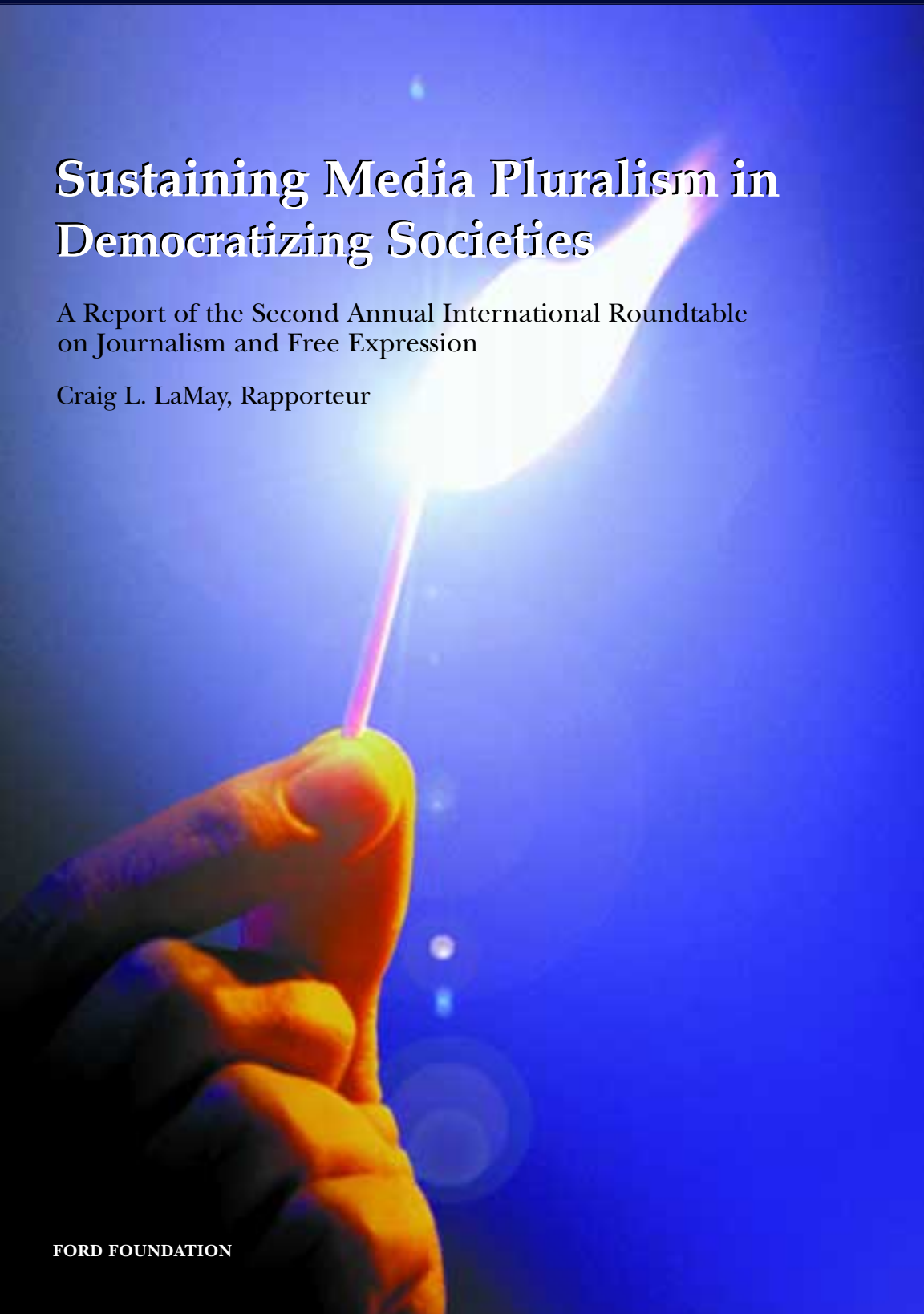
COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIETY PROGRAM

Sustaining Media Pluralism in Democratizing Societies

A Report of the Second Annual International Roundtable on Journalism and Free Expression

Craig L. LaMay, Rapporteur



FORD FOUNDATION

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International Roundtable on Journalism and Free Expression

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THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

Communications and Society Program
Charles M. Firestone
Executive Director
Washington, DC
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Foreword

For the past quarter-century, many countries around the globe have been transitioning from governments with centralized control of authority to some form of democracy. There are several types of democracy, of course, and these transitioning countries have engaged various strains, stages, and ideals along the way. Nevertheless, many countries in Latin America, Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia can be described as somewhere along the continuum from "transitioning" to "post-transition democratizing" societies.

One building block of democracy that has assumed heightened attention in recent years is the role of civil society. Civil society is the nongovernmental, non-business element of the public sphere, often informal, that many people believe is essential to a healthy democratic society. One amino acid of a strong civil society, at least in industrialized countries, is a pluralistic press. That diversity of views, sources, and ownership, the theory goes, enables a marketplace of ideas to emerge and democracy to flourish.

But is media pluralism an essential element to create a civil society in a transitioning state in which tradition, culture, governmental attitudes, and economic conditions are so different? If so, in what ways? And how does one sustain such pluralism in the face of many obstacles along the path to a free, democratic society? Variously, governments are new, jealous, or fragile. Markets are tenuous, fractious, and often weak or, conversely, virulent and inclusive of semi-governmental competitors or illegitimate players. Non-profit organizations are nascent, foundations non-existent, and a tradition of civil society absent. Furthermore, the general public often is unaccustomed to critical analysis of the varied content coming from a variety of news sources.

Santiago Conference and Report

The foregoing were among the central questions and issues of a three-day conference convened by the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program and the Ford Foundation Media Arts and Culture (MAC) Division in Santiago, Chile, March 13–16, 2001. The gathering

was the second International Roundtable on Journalism and Free Expression, which is sponsored by various offices of the Ford Foundation around the world, under the auspices of the MAC Division.

