EURASIA-Net Final Conference
on
Trans Regional Platform and Joint Research Agenda on Protection of Minority Rights
Organized by
Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG)
Dates: 18-20 March, 2010
Venue: Swabhumi, Kolkata (India)

MEDIA AND MINORITIES -- Issues in Europe and South Asia

Subir Bhaumik

Geographic and symbolic boundaries are being increasingly challenged by information and communication developments across the world-- both within nation-states and across regions. The mass media explosion in our times has provided unique opportunities in local, national and transnational spaces to communicate in cheaper and quicker ways and while having the opportunity to get access to different media settings and communication flows. While a free media is normally expected to reinforce democracy and empowerment of populations, usually disadvantaged, it suffers from majoritarian bias in content and representation, leading to ever evolving patterns of media use .

The media's biased portrayal of minorities in Europe and South Asia has been studied by many researchers, including by some under the EURAC program. It persists not only at the level of recruitment, where journalists and producers from minority communities find huge entry-level problems and hence their numbers in media happen to be low. It also persists more viciously in the way the media constructs images of minorities that often leads to greater social schism between the majority and the minority, specially if the minorities are from an entirely different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

And if the mainstream national media stereotypes and vilifies minorities , the minority populations tend to withdraw into community boundaries and create their own media -- or reproduce , as is done by the Turks in Germany, their home-country by using modern technology. Emerging communication and information opportunities can allow minority communities to produce, distribute and consume alternative to the mainstream images and sounds; they can reconfirm co-presence and feed imagination of belonging in their shared media cultures. All these can have diverse consequences regarding minorities' participation, inclusion, empowerment or even isolation.

The development and the implications of minority media cultures for ethnic communities, for social exclusion and participation and for the shaping of multicultural Europe was at core of the two day European workshop Minority Media in Europe: A Revolution from Below? that took place in September 2002. and NGOs to discuss key issues that relate to minority media cultures. But such a conference or workshop has not taken place in South

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Asia so far -- though the issues have been broadly debated in piecemeal fashion even in TV shows -- the recent televised debate on "Muslim constructs in Bollywood films" that was moderated by Barkha Dutt of NDTV is a good example . This session intends to look at the following issues that relates to media and minorities in Europe and South Asia --

how culture – and media in particular – relate to minorities' cultural and social inclusion

whether minority communities sustain separatist cultures or participate in an emerging European and South Asian multi-ethnic culture (or diverse multi-ethnic cultures)

how particular media cultures participate in creating new conditions for social inclusion and exclusion

how minorities' experience with the media reflects a particular relation to media and communication technologies; whether media technologies change conditions within minority media cultures and the broader media environment

how national policies in South Asia and EU policies in Europe about minorities and the media further or obstruct their social inclusion
The key questions that needs to be addressed are as follows :

To what extent are media playing a role in maintaining cultural particularity?

How do minority media cultures get involved in processes of minority inclusion in multi-ethnic, multi-national social spaces?

How do the member-states and the EU allow/obstruct the emergence of particular and multiethnic (mediated) cultures?

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What can be learned from particular minority media experiences regarding participant and democratic communication across Europe?

Does "national media" in South Asia and Europe provide enough minority representation in recruitment policies ? Both policies and trends should be discussed.

Does "national media" in South Asia and Europe promote broader understanding between majorities and minorities -- or is their a conscious vilification of minorities specially in the post 9/11 context --

what impact does all this has on media trends -- is there a tendency of media ghettoisation in either of these regions .