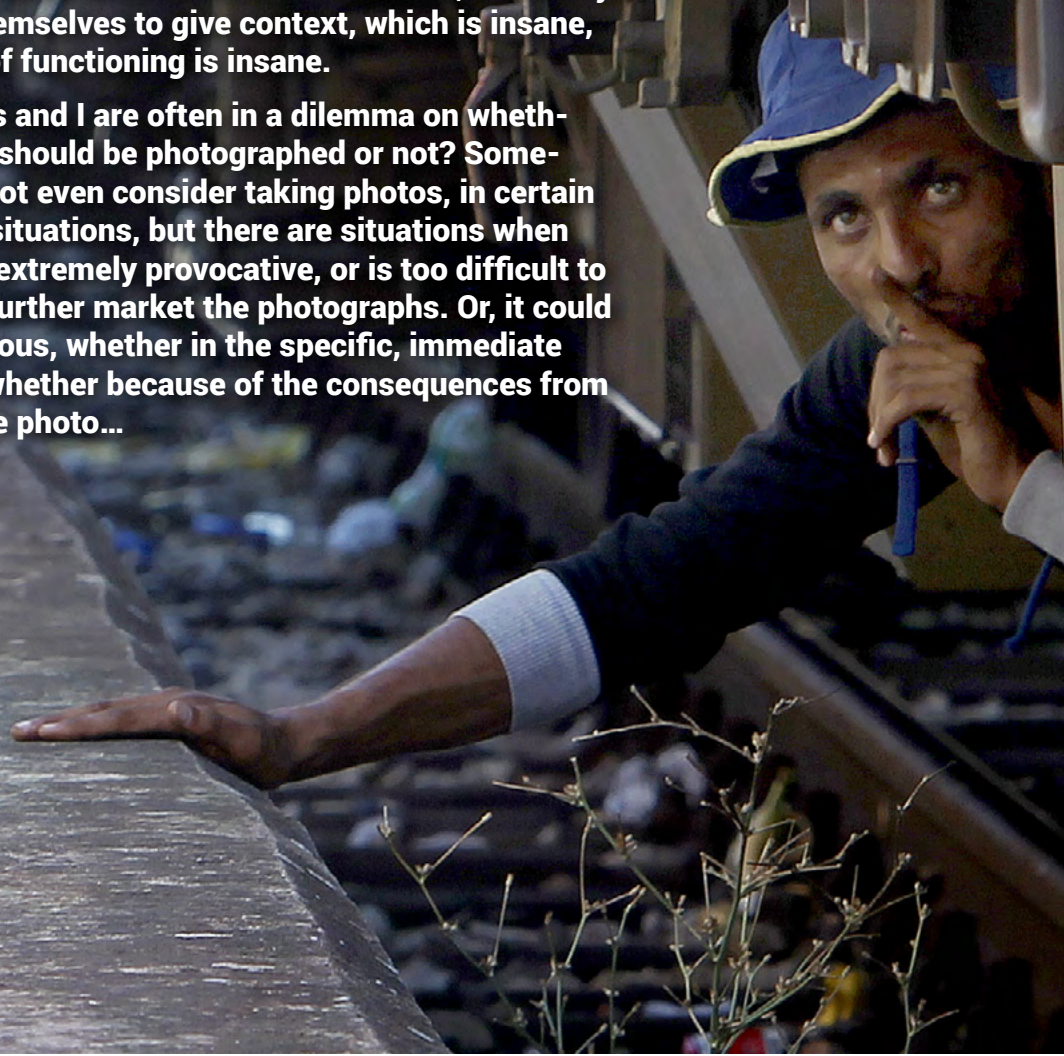
**Boris Grdanovski**

**A PHOTOGRAPHY** contains data about itself, on the way it was created, how it was created, the conditions under which it was created, with serial numbers, or technical data on how the photography was made, all of which is called metadata. Every digital photography has this. If fraudulent manipulations have occurred with the metadata, it can be detected how they occurred and that they had been corrected in Photoshop. There are skilled photo reporters, and there are also professional on this matter, who can detect how this was done and return back all the procedures, though they will not have the original form, but they will know what had happened to the image.

Photographs can be bought from agencies, but these can often be misused, in that they will not be used for their initial purpose and for the reasons they were photographed, but rather in some other context, or in a totally different one. If taken out of context, a photography can be very dangerous also for the purpose taking it. Most often, when publishing a photography, it needs to have a “legend” in addition to it having a story, regardless of whether it is an electronic or printed media...It has to present what is happening in the image, when and where, it is the fairest attitude towards the reader. Why am I telling you this introduction?