What follows is not just a report of a meeting in Santiago; it is a coherent examination of the topic written by Craig LaMay, associate dean of the Northwestern University School of Journalism, in a most readable and informative style. In addition to points that arose in the conference, LaMay brings in the results of his own research on the topic. As a result, the report is more organized, accessible, and insightful. The latter point is assured by quotes from conference participants—journalists, foundation program officers, activists, financiers, lawyers, and others who are steeped in the issues and exigencies of daily life in transitioning countries.

The report highlights the experiences of our host country, Chile, both in its unique history in and out of democratic governance and as a prototype of a democratizing society. More important, the report delves into what civil society means to a democracy in different contexts, the role of the press in that regard, the role of a pluralistic press as a means for sustaining civil society and democracy, and the difficulties of achieving a pluralistic press that is sustainable over time. The report cites many examples—some presented by participants at the conference, others from the author's research—to probe the dark corners and broader implications of the insights and recommendations of the conference participants.

In the end, participants did arrive at some mutually reinforcing strategies for media sustainability in democratizing countries. These strategies, which are explained in more detail within the report, include the following:

1) Building coalitions between media organizations and nongovernmental organizations,
2) Promoting civil society through unconventional uses by mainstream media, or through the use of new media from video recordings to the Internet, and
3) Applying basic management and capitalistic tools to the emerging media.

These strategies are demonstrated by three examples in the report: those of Radio Jurnal Perempuan in Indonesia, Regional Reach in Kenya, and the Media Development Loan Fund in the Czech Republic and elsewhere.

To help the organizers, participants, and rapporteur find their way, law professor Monroe Price of Cardozo Law School in New York prepared a succinct background paper setting forth the issues we would or should confront in thinking about a sustainable pluralistic press. We reprint that paper in the Appendix to this volume.

Stone Soup

We are grateful to the Ford Foundation for sponsoring this important series. In particular, we thank MAC Deputy Director Jon Funabiki, who founded this project with a story and a label: "Stone Soup." The story—which, in different forms, is folklore in several societies—goes like this: A beggar appears in a village with nothing to eat and no offers of free food. So he borrows a pot from a villager, saying that he will make stone soup with it. He then fills the pot with water, places some stones in the water, and begins to boil it over a fire. A villager, curious how the stranger will make soup from stones, watches as the stranger tastes the brew. "It would taste a lot better with a carrot," the villager says. "That would be great," responds the stranger. "If you bring a carrot I'll share the soup with you." And the two add a carrot to the mix. An inquisitive neighbor asks what is going on, and upon hearing about the soup, offers to bring a turnip. Another brings an onion, and so on. Before long, the soup, to which everyone has contributed, is far better than what any single villager could have made individually.

So too has this stone soup project of the Ford Foundation been a true collaboration among Ford offices around the world and the Aspen Institute. It is yielding not only a tasteful blend for a conference project but a spirit of cooperation and a new network among journalists and activists in democratizing societies around the globe. We hope this report furthers that effort.

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge the turnips, onions, and carrots offered in this project by Ford Foundation program officers throughout the world, including Augusto Varas, Martín Abregú, and María Amelia Palacios from the Andean Region and Southern Cone office, who also graciously hosted the event; Akwasi Aidoo, Basma El-Husseiny, Joseph Gitari, Aida Opoku-Mensah, and Gerry Salole in Africa; Larry Cox and Irena Grudzinska-Gross in New York; Gary Hawes and Suzanne Siskel in Asia; and Irina Iurna in Russia. In New York we appreciate the continuing support of vice president of Communications Alex Wilde; Education, Media, Arts and Culture senior director Ken Wilson; MAC director Margaret Wilkerson; deputy director Jon Funabiki; program officer John Philip Santos; program associate John Bracken; and senior administrative assistant Linda Fingerson. In our host country the Chilean Information Project, particularly Steve Anderson and Marc Killinger, served as local planners, guides, and advisers, along with the local Ford Foundation office.

Monroe Price, who unfortunately could not attend the meeting, was our consulting adviser throughout the planning proces and contributed the background paper (see Appendix). The conference discussion was most ably moderated by the dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California, Geoffrey Cowan. We congratulate Craig LaMay for an excellent job of placing the topic and dialogue in context, pulling from the meeting the nuggets of insight worthy of our further attention. Finally, at the Aspen Institute, we want to acknowledge the countless hours and careful preparation contributed by Amy Korzick Garmer, director of the Institute's Journalism Projects within the Communications and Society Program, program coordinator Lisa Dauernheim, and publications production manager Sunny Sumter-Sana. We all hope you find the contents of this volume interesting and helpful.

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Washington, DC
October 2001

Sustaining Media Pluralism in Democratizing Societies

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Introduction

In 1974 a global "third wave" of democratization began when a military coup in Portugal ended the dictatorship of Antonio Salazar, who himself had come to power in a military coup in 1926. Over the course of the succeeding 15 years, about 30 countries changed from various forms of nondemocratic regimes to nominally democratic ones, most dramatically in South America and Central and Eastern Europe. During this period, notable transitions from nondemocratic rule also occurred in Africa and Asia.

The questions still confronting many of these nations are whether their transitions are permanent or passing and, if the former, what obstacles lie in the way of democratic consolidation. Perhaps the largest obstacle, asserts political scientist Samuel Huntington, is the recognition that "democracy is a solution to the problem of tyranny, but not necessarily to anything else."[1] Poverty, ethnic and racial conflict, inadequate economic development, chronic inflation with substantial external debt, and political leaders—many of them former dissidents—who are not fully committed to the democratic ideal of lawful and peaceful transitions of power all militate against successful consolidation. In transition countries as varied in their political, economic, and cultural experiences as Russia and Indonesia, democracy's hold has been irresolute and, in some key respects, may be in retreat. At the same time, international donors and aid organizations interested in democratization have become increasingly intent on the problem of program sustainability in the nongovernmental sectors of transition societies.[2]

This report focuses on two important elements of democratic sustainability: civil society and the media. It draws on discussion at the second International Roundtable on Journalism and Free Expression, a joint project of the Ford Foundation and the Aspen Institute, held in Santiago, Chile, March 13–16, 2001. In its first such meeting in May

2000, Roundtable participants focused on the legal and structural obstacles that journalists face in transition societies, the ways in which journalists might view their work and their responsibilities in such situations, and the activities that nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations could and should undertake to support free expression and a free press. The Santiago conference took a more forward-looking view; it focused on strategies for sustaining media pluralism in the post-transition period—or, as journalist, educator, and conference moderator Geoff Cowan called them, "models that travel."

There was general agreement that any such models should serve two broad goals. The first goal is the creation and sustainability of civil society and civic values—what one participant called "enhancing the bonds of community, building citizenship, and promoting individuality." The second goal is "building a culture of free expression to which end the conferees discussed a range of issues associated with the "watchdog" role of the press and the need to provide citizens with access to news and information. A quite different conception of the media's contribution to civil society focused on providing citizens with access to the instruments of communication, perhaps even against the prerogatives of those who own them, and especially where ownership is concentrated in the state or in private centers of economic power. These general concerns were joined in a common inquiry—how does a society create and sustain media that engage the public in democratically centered discourse?—and framed by the following specific issues:

- What are the characteristics of "civil society," and what factors affect its growth or decline? What factors make civil society a constructive agent in democratization? Can civil society be antidemocratic?
- What is the role of the state in creating and sustaining a strong civil society? What is the role of an independent and diverse press? Can a nonplural society sustain a vibrant civil society or a vibrant press system?
- What about the seemingly intractable problem of inhospitable environments—from coercive governments, antiquated press laws, and marginalized populations on the one hand to public apathy and unfavorable markets on the other? What strategies

can journalists in developing societies realistically employ to circumvent, if not overcome, these obstacles to civil society and free press development?

To put some flesh on these questions, the conference opened with a lengthy examination of its host country, which emerged from bureaucratic authoritarian rule with the election of a Christian Democratic president, Patricio Aylwin, in 1989—around the same time that much of South America returned to civilian rule after more than a decade of domination by right-wing military governments. The modern Latin American political experience is unique in many ways, not least in the fact that the generals who ruled there did so with the aid of the U.S. government, which in the name of democracy helped launch numerous dictatorships. Officially, U.S. policy in Latin America in the years following World War II was to fight communism; in 1961 president John F. Kennedy had announced an "Alliance for Progress"—a sort of Marshall Plan for the region. For several decades the United States provided direct military, financial, and political support as part of its Pan-American alliance against communism—particularly, in Latin America's case, against internal "enemies of freedom": labor, the poor, and the intelligentsia.[3]

Chile's experience was particularly tragic. "No other Latin American country could equal Chile's record of constitutional government," writes historian John Charles Chasteen. "For years, Chilean democracy had negotiated major ideological differences,"[4] but following the presidential victory of socialist-communist Salvadore Allende and his Popular Unity coalition in 1970—and despite the fact that Allende disavowed violent revolution in favor of constitutional process—the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency adopted a "firm and continuing policy," in the words of the agency itself, "that Allende be overthrown by a coup."[5] The United States embarked on an economic war against Chile, and in 1973, under General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, the Chilean military overthrew Allende's constitutional government in what turned out to be "the bloodiest takeover in the history of Latin America."[6] The country would not emerge from military rule until Aylwin took office in 1990, although the military—and Pinochet—have remained powerful figures in the Chilean transition, and Chileans continue to reconcile themselves with their legacy.

Media and Civil Society in Post-Transition Societies: The Chilean Case

The experience of Chile in the final years of the Pinochet regime illustrates the surge of civil society and media activity that precedes political transition, as well as the difficulty of sustaining that level of mobilization after the nondemocratic government has been toppled. Several Chilean hosts for the Santiago conference—among them Faride Zeran, director of the journalism school at the University of Chile—presented evidence on this point. Speaking primarily of opposition newspapers and public affairs periodicals, Zeran said that "the independent press helped Chilean society to overcome dictatorship at the ballot box and made it possible for people to overcome their fears," but since 1989 the independent press has withered. During the decade of transition that followed the 1988 elections, Zeran said, "We did away with what Pinochet could not undo in 17 years."

Much of the independent press of which Zeran spoke had had an organic relationship with political parties that were illegal under the Pinochet government. As such it also was an elite press, its audience limited to the upper strata of Chilean society. Without question those media were important incubators of dissent and principled opposition to the military regime, but most students of the Chilean transition point to television, the country's only true mass medium, as the more critical element in Pinochet's electoral defeat. Ironically, television's rise to prominence was the result, at least in part, of Pinochet's efforts to modernize the country's communications system, place it in private hands, and orient it toward the market and away from a politically focused print press that depended heavily on the state. One consequence of that modernization was a sixfold increase in television set ownership between 1970 and 1983; television penetration had reached 95 percent at the time of the 1988 plebiscite.

That geographic and demographic reach, more than the editorial content, made television singularly important to democratic transition. Until 1988 Chilean television had offered no political debate; broadcast news under the Pinochet regime was whatever the regime said it was and typically showed political opponents only in a judicial context, where they were portrayed as criminals. Editorially independent broadcasting had ceased following the 1973 coup, when radio stations,

magazines, and newspapers belonging to Unidad Popular, the left-wing coalition that had supported Allende, had been confiscated and either held by the military government or sold to private firms. Media belonging to other parties, such as the Christian Democrats, were not officially closed but were hounded out of existence. The state television network, TVN, and all other television broadcasters came under the control of Pinochet-appointed university presidents. Within a few years, the military government ended the practice of providing public financing to television, and in 1977 it ended all restrictions on television advertising, thereby creating a unique and curious situation in which state-controlled channels were financed by the private sector.[8]

This state of affairs began to change in 1987 with the visit of Pope John Paul II—the first-ever papal visit to the overwhelmingly Catholic country. Although the government tried to orchestrate television coverage of the visit in its favor, it was hard-put to deny or suppress the pope's public call for a return to Chile's democratic traditions. "The result," writes one commentator, "was to legitimate an ethos antagonistic to the authoritarian regime, an ethos that would eventually serve as the basis for the victory of the 'No' side in the 1988 plebiscite."[9] In advance of the plebiscite, under the rules of the government's National Television Council, the opposition received 15 minutes of airtime each day, although it was otherwise banned from news and public affairs programs. The opposition's brief message was juxtaposed with the government's own 15-minute message in 30-minute programs that aired between 10:45 p.m. and 11:15 p.m. on weekdays and between noon and 12:30 p.m. on weekends—time slots the government had chosen to ensure the smallest possible audience.

To the government's great chagrin, the program drew enormous audiences and became the topic of public discussion throughout the country, allowing the opposition to surmount the enormous obstacles to defeating Pinochet at the ballot box. It had to overcome the negative images that the regime had used to portray it as inefficient and violent, even as it offered no candidate or program of its own; it had to convince people cowed by 15 years of state terror that a "No" vote against the government would not result in reprisals; and it had to explain that even if Pinochet lost the plebiscite he would remain in power for a full year before there would be a presidential election.[10]

To meet these challenges, the opposition turned over its media campaign almost entirely to a team of producers, advertising executives, reporters, and political scientists who chose to attack Pinochet with the modern techniques of democratic campaigning: focus groups and polls designed to ascertain voters' concerns, as well as public relations strategies for targeting undecided voters, especially women and the young. Instead of trying to counter the government's relentless negativity and scare tactics, the opposition chose the motto "We are more" and was positive and issue-focused. Rather than devote its entire 15-minute broadcasts to single topics, it did short vignettes on issues ranging from poverty and health to exile and torture, all hosted by a well-known personality and featuring musical jingles, comic sketches, and the personal testimony of common citizens. Pinochet became a target of humor intended to dispel his image of political invincibility; painful subjects such as the "disappeared" were treated respectfully, as the basis for national reconciliation rather than division.

So successful was the television campaign that it became a news story in its own right, covered by the nation's print media. Importantly, where the opposition's television campaign had made the conscious decision not to respond to the government's attacks, the print media covering the campaign *did* respond, disputing the government's arguments and thus providing a valuable complement to the television campaign. This activity underscored the fact that although the television campaign was critical to political mobilization, the print media performed the essential task of providing information. In that role, the print media were among the associations that laid the groundwork for mobilization in the realm of civil society, contributing to and interacting with the social organizations and the political opposition that Pinochet had tried to eradicate, then ignored, and finally misjudged. The television campaign reinforced activity that went on in communities and in face-to-face contact with voters.

After the Transition: Demobilization or Democratic Consolidation?

With few exceptions, said Zeran, the dynamism that existed among the media in the years immediately before and after the plebiscite is now gone. Among the principal alternative weeklies that promoted democratization were *Cauce, Analisis,* and *APSI*—all now defunct. Much of the opposition press had relied on grants from foundations

and political parties for a significant portion of its financing; when those sources dried up, circulation and advertising revenue did not suffice to pay the bills. For a time, some print media that campaigned for democracy did successfully appeal to broader and more diverse audiences, but they too have closed. The last of the important opposition weeklies, *Hoy*, closed for financial reasons in 1998, as did the independent daily *La Epoca*, which had been founded in 1987 and was generally credited for high-quality reporting leading up to the election. *La Epoca* was unable to service its debt from sales and unable to attract advertisers after the transition because of advertiser discomfort with the paper's editorial view. Today Chile's newspaper market is dominated by two large and conservative conglomerates: El Mercurio, S.A., publisher of the Santiago daily *El Mercurio*, and Consorcio Periodistico, S.A. (COPESA), whose flagship paper is *La Tercera*. Both organizations gave and received financial support from the former military government.

Television—which in Chile, as throughout Latin America, came of age in a period dominated by military governments—has increased its standing as the nation's principal mass medium. TVN is now self-financing and subject to the same ratings pressures as other private broadcasters and cable channels. At the same time, TVN is subject to government oversight and interference, just as all media are subject to prosecution under the country's media laws—most notably the "contempt of authority" provisions in the criminal code, the state security law, and the code of military justice. All of these provisions allow public officials, including judges and military officers, to bring criminal charges against news organizations for virtually any kind of criticism.[11] Indeed, only a few weeks before the conference, a Santiago business reporter had been prosecuted under the state security law for an article that was critical of a senator—an offense that on conviction carries a five-year prison sentence.

Most worrisome, said Sebastian Brett of Human Rights Watch, is that Chileans don't seem to care much that their news media are so singularly conservative and uncritical, nor do they perceive their relative lack of choice in this regard or the government's punitive hostility to criticism as a threat to or limitation on their own expressive rights.[12] "If freedom of speech is the oxygen of democracy," Brett asked, "why are there not people in the streets asking for air to breathe? I remember in the early 1990s there were people wearing gags on their

faces standing outside of court buildings protesting. The Chilean Journalists Union led this protest. Now, ten years into democracy, no one is in the streets anymore. What's the reason?" For the most part Brett's Chilean colleagues shared his concern, though both Zeran and Ford Foundation officer Augusto Varas offered that, as Varas put it, "The right for freedom of expression has not been deeply rooted in Chilean civil society." Zeran noted that of the country's 40 journalism schools, 33 are "controlled by the economic right" and "the question of freedom of expression is not on their curriculum."

Zeran's observation confirmed a point discussed subsequently in this report—that the institutions and conditions that are necessary to civil society are not always sufficient to produce one—but it also raised some fundamental questions: What constitutes "media pluralism" in a society, and what role should governments and markets play in creating and sustaining it? A point of view that was not much in evidence at the Santiago conference but is well represented in the scholarly literature is that Chile's media *are* both modern and pluralistic. Indeed, unlike most democratizing countries, Chile did not witness any fundamental changes in its communications system after the fall of the old regime. Instead, the process of privatization that began under Pinochet has continued under subsequent, democratic governments, most notably with the privatization of Radio Nacional in 1994. Chilean television, at least, has also been globalized: Megavision is owned partly by the Mexican broadcasting giant Televisa, and 49 percent of the television operation of the Universidad de Chile is now owned by the Venezuelan consortium Venevision.

All of this activity has had the effect of reducing the government's involvement in the operational aspects of communications—from the point of view of many free expression advocates, an essential task of any meaningful transition to a democratic media sector. It is not the only goal, of course. With respect to editorial matters, most of the conference's Chilean hosts said, the country's hostile press laws combined with the pressures of the market have had the undesirable effect of driving viewpoint diversity from Chile's media, although that perception clearly depends on how one defines viewpoint diversity. The Aspen Institute conferees, for example, spent some time discussing *El Mostrador*, a new online news publication based in Santiago whose general manager, Federico Joannon, made clear that he and his partners

were in business to turn a profit, not to serve as an opposition center to the government. "We care about recovering democracy," Joannon said, "but that is not our key issue. We created the company and risked our capital in the belief that the Internet will become the fundamental medium. We are not committed to the government, the church, or the business community. We are not a refuge for alternative groups; that is legitimate, but not the crux of what we do. We want to provide information to the majority of people—they have the right to be well informed, too—and are trying to be a watchdog on power, a viable business activity in the center of the business world."

Joannon's presentation prompted a discussion that wound throughout the conference about the structural, financial, and editorial foundations of media organizations and how well different configurations comport with the needs of civil society. Criticism of *El Mostrador*, for instance, centered on its "elite" character as an online-only service and, more obliquely, on its non-oppositional approach to public affairs. Such criticism was not limited to the Roundtable. Not long after the conference, a *New York Times* editorial on Latin American media praised *El Mostrador* for being "daring and innovative" but closed with the charge that in Chile "as elsewhere in Latin America, the market has more often produced media that unquestioningly support the powerful in society, failing the public they are supposed to serve."[13]

Charges such as these—especially when they come from large, private, and profitable Western media firms—are difficult to evaluate. Throughout developed democracies, for instance, the leading public affairs media, almost without exception, are private firms that earn the bulk of their revenues from advertising, not circulation.[14] (Advertising and other forms of sales activity also have become an essential source of revenue for large public media organizations such as the British Broadcasting Corporation, which now derives about 20 percent of its annual revenues from its profit-seeking subsidiaries.) More generally, although it may be true—as most of the conference's Santiago hosts argued—that Chile's media do a poor job of covering public affairs, it also is true that the low levels of political involvement and political polarization in the Chilean public are characteristic of consolidated democracies.[15] In short, what some of the conferees viewed as public apathy and a diminished media market, others may fairly regard as measures of successful democratic transition.

Clearly there are multiple valid and important measures of media pluralism;[16] where the state wields substantial powers of censorship and control, as in Chile, pluralism will suffer. It may be circumscribed further where major sources of news and information are controlled by non-media sectors of the economy with links to the government or large stakes in public policy. COPESA, for example, is controlled by a group tied to Chile's banking industry—just as in the United States the NBC television network is owned by General Electric, a large defense contractor, and in Italy three television networks are owned by the country's prime minister. With regard to the practical problems of *which* voices to sustain in a transition society and *how* to sustain them, however, the conference participants held a variety of conflicting views on the role that governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) should play, on one hand, and the role of the market on the other. For example, Edetaen Ojo, executive director of Media Rights Agenda in Lagos, talked about the concentration of media in southern Nigeria and the complete lack of media in the north; to him, the issue was essentially geographic, although he acknowledged that in other parts of the world, ethnic, religious, or political diversity might be what matters. With respect to the "how" question, Brett noted that in the early 1990s left-wing members of the Chilean legislature proposed to enforce pluralism by statute, essentially guaranteeing financial support for media that were unable to find sufficient footing in the market. The Chilean Supreme Court declared the law unconstitutional—a decision that Brett called correct. "Judges should not have that responsibility," he said, although he clearly supported the goal of the legislation.

So how to get from here to there? Because so much of the conference discussion about media pluralism and sustainability was rooted in the language of civil society, it might be helpful to examine some of the literature and lessons from that sector in the years following the third wave.

Civil Society and Its Problems

The idea of civil society has its origins in the Scottish Enlightenment of the 18th century, although it received new visibility and celebrity in the years preceding the collapse of the Soviet Union when the political opposition to authoritarian governments in Central and Eastern

Europe embraced the concept. Over the past decade untold aid monies and conferences have been devoted to civil society, and a large literature has bloomed on the subject. Some of that literature is analytically helpful; much is conceptually muddy or romantic. Scholars debate the definition of the term; journalists use it to mean a variety of things (including simple civility) and have invoked it as a remedy for any number of political and professional ills. One commentator notes that "rarely has so heavy an analytic cargo been strapped on the back of so slender a conceptual beast."[17]

The scholarly literature on civil society generally agrees that the term excludes private business and "political society" but includes just about everything else that falls under the rubric of voluntary association, from churches and social clubs to organized labor and even organized crime.[18] As far as democratization is concerned, the point of these associations (ideally) is to articulate and advance social values and interests. Civil society can include large social movements (most notably, today, feminism, environmentalism, and human rights), political groups, and professional associations (including journalism and media organizations). In its modern form, civil society places renewed emphasis on ethnic, racial, and religious identities and includes a wide array of single-issue groups with varying commitments to pluralism and democracy.[19] Still another, much-noted feature of modern civil society is its global character. Tens of thousands of NGOs have become the locus of civil society activity, and in some cases—such as the negotiations leading up to the global climate accords at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro—decisions taken in the civil society sector have rivaled or even superceded those taken in the political and economic sectors by sovereign states.[20]

At the Aspen Institute Roundtable, discussion on civil society turned on a few core concerns. For some participants, the primary problem was (and presumably will remain for some time) building civil society; in some countries and regions, civil society is for one reason or another weak or nonexistent, and sometimes where it does exist it is not very pluralist—or worse, it is antidemocratic. For other participants, the problem was reinvigorating a civil society sector that in the years after democratic transition has withered.