**In order for you to see how complicated the procedure is to reach the end consumer, and therefore, you have to be really careful. Nowadays it is easy to do things, it is easy to market...Today we can see that all kinds of things are done on the social networks and on Facebook, and everyone allows themselves to give context, which is insane, that manner of functioning is insane.**

**My colleagues and I are often in a dilemma on whether something should be photographed or not? Sometimes we do not even consider taking photos, in certain insignificant situations, but there are situations when something is extremely provocative, or is too difficult to control or to further market the photographs. Or, it could be too dangerous, whether in the specific, immediate situation, or whether because of the consequences from presenting the photo...**





THE media were interested about the refugee crisis only from time to time, or when there was something “happening” and the journalists would be in Ghegelia for several days and then would leave for home. And they were not conveying the real picture – on what exactly was happening at the Macedonian border. I, along with 7-8 other people, stayed there, I know what was happening and I know what I went through...During those six months you could not just leave without emotions. Sometimes that is good, but in this case it was very difficult...



# Photojournalist: entertaining, sad, interesting, at times tragic profession...

excerpts from transcripts



**Robert Atanasovski**

Perhaps at times we are over emotional, but the job of a photojournalist is to convey the real picture, in the way in which they see and feel it at the moment. I have spoken to many people, and believe me, it is not easy. Someone's house was torn down, someone had a member of their family killed, or was threatened that they would be killed and need to leave the house in an hour...Many questions are raised. What would a person do in such a situation? Whether to send the photos with the police officers who are beating people, or with the police officers who are giving water to refugees? What do you think is best?

A photo of mine titled "When migrants sew up their mouths, Europe must start talking" was published in "The Guardian"...What can you say...There, among the refugees, were engineers, doctors, dentists...all left there on "no man's land"...And here there was an ignorant attitude from much of the media...From time to time they came, if there was a great story, but mainly to show that the police were helping the migrants there. And often, unfortunately, the truth was quite different.



# Emotion is a driving moment

excerpts from transcripts



**Ognjen Teofilovski**

**PHOTOGRAPHY** is the first medium that “stops” part of time that will never be repeated again. Journalistic photography has the task of captivating and preserving that part of history that is unrepeatable. This is not a film, it is not a studio photography and there is no staging, no repetition, no one returns...It happens once and never again, and that is a great responsibility. How you will convey the events for people to see the message, how you will live with that, how you have managed to convey things, and how much of it is subjective or objective? It is difficult to convey issues objectively, photography is so subjective, so personal, and depends on one's own knowledge of life and view on certain matters. Therefore, it is a moment when you, as a photo reporter, have the opportunity to watch events and history from the front line. Everyone else is behind you and there is no repeating...

It is very important how objective we set ourselves to be. However difficult this may be, we need to try for things to be realistic, to convey the real object. There is no bad event for photography. Equal attention should be given to all events. You need to be the first to come to the event and the last to leave, to pay attention to everything. You need to be prepared beforehand on where you are going, what will be there, who will come and who will leave...You need to predict things, in order to capture the moment that only happens once, you must be prepared.

Emotion is a driving moment in every photograph. We know how to “look” at photos before we know how to read and write. That is why everyone, precisely everyone, has the right to criticize a photograph. With written text it is different, some know

how to read it, others do not, some will understand it, others will not...Photos have no barriers, neither in terms of language, nor in terms of time...A photo is perceived as one sees it, and that is why I say that it is the emotion, which the photo will convey to the viewer, that is the driving moment. This is what distinguishes a good photo from a bad one, nothing else. The technique can be learned; cameras can be bought...Whether a photo is good or not, depends on what it will convey emotionally. Whether it will make the person viewing content, sad...If the photo manages to convey an emotion, then it has completed its work, if it manages to convey a message as well, then we have done a great job.

Photo reporting, or visual journalism, is a craft. You need to be constantly present. We are like the edge of a knife, constantly cutting. If you are not sharp every day, if you do not work persistently, you will grow dull, and there is no turning back. You need to constantly work.

When taking photos, pay attention to the details. Sometimes details say much more than the entire picture.

There is no good or bad event. I took photos of an event for a lady who was awarded for best cookies. I had to give my entire attention during those 15 minutes to that lady. Because she succeeded in winning the prize, because she had went to the hairdresser to get her hair done for someone to photograph her...I cannot allow myself for this to pass with just one photo, without any attention, and for me to just leave. She had worked on this with all her dignity and I need to give her my fullest attention.



# PHOTOJOURNALISTS ARE LEFT ON THEIR OWN

excerpts from transcripts

**Georgi Licovski**



**BEFORE**, people might have not known what it all means when someone takes photos of them, but after the Yugoslav wars, they are a classical example, when many people finished in Scheveningen. Because of photos taken by photojournalists during the clashes, things changed. Some participants in the war became aware that they had become eternalized, recorded or photographed, after ending up in jail. Today, almost everyone is aware what it means to be photographed and recorded. You immediately become a target.

On the other hand, it is not at all safe to be in this profession, especially in Macedonia.

We, the Macedonian photojournalists formed our association, we also organized an annual exhibition and the “Zivko Janevski” award, but all of that failed. It failed because of our discord. We did not manage to hold a meeting of the Assembly and because of that, today, our status is such as it is. We are trying to gather, to organize ourselves in our association, or to be part of the AJM. Not having an association is one of the bigger reasons why the status of photojournalists is as such. None of the photojournalists have real protection when something happens to them, rather we are left on our own.

But, it is our own fault.





Photo: Georgji Licovski

# NGOs have become most important factor for protection of human rights!

excerpts from transcripts



**Uranija Pirovska**

**VULNERABLE GROUPS** are always in the focus of international standards. They are the group of citizens with a more difficult access to rights. Children are the first vulnerable group. They do not always have the possibility to request rights and protection by themselves, and because of this they have a special convention and have special rights.

Furthermore, people with disabilities and people who are imprisoned or are held in detention. In recent times, women have also become a vulnerable category in Macedonia. therefore, human rights should not be viewed as a fixed category. The civilizational progress, unfortunately, has not also meant progress in respect for human rights...

\*

In theory, rights are divided into four generations. The first generation of human rights are civil and political rights. The second generation are social, economic and cultural rights. The third generation, which for us are science fiction, are the right to peace, the right to development and the right to clean environment. Countries with a longer parliamentary democracy and a different culture of human rights are the ones who are concerned with these rights. That means right to freedom, more specifically, it determines those rights of citizens that enable freedom, as opposed to order, authority and power of authority...



In 1997, Macedonia received its first independent institution, the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is not appointed by the Government, but rather by the MPs, from where it draws its independence, which is a rule all over the world. Also, the Ombudsman is given a special mandate and has the right to enter any closed institution – prisons, detention facilities, psychiatric institutions...And, from there to report on the situation of human rights. Although it exists for 18 years now, the Ombudsman still has no independent budget, which means it is limited in its independent functioning. How can someone be critical towards the one who is providing the money for their employment? Hence, the Ombudsman cannot perform his function entirely, as has turned out, and cannot be critical to the extent which is expected.

Four years ago, Republic of Macedonia received another independent institution, the Commission for prevention and protection against discrimination. This body is also elected in parliament, but unfortunately, what happened in Macedonia was unprecedented. The President of this Commission is a state advisor within the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and, therefore, there cannot be any independence in his work.

The NGO sector in the past four years, in the absence of a constructive opposition and of institutions of the system, which instead of providing protection are refusing to respect human rights, has become the most important factor for the protection of human rights...

\*

In theory there are three forms of activism: contact activism, constructive and hostile activism. The first assumes contact with institutions, submitting requests, which should not be neglected, even though we know that the institutions do not respond to our requests, but still, we should not spare them and we should go through all the instances that are at our disposal, so as in the end to reach the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Constructive activism goes one step higher. It represents active participation of citizens in working groups, discussions and public debates. But, what happens when there are no public debates? What if Parliament, despite the fact that it passes laws, which has been most often during the past 10 years, does this in shortened procedure, even for amendments to the Constitution and for handling essential rights of citizens? What is the civil society sector doing? It is organizing debates in parallel, because one of the most important things of the NGO sector is changing public awareness among citizens on matters for which the state has not found it necessary to hold debates.



# Journalists have a great responsibility

excerpts from transcripts

Suzana Miceva

**JOURNALISM** is a euphoric profession, especially when you sense an issue in which there are tears, where there is blood, where there is some intricacy. Not that we find pleasure in this, it is just about discovering something much bigger than what is actually being shown, or has already been shown. Journalists and the media in Macedonia are currently in euphoria, but in an overall euphoria, very little is seen of what actually crosses our nose and our eyes.

www.civil.org.mk

I have to tell you that it is really difficult for journalists to pursue the real stories to the editors in Macedonia. Many editors have never even been on the field, and so for you to be able to convey to them what is happening out there, you need to first of all build up muscles and then draw it out for them, and in some way, convince them that the story you are bringing is not only worthy of publishing, but that it should also receive more space on the news, or that it should be placed above and not below the weather forecast.

We noticed the migrants when they started dying on the railroad tracks. They were passing our country even before that, but nobody had noticed them. Is it possible for over 1,000 people to enter through illegal crossings every day, in a country with two million residents, to pass by in front of the eyes of citizens and in front of police patrols without anyone noticing them? This is something that has been happening in the past three years, and we have been actively informing about the developments with the migrants throughout Macedonia for only six months, and some of them are refugees from war-conflicts.

The last incident happened sometime in March, I believe, when 14 migrants from Afghanistan were killed, and I think that was the starting point, for me to become aware of what was happening in my region. We headed towards Miravci and in two hours recorded thousands of refugees, in deserted buildings, and in fields. The first story I published was that in Macedonia two wives and five children had been kidnapped of migrants who had entered illegally. This attracted much attention in the public. Do you know what the police's response was? That the kidnapped children had not been reported. For three months, from March to June, we have been trying to prove that we are having a serious problem, that thousands of people are entering, many refugees, but that we do not know whether other people have also been entering the country, with other intentions. They kept this silent and said that in Macedonia the asylum law requires so, and that if they enter illegally in Macedonia that they should immediately report themselves at the first station, and that from there the matter would be further handled.

Reporting in such situation is truly stressful. We all have families at home. It is usually said that journalism is not a profession for women, but recently in Macedonia no profession is appropriate for a woman, in many situations. Women first need to struggle, to present themselves in a strictly patriarchal and very backward society. Wherever you go

as a journalist, it is important for the man on the other side not to vulgarize your performance. Whether he will accept you as an interlocutor or as a journalist, or whether he will look at you as a sexual object. That is the reality.

Then, whether they will take you seriously because you are a woman, and thirdly, whether you as a woman have the capacity to push forward the story. However, in addition to this you also have a private side, you have to take care of things at home, before you leave for work. In journalism you never know when you will come back home. Yesterday my working day began at 10am, and I was back home at 9pm. I also have three young children.

What is most difficult? When you leave your children home and have to go in an environment where there are many other children, in many other situations that you have to record. Two days ago, there was so much rain, and yet there were hundreds of children waiting at the border to enter the country. On one side, you have parents hugging their babies, and on the other side, you have a corridor where refugees from war zones are allowed to enter. All this is very moving, regardless if you are a man or a woman, or a journalist. I believe that is not easy for the police as well. They too have shared their food many times and have been left hungry. And that is why journalists have a great responsibility, when we have to inform on certain news. Today there was a police officer using tear gas on the crowd, and yesterday you could have seen him sharing his meal. Where can you make the balance, should you make balance?

You have to be very well trained and emotionally well prepared, in order to be just a professional. I would not want to be just a professional. I as a person, want to help. There was a situation when photographers took photos of us. One migrant collapsed, and these are very powerful images and photos. The reporters left their cameras and went to help the person. There are many dilemmas, but we have to be humans, above all.

As a representative of the media you can do much less than as a citizen activist. You as a citizen journalist can do the things that we as journalists cannot or feel hesitant to do...



# Citizen journalism has a future in Macedonia



Sinisa Stankovic

I LOOKED upon the “Civic Lenses” project with some reserve before it started, because with the catastrophic situation in terms of the media freedom and with the downfall in the quality of the journalistic product in the country within the past 10 years (due to the harsh political racketeering on the few media owners who with their media, in addition to the lucrative role, also wish to fulfill a socially responsible role, or due to the economic blackmail by the government, which is the biggest advertiser, as well as due to the unprecedented party pressure on journalists, the arrogant non-transparency of officials in the decision-making process and the downgrading of professional standards and moral norms within the quasi-media under the government’s umbrella...), I could hardly accept the idea that now the “ordinary citizens” perform what traditional media and professional journalists, due to the newly-established rules of game, unfortunately, do not perform anymore.

These sincere people from the neighborhoods, who despite showing particular interest in becoming citizen journalists, and through their contributions against injustice and unlawfulness, still, have no previous journalistic experience, even though they are educated, and have worked something completely different in their life....And I was breaking between the realizations on citizen video activism, popular in the world for decades, and the “push me to get started” – credo, for centuries present in pitiful Macedonia...And I was scared by the proposal for several activists of CIVIL (regardless of their heavy “baggage” in the civil society sector) and barely two more experienced journalists, to try to cause drastic change in the mental structures of many people in the state structures (which the brutal government of VMRO-DPMNE together with the vassal leadership of the novice DUI, grinded to maximum hypercriticism!), or to awaken the long forgotten rebellion among the rest of the population, which has been surviving an entire decade in Macedonia.

Moreover, because of the accelerated extinction in this present of ours “Macedonia Speechless”, unlike international experience, which to a lesser extent was and is a consequence of the inevitable “computerization”, is a direct result of political settling of scores with the last media owners and journalists – real professionals who defended and still defend the freedom of public opinion and the honor and dignity of this difficult, though, great profession. In parallel, propaganda radio and TV stations, orchestrated under the strict control of VMRO-DPMNE, started sprouting like mushrooms after rain, both at the central and local level, degrading the profession and downgrading the moral and professional standards, spreading lies on the success of the “revivers” and “builders” (bewildering the public with virtual



Sinisa Stankovic presents Sotir Gabeloski from Krisevo an award for citizen journalism

achievements, such as, for example, the caricaturistic “Skopje 2014” project), and keeping silent, and even hiding and spinning the facts on the unprecedented crime and unscrupulous looting of Macedonia, on the country’s devastation in almost all areas and the massive fleeing of hundreds of thousands of young and educated people, on the hopelessness and fear that chokes the citizens, regardless of their nationality and religious affiliation...

However, on the very first of the five seminars, in average, with about twenty participants, which we held in Skopje, Bitola, Strumica and Veles, I confronted interested citizens from all age groups, who carefully listened to the lecturers from CIVIL’s team, to the guests, prominent citizen activists, photo journalists, journalists and artists (actors, directors and writers), and participated with great interest in the practical part of the training – in the workshops at which they wrote, took photos and recorded video materials on cases of violation of human rights...And I was thrilled.

I had no doubt that the project for training of citizen journalists, thanks to the experience and patience of the elderly and the strong will and excellent condition of the younger CIVILs, could have an influence on raising awareness among the broader tiers of the population on the importance of respecting human rights and freedoms, and on the need of publically stigmatizing all those who violate them, especially from the position of power and function...However, living in startling fear for a decade in the “dark Vilayet” – Macedonia, sparked my skepticism on whether there would be enough citizens that would be encouraged to activate themselves and publically speak out about the injustices and violation of rights happening in our surrounding, but also at the state level.

On the other hand, even though the anticipated topic “competition” of citizen journalists on violation of human rights, with special emphasis on electoral rights, narrowed the choice of options for citizen journalists (who kept sending us contribution also on social injustice, on various abuses, on violation of workers’ rights – pressures and mobbing...), it turned out that it was precisely the arrogance and unaccountability of the irresponsible government, which invested enormous efforts to suppress the public opinion and in disciplining the media, that enabled the citizens to easily “choose” what to write about. Even the list we prepared for them with possible cases of violation of human rights and freedoms was too short for them, and they kept finding new ones, month by month...





The joint evaluation of the contributions at the end of each workshop, along with the proposals of the younger colleagues from CIVIL Media, of the materials that were received from citizen journalists to be published and to compete for awards, only reinforced our belief that citizen journalism has a future in Macedonia. Even if Macedonia were to return to the familiar paths of the Euro-Atlantic integrations (and should begin to once more approach the civilized countries, from which it has distanced itself so much in recent years because of the will of the political elites, and especially because of the state leadership), or if the media should free themselves from the government's iron grip, and if the situation in journalism should return at least to the level of the 90s of the last century, then the advancement in technology will have widely opened its doors to citizen journalists. Previous consumers who have already encouraged themselves to "produce" articles, will easily

return to the position of readers/listeners/viewers, but now, completely prepared, in case necessary, to once again cross the ever more porous border and to use their mobile phones, tablets, cameras...



Istanbul, 2015, Photo: Tomislav Georgiev



# Brief history of citizen journalism



Protests for women's rights, Washington, USA, 1970

**CITIZEN** journalism is often also described as guerrilla, networking, WEB 2.0, democratic, street or participatory journalism. It differs from community journalism (communal journalism) or journalism in the service of the public that are practiced by professional journalists, as well as from cooperative journalism and social journalism, which are hybrid forms that unite professional journalists with beginners or with activists in the process of media productions.

This new, growing media gender that has caused tectonic shifts in the manner



of informing around the world is, primarily, based on the content produced by the media and media products. More specifically, from a silent observer and consumer, the audience becomes a generator of news and opinions.

The beginnings of citizen journalism can be found somewhere in the 80s of the 20th century, when in the US, citizen reactions to corrupted journalism become increasingly loud, which instead of serving the public interest, it represents the interests of the centers of financial and political power.

Some authors link the beginning of citizen journalism with the amateur footage of the assassination of US President John Kennedy in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963.



Assassination of Kennedy, 1963

The amateur video footage of a passer-by who videotaped the brutal beating of legendary NBA basketball player Rodney King by the police in Los Angeles, on March 3, 1991, is considered a classic example of citizen journalism. This event, unveiled through an amateur video footage, sparked strong revolt and mass protests in Los Angeles and several other cities across America.

Citizen journalism is growing in this period. It mobilizes and stimulates action. It is an excellent motivation for increasing the number of members of renowned human rights organizations.

For illustration, the number of 40,000 members of Amnesty International in Great Britain in 1987 grew to 150,000 in 2000.

### **From necessity, through interest, up to participation**

The need of modern man to be informed is constantly growing. With the rapid technological progress, that need is being satisfied in increasingly complex ways. At the very beginning of the film, there is actually a documentary film – “Workers Exiting Factory” by Louis Lumiere, 1895.

In the 20s of last century, Russian filmmakers were making documentaries for raising public awareness (“Weekly Film, Dziga Vertov).

In the 20s and 30s of last century, documentaries on the everyday life of the common people were being produced in the United Kingdom – every day.

John Grierson and his team have been producing documentaries that have become a real political force. (“Housing Problems”, John Grierson).

In the 40s, the Nazis were making their own “home videos” from the pogrom in the concentration camps, material that was later used in the Nuremberg Trials. In the 40s, documentaries are made all over the world on war, peace and rebuilding the world.

In the 60s, film becomes a popular means of civil movements in that period of time. The small camera with a 16mm



The beating of Rodney King, 1991



"Workers Exiting Factory", Lumiere, 1895

film that appeared on the market and which was easy to handle, became a great tool in the hands of peace activists and defenders of human rights in the US and in Europe (Cinéma vérité in France).

In the 70s, activists against the Vietnam war, against racism and the apartheid, advocates of human rights, of the feminist movement, environmentalists and many others – received even better cameras that used the first generation of video tapes. These were the Portapak and U-Matic cameras.

Small, easy to handle and relatively inexpensive, these cameras became popular with "guerrilla" filmmakers first in America, and then around the world.

Downtown Community Television Center was founded in 1972 in New York, by John Alpert and Keiko Tsuno. This organization offers interested citizens free and very favorable training on electronic media and producing.



Within the first seven years after its establishment, this center trained 7,000 activists in English, Spanish and Chinese. Today, this center trains around 2,000 video activists annually. Over 50,000 people have so far received training on video production in the past 40 years of the center's existence.

Traditional media have failed. A good part of them have betrayed the public's trust. The technological revolution and the development of the Internet media have helped citizen journalism become an important tool for those fighting for human rights and freedoms all around the world.



Photo ad for Portapak



"For Freedom of Expression" - public event, Skopje, June 1, 2016



# WHEN MEDIA GIANTS FALL...

The experience of an internet and coffee addict

**Ermin Klimenta**

**IN WORKING** for an organization that is one of the most influential for the society in which we live in, the city and the country where we live, where people recognize the difficult and painstaking work that we perform every day with results that motivate us to work harder and more dynamically than ever, the online influence is super important and in this regard I would like to share some of my thoughts here.





As part of the project team and a member of the Assembly of CIVIL, I was ecstatic when I found out that support had been offered to us by National Endowment for Democracy, and also for being given the opportunity to encourage citizen journalism in our small, yet turbulent country.

We undertook this project precisely one year ago, with hope that it would become influential and a continuous trend in our society. We want to provide space in which people, who walk their dogs every day or go to work, while having their phones in their hands nonetheless, will use the opportunity to document something that is happening and to inform their fellow citizens through one of our platforms.

As part of the student movements and the mass protests, especially after the wiretapped conversations were released, I was in a quite unique position. The big media who were blind to the protests, in addition to labeling them as traitorous and mercenary activities, began war with the public, a war from which any experienced PR agent would run far away from.

The centers of power unveiled their policy for manipulating the media and proved that they should not be trusted. The principles based on which the poltroons built their careers and left the principles behind them, crossed the red line in journalism long time ago. Citizen journalists have now emerged in their place, who have joined the information era and have brought credibility and urgency of events. They have opposed the brainlessness that is threatening to kill democracy.

Through our web sites and social media, citizen journalists have declared war on traditional media. They have appeared in front of their doors and have unanimously said NO MORE! No more lies, corruption, a state acting like a despot towards its citizens, one that commands the state as their court of money laundering and much more. We had to stand above all this and fight against the brainlessness in front of us.

The citizen journalist within us did not want, and did not allow for the spirit of our intelligence, for the conscience that was in front of us the whole time to be broken, but now we had ways and platforms, as well as resources, to spread the awareness and to expose them from the bottom up.

Every individual story from our citizen journalists has reached a minimum of 1,000 views on our website and over 10,000 on Facebook, with up to 80,000 views on only one article on the protests that were taking place in the capital of Macedonia. Perhaps for the readers in the US or Europe, this may seem microscopically small, but for us it is a great success.

Messages of people who never had a right to vote, were now given one, they could not imagine someone giving them a platform to speak, let alone thousands of people reading them. We reached numbers that exceeded all, even our, expectations. The daily press, for example, sell a maximum of 10,000 copies, which is several thousand less than the daily readings of just one article of a citizen journalist.

Our Facebook audience and Twitter support cannot be counted, along with the many online outputs and platforms that give voice to the ordinary citizen. I will mention just one Facebook statistic that indicates that over two million views have been made in one year from the start of this project.

Our website ([www.civil.org.mk](http://www.civil.org.mk)) has been visited over 200,000 times for the “Civic Lenses” project alone. These stories have had a direct impact on society. The problems with the roads that were promised by politicians, but destroyed due to the unfulfillment of these promises, might not be important to some, but the children who walk several kilometers to school know exactly what it means. Single mothers who have received a word through this project, have come for the first time to speak out about their problems with the institutions.

Well then, do you want more statistics or will you grab your phone and start recording? I will be waiting for you behind the cold monitor, to turn your story into a victory over the media giants.



# CYBER ATTACK

## error



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# **CYBER ATTACKS**

**THE ATTACKS** on our websites were intensive and hampered the normal functioning in critical moments. As much as they were distressing, these attacks were also of great benefit to us. First of all, we learned quite a bit about cyber-attacks. However, the intensity and dimensions of these attacks also meant something else. It became obvious to us that what CIVIL was publishing was important, visible and that it troubled certain structures of power, who do not regret spending resources to conduct serious attacks on our server and websites.

Accompanied with hate speech on the social networks and threats, which part of CIVIL's team receives in their private messages, we truly are faced with major challenges every day and every night.

Yet, the online support, the expressions of approval and encouragement are by far more numerous and more visible, which gives us signal that we are on the right track and that we need to continue even more persistently, harder and bolder. Every day with each cyber battle, we come out stronger and wiser.

Nevertheless, the cyber-attacks were directed on our servers, which are built to withstand high pressure of various kinds, such as false website visits (bots).



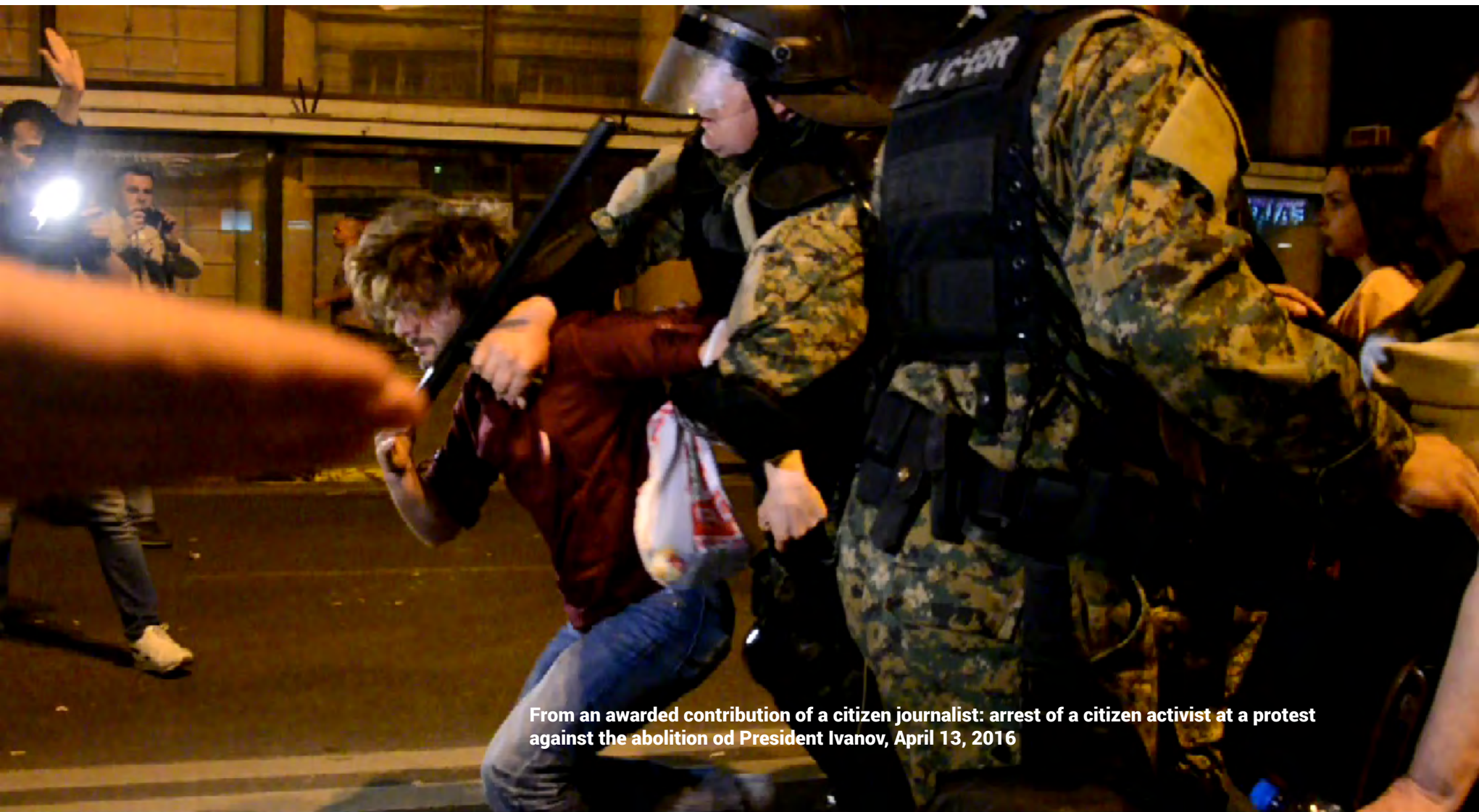
# CYBER ATTACK

**Most of these attacks come from powerful servers that are located in Russia. After the attacks started intensifying in April this year, we undertook many security measures and have been making daily efforts to keep the websites online, despite the frequent and enormous attacks. We can notice that the attacks on us are ultra-sophisticated, and use the latest technologies and platforms.**

**For illustration, CIVIL's main website has endured over 30 million attacks in just 6 months, that is, over 5 million a month on average. As elections are approaching (December 11, 2016), these attacks will become fiercer. We are prepared to withstand that attack.**

**CIVIL's website is one of the most inclusive in the region, with daily multimedia production. In some way, the cyber-attacks on CIVIL caused exactly the opposite effect. We are more determined, support is growing, with the visibility of CIVIL's online channels also constantly growing.**

**Ermin Klimenta**



From an awarded contribution of a citizen journalist: arrest of a citizen activist at a protest against the abolition of President Ivanov, April 13, 2016



# Citizen journalism on the barricades of truth and freedom

**Xhabir Deralla**

**WHEN** people in civilian clothes with their guns drawn were arresting the driver of the van of the Colorful Revolution following the protest under the slogan “Gjorge, you are a disgrace to Macedonia!”, and without explanation held him in the police station for several hours without telling him the reason for his arrest, a citizen journalist took several photos of that event and sent them to CIVIL, a human rights organization leading a project on promoting and strengthening citizen journalism in Macedonia.

The information reached 20.000 people on Facebook alone, and



Photo: From public presentation of "Civic Lenses" in Bitola, May 19, 2016.

within an hour after the information was published. Hundreds of people were alarmed in the late hours, while some of them appeared in front of the police station as a sign of solidarity with their fellow citizen who drove that little van, playing music and sending out messages of freedom, justice and democracy, every day.



This event took place just several hours before this article was completed (May 30, 2016). This example is only one of the hundreds of examples of the boldness of citizen journalists, both in our country and around the world.

Citizen journalists are the last barricade of free media, the last line of resistance against the corporate policy of the corrupted potentates. International standards, advanced laws defending freedom of expression and media freedom, state mechanisms for protection of democracy, commissions and regulatory bodies... All this, in the sad and unsettling example of Macedonia,

have shown to be subject to corruption, distortion, manipulation and dictate of a clique. All standards and laws fell crushed by a system that was developed by a clique that has nothing else on its agenda but to gain and maintain power, and to use that power to steal as much as possible more money and more power.



The media and media consumers are pressed in that vice. Many journalists and editors have been playing their infamous, dirty and immoral role for years, leaving behind the dignity of their profession and portraying an image of miserable human beings. Humble servants of their masters, they lie and hate day and night. They say everything their owners cannot, or are not allowed to. They cover up everything commercial sponsors need to cover up. They are prepared to turn every link between politics and business, every dirty deal between usurpers and primitive company owners into a political, economic, business and “deal-oriented” success.

But, this has come to an end. Citizen journalists have given a new pace, a new energy to this time – to this mess. Citizen journalists are revealing things that media choose to hide. They are their warriors on the side of the facts and truth. Citizen journalists do research, they record, take photos, conduct interviews, collect testimonies and evidence on everything that the potentates hide through their media manipulators.

Citizen journalists are the ones who disclose secret communications between party soldiers who trample over human rights and freedoms, they report on arrests of activists and on police brutality, and on the crime of the authorities.

Without professional improvement, without credentials and logistical support that every journalist has (or should have) from the editorial board, without any protection, these brave people have only one goal: to reveal the facts and to tell the truth.

It could cost a newsroom much time and money for it to investigate and publish a story, with the entire risk that in the end it may not contain all the necessary elements for it to be true and in defense of the public interest for the truth to be known about the people, events and processes in society. The gigantic leaps in development and access to new communication technologies, social networks and websites that are inexpensive for registration and easy to design and use, and smart phones, tablets and laptops – have all become new tools for citizen journalists. They are usually in the front line of events or they themselves are participants or victims in events. Assisted by technology, they are quicker than traditional media, which as slaves to commercial standards cannot by far succeed in satisfy-



ing the thirst for consistent and objective informing of the public.

Mobbing in the workplace, party pressure on socially deprives persons, manipulations with voting rights, crime and corruption, poverty, police abuse and captivating of institutions, the media and society – are things that rarely which journalist in an undemocratic society can reveal and publish, and even if they were to manage to do so, it could be too late, or they could succumb to the pressure of the structures of power. However, citizen journalists can do this!

Just as democracy is constantly won thanks to human rights activists, so is the truth thanks to citizen journalism. Certainly with the help of technology and the Internet.



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