Civil Society, the State, and Democratic Transition

Scholarship on democratization argues that the character and strength of civil society institutions depend above all on the type of regime that preceded the transition period. Political scientist Juan Linz, for example, has argued that the paths to democratic transition and consolidation vary according to whether the deposed regime was authoritarian, totalitarian, post-totalitarian, or sultanistic.[21] As far as civil society is concerned, the defining characteristic of totalitarianism is the complete lack of political, economic, or social pluralism, all of which the state has tried systematically to obliterate. Post-totalitarian regimes allow the emergence of some forms of social pluralism, but that pluralism usually is located within the regime itself—such as an opposition faction within the ruling party. Authoritarian regimes typically have civil society institutions that evolve outside the regime—in the private space of culture, art, and religiosity, as well as in the economy—and can be very strong but are not necessarily democratic in impulse. In China, for example, the civil society sector has grown dramatically in recent years, but that growth has not been accompanied by any significant democratization movement. In sultanistic societies, Linz writes, the defining characteristic of the regime is unrestrained personal leadership of the kind that typified Marcos' Philippines, Haiti under the Duvaliers, Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire (Congo), Suharto's Indonesia, or Iran under the Shah. In such societies, all forms of pluralism are precarious; where civil society exists, it is subject to the whims of the ruler, for whom the state and the military are personal instruments to be used at the ruler's discretion.

With each type of nondemocratic regime, Linz argues, the most important element in the development of civil society after the transition is the concurrent development of the rule of law and the guarantee of civil liberties. The corollary to this argument is important—and a subject of considerable discussion at the Santiago conference: *The most effective guarantee of a healthy civil society is a strong state, and the struggle between civil society and the state is not a zero-sum game.* Indeed, in the absence of a strong state, civil society can easily erupt in civil war; most of the armed conflicts since the end of the Cold War have been intrastate affairs in ethnically and religiously pluralist countries where the proliferation of civil society associations devoted to narrow causes threatened or destroyed democratic

transition. In a 1998 editorial that was sharply critical of "civil society romantics," the Indian newspaper *The Hindu* observes that "civil society finds as much space for casteist, class, communal and patriarchal projects as for movements challenging all these, and dominant structures in civil society can neutralize democratic agendas."[22] Moreover, as conference participant Bimo Nugroho said of the Indonesian experience, weak or corrupt states can politicize civil society and thus exacerbate rather than ameliorate social differences.[23] This is as true among nations as it is within them. Several commentators have noted that the global activities of many NGOs and international governmental organizations (IGOs) have played a role in triggering ethnic nationalism and religious fundamentalism, both of which tear at the state, encourage human rights violations, and provoke humanitarian crises. In short, civil society gains that come at the expense of a weakened state, although predictable and perhaps even healthy in the short term, may not be supportive of democratization in the long term. As political theorist Michael Walzer writes,

> The state itself is unlike all the other associations. It both frames civil society and occupies space within it. It fixes the boundary conditions and the basic rules of all associational activity. It compels association members to think about a common good, beyond their own conceptions of the good life…. And across the entire range of association, individual men and women need to be protected against the power of officials, employers, experts, party bosses, factory foremen, directors, priests, parents, patrons; and small and weak groups need to be protected against large and powerful ones. For civil society, left to itself, generates radically unequal power relationships which only state power can challenge.[24]

That is not to say that civil society joined with a strong state automatically results in political pluralism. Even where governments are strong and ostensibly liberal, they are not necessarily supportive of civil society. Running roughly concurrent with the most recent global wave of democratization has been the rise in Western developed societies of what some scholars call "authoritarian liberalism"—the process by which the role of the market in social organization has been

maximized and that of civil society diminished, sometimes with strong impetus from governments.[25] According to John Dryzek, for example, the British government under prime minister Margaret Thatcher attacked the conditions of civil society by trying to restrict the activities of trade unions, limit press freedom (including in particular that of the British Broadcasting Corporation), curtail the rights of criminal defendants, make local authorities more responsive to the central government, politicize the police, and so on.

Many authoritarian states—China, Vietnam, and Iran, to name a few—have allowed political, social, and economic liberalization to enlarge the space for civil society operations, but only because the government regards those operations as central to its own goals of control. In China, for example, privately published newspapers now far outnumber state papers and engage in investigative reporting and muckraking. Journalists have to carefully self-censor themselves, though not always. When the ruling party began its own highly publicized anticorruption campaign, it encouraged the private print press to join in. Chinese television features live news, call-in programs, and celebrity interviews, and the government allows a great deal of general news and entertainment programming to enter the country, but the growth of electronic media is largely the result of market reforms and the government's desire to invest in growth industries, and the government does not hesitate to jam international broadcasts that are critical of the regime. Groups that represent broad portions of the population (such as women's groups) and have aims that are not clearly focused on officially stated goals typically have a harder time establishing themselves. When they do it is often because they undertake some "acceptable" activity; the government looks favorably upon groups that give support to women living in poverty, for example, but not to those that object to the official economic policies that keep them there.[26]

Many democratization studies note that in some regions of the world—particularly Pacific Asia and the Middle East—the dividing line between the government and society is neither clear nor immutable. The Chinese language, it is said, has many terms for "state" but none for "civil society." Nomenclature aside, many scholars argue that civil society does not really exist in Pacific Asia—at least not in the liberalizing sense in which Western political theorists use the term. The thrust of the argument focuses on an "illiberal middle class" that emphasizes

"community rather than autonomy and moral certainty rather than tolerance" and has a substantial economic stake in the stability of the public sector.[27] One piece of evidence in this theory is the extent to which press freedom is curtailed throughout the region. Self-censorship is common; where it fails, as one commentator put it in a description of the South Korean media, the state is regularly "on hand to offer Confucian guidance."[28]

Several of the Aspen Institute conferees described similarly illiberal civil society tendencies in their own countries or regions. In Egypt, said Basma El-Husseiny, a Ford Foundation participant at the Santiago conference, society itself is "nonplural" and thus there is fairly low tolerance among the public for diverse ideas or even free expression generally. At present, she said, the most potent elements of Egyptian civil society are the Islamic groups that "provide educational institutions, provide services to the community, and work on conservative legislation." One measure of their effectiveness can be found in news reports that Cairo's al-Azhar University—for a millennium the unrivaled center of higher education in the Islamic world—has embarked on a censorship campaign to weed out vice from Arabic literature, film, theater, music, and scholarship.[29] Konstanty Gebert, consultant to the Media Development Loan Fund and a columnist for *Gazeta Wyborcza* in Warsaw, made a similar observation about the political influence of Catholic and Jewish fundamentalists in Poland and Israel, respectively.

In some countries the lines between civil society and the authority of the state simply do not exist; the government itself dominates the civil society sector through government-owned nongovernmental organizations (GONGOs). In authoritarian Iran, for example, large public-assistance organizations known as *bunyads* are linked with the ruling clergy and dominate national finance, housing, transportation, and agriculture. In many Middle Eastern societies, there are so-called Royal NGOs whose boards of directors are appointed by royal decree; these Royal NGOs carry out government development projects. There also are many independent NGOs that are not registered with the government and thus are technically illegal (as in Kuwait); they manage to survive, however, in part because they enjoy support from key parliamentary committees.

Civil Society After the Transition

For many Santiago conference participants, the problem with civil society is how to sustain it in something other than a purely oppositional form after the early period of democratic transition. Several scholarly and political commentators looking at transition societies from Central Europe to Latin American have commented on the processes of civil society takeoff, stagnation, and institutionalization—in short, the gradual inclusion of civil society into the state after transition and the consequent weakening of the civil society sector.[30]

One commentator describes these processes as "demobilization" and "decapitation."[31] Demobilization occurs when democratic transition follows a negotiated settlement between the old regime and civil society. This is precisely what happened in most of Eastern and Central Europe in 1989–1990, where national roundtable negotiations were critical to transitions in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany. In the course of negotiations, some of the enmity that exists between the state and civil society softens, and in any event the immediate reason for civil society's intensity—exclusion from political life—disappears. Very often demobilization is a conscious decision, taken to make way for the development of democratic politics. In Chile, for example, much of the civil society movement in fact was the creation of the outlawed Christian Democrat and Socialist parties. In the period after the 1988 plebiscite, these parties were again able to participate legally in politics and consciously chose to demobilize so that they could get on with the business of governing.

Decapitation occurs when many of civil society's most articulate and active spokespeople are drawn into the new government, as in Poland and the Czech Republic, thereby depriving civil society organizations of their leadership. The irony is that decapitation is most likely where civil society has been most successful in promoting democratization.

In some transition societies, demobilization and decapitation are particularly troublesome because civil society is weak to begin with. In post-communist European states, even those that liberalized in the years following Stalin's death in 1950, many civil society organizations had little opportunity to escape state scrutiny and harassment or to engage in autonomous social action. So long was the experience of

repression that civil society organizations were simply crushed out of existence—and, as important, out of memory. In Latin America, by contrast, the bureaucratic authoritarian regimes that ruled virtually the entire region in 1970 also were relatively short-lived; following democratic transition about a decade ago, political parties, trade unions, and other repressed organizations were resurrected, often with the same leadership that existed before dictatorship. More generally, most Latin American countries had had experience with the political and institutional elements that are essential to civil society: an accountable executive, a capable bureaucracy, laudatory experience with civil and political rights, the rule of law, and transparency in political decision making.

In Central and Eastern Europe, civil society has been further strained by economic reforms that, though necessary, have effectively created dual societies—one far better off than the other economically and socially. Dual societies commonly exist in other developed and developing countries, but in Central and Eastern Europe the duality is particularly divisive because so many of the old structures of socialist production now coexist with large sectors of the economy that have adapted to the competitive market. Latin America again provides an interesting contrast. By the time Pinochet stepped down in 1989, for example, Chile had the strongest economy in the region, one that enjoyed broad popular support. All of the Christian Democratic presidents that followed the dictator—Patricio Aylwin, Eduardo Frei, and now Socialist Ricardo Lagos—have emphasized social justice, but none has introduced significant economic changes. Arguably, the economic stability that Pinochet brought to Chile also has provided some of the necessary social stability for the continuing investigation of and national reckoning with the dictator's crimes.[32]

Not all of these factors (e.g., demobilization and decapitation) argue against the creation of civil society, and some are short-term problems. New leaders eventually will replace old ones, for instance. Other problems are more serious. By its nature, civil society is about the creation of social unity through fragmentation and conflict; in dual societies, however, such conflict is apt to have less to do with governance than with the allocation of state resources. Where governments are weak, this kind of civil society discord can be antidemocratic and destabilizing.

Civil Society and Media Pluralism

In an important background paper prepared for the Santiago conference, legal scholar Monroe Price defines media sustainability in terms of "reasonable objectives" and whether sufficient and varied revenues exist to meet them.[33] Some objectives may be perfectly reasonable (maximizing audiences, for example) but make little or no contribution to the information needs (balanced and complete reporting, presentation and discussion of opposing political views) of healthy civil society association. The choice of objectives is critical: Because news and public affairs reporting may cost more to produce than other kinds of content and, at the least, competes for time or space that otherwise could go to more lucrative fare (e.g., entertainment), a newspaper or television station that provides news and information may find that the *level* of revenues necessary for sustainability is higher, as well as that the *sources* of those revenues are fewer or significantly different (for instance, not-for-profit rather than for-profit).

Thus, although sustaining a variety of media may be important as a general civil society goal ("the key to civic engagement," according to one conference participant), it matters a lot what *particular* civil society goals a country's media policy is supposed to serve. At the Santiago conference, for instance, it was not always clear what goals participants had in mind when they spoke of "media pluralism." In economic terms, for example, pluralism might be measured in terms of *product* diversity (the number of media choices available to consumers); in normative terms it might be measured in *idea* diversity (point-of-view variation, which presumably is essential to rich democratic discourse) or *access* diversity (a variant on idea diversity that seeks to make sure all ideas get adequate time and emphasis).

In practice, pluralism is likely to be a function of some combination of these measures.[34] Talking about media coverage of the second *Intifada*, for example, Daoud Kuttab of the Institute of Modern Media at Al-Quds University in Ramallah spoke about the development of Arab satellite stations, local television, and radio and their importance in how the world—and especially Arabs themselves—viewed the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Whereas the major wire services often were biased and Arab state television tightly controlled, Kuttab said, satellite stations allowed people to see "professional Arab journalists working

for the BBC or other western agencies reporting on how the conflict was affecting the Palestinians, and also giving time to Israeli officials who speak Arabic." At the community level, he said, local stations had the "unique opportunity to literally stick their cameras out the window, sit under the table, and give the audience an amazing show." Thus, many Arab television audiences had both product and idea diversity: more channels to choose from and perspectives other than the government's.

At some point, however, the logic of markets suggests that increasing competition will drive overall quality down rather than up. The result is a media system that has product diversity (arguably an important civil society requirement) but provides little of the news and information the democratization needs (idea diversity) and where consumers may reduce rather than increase their consumption of information (thus diminishing access diversity). Even as Kuttab lauded the variety of choices now available to Arab viewers, for instance, he bemoaned the fact that the private stations depend on advertising and the public stations become "government mouthpieces." "There is little room between these two choices," he said, "and only international funding keeps alive a third way."

There is an important civil society and media sustainability issue here: Programming subsidies, whatever their source, may have little or no practical effect because increasing the amount and variety of information does not change the fact that the fundamental market failure is at the point of consumption, not supply. That is not to say that satisfying consumer values should be the primary concern of a media system or that non-quantifiable social values do not matter—only that the values that *are* emphasized in a media system will have consequences that play out in the realm of civil society and media sustainability. Some conference participants were less concerned with access diversity, for example, than they were with public access to the instruments of mass communication. Such a concern shifts the emphasis in values from free expression to open communication—from the rights of speakers to the rights of audiences; it also may suggest that the media's free press rights are to be balanced against the public's free speech rights and that the government has a role in balancing the two.

Finally, the issue of media sustainability has to be considered at the micro level, in terms of the *particular* goals a media organization serves. Different goals come with different expectations about sustainability. Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, is home to more than 270 radio and television stations, many of them supported by NGOs and IGOs. Some were created to provide information during the crisis of war and reconstruction, others to facilitate democratic transition, and still others to counter nationalist programming from Zagreb and Belgrade. At some future date, many of these stations will close after they lose the benefit of donor assistance, and presumably many should as the country stabilizes. Among the media that remain, some will feature mostly low-quality entertainment fare and sensationalism. The problem of sustaining these media, Price notes, is less interesting, and arguably less important, than sustaining "more public-oriented stations"—including, perhaps, even state-supported stations that compete with them.

Where these sustainability issues get truly difficult are where the goals of "independent" media are ambiguous (like independence itself). Recently, for example, the Russian company Media-MOST lost control over its television station NTV and its publishing house *Sem Dnej* (Seven Days, publisher of the daily *Segodnya* and the weekly newsmagazine *Itogi*) to the huge and partly state-owned gas utility Gazprom, which technically controls only 46 percent of Media-Most but called in $300 million worth of loans in 2000 and staged an armed raid on the station on April 15, 2001. In the weeks before the raid, American media mogul Ted Turner and financier George Soros reportedly offered to buy approximately 19 percent of NTV's shares from Vladimir Gusinsky for $225 million; the Russian Duma firmly rejected a resolution to support the station; and on March 31 between 10,000 to 20,000 Muscovites rallied in Pushkin Square holding signs that read, "We want our NTV."[35] After the raid, more than 350 NTV employees reportedly quit or were fired, some going over to Gusinsky's cable channel TNT, which reaches only about half of Russia's 145 million people and also is deeply in debt to Gazprom. At one point several of NTV's journalists tried to negotiate a merger with another independent channel—Boris Berezovsky's TV-6—but no deal ever materialized.[36] Eduard Sagalaev, the respected journalist who had led TV-6, was replaced in March by Igor Shabdurasulov, a former government official, and Berezovsky himself has fled the country to avoid criminal charges.

International observers have rightfully condemned the "Kremlin's determination to reassert its dominance over the news media,"[37] but much of the criticism overlooks the fact that neither Gusinsky nor Berezovsky was a model of professional independence or integrity. During the Yeltsin years, NTV had been alternatively opposed to the government's policies and openly allied with them, and Berezovsky reportedly gained the chairmanship of his media empire by having the previous chairman assassinated.[38] Yet NTV had done some distinguished and critical reporting, making its reputation for independence in its coverage of the Chechen wars, and both NTV and TV-6 were free of the large banking, mining, oil, and electricity conglomerates, many of them state-owned, that control most of Russia's other major media outlets.[39]

The issues of government interference at NTV played out in dramatic fashion but have not been unique to Russia. Similar conflicts have occurred in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic, in each case with government broadcasting councils dominated by the ruling party making top editorial appointments to national television or radio stations. Unlike their Western European counterparts, public broadcasters in Central and Eastern Europe typically lack the layers of administrative insulation necessary to ensure editorial independence. Nor is it unusual for journalists at public stations to maintain close contact with government officials, particularly those who appointed them, or for politicians to telephone editors in advance of an election to complain that coverage of their parties is unfair or inadequate.

Journalists in the region have responded to these pressures in a variety of ways and with mixed results. In Slovenia, for example, public broadcasters in 1999 published an extensive code of professional ethics, in the process staking out the boundaries that define editorial independence from state and private sources of influence and interference. As impressive as the code is, it doubtlessly is more effective because Slovenian public broadcasters enjoy a source of revenue (surcharges on viewers' electricity bills) that is independent of the state budget and because the country's broadcast council is not appointed by the parliament.

Czech public media also earn revenues from a license fee, but the independence of Czech Television came under international scrutiny in late 2000 and early 2001 when the government council that oversees the

station dismissed its director and replaced him with Jiri Hodac, an experienced former BBC editor who purportedly had connections with former prime minister Vaclav Klaus and his Civic Democratic Party. The journalists at Czech Television suspected government meddling and had their suspicions confirmed when Hodac named former journalist and Klaus economic advisor Jana Bobosikova as the station's news director. She promptly fired several editors and staffers, at which point the editors barricaded themselves in the newsroom and for a period of weeks broadcast their own "unofficial" version of the news, using satellite and cable links. President Vaclav Havel and other prominent Czech writers and artists gave support to the protestors, and at one point some 75,000 Czechs rallied to their cause in Wencelas Square, turning the entire episode into an international embarrassment for the government. Hodac eventually resigned and his cadre of new managers was fired; all of the protesting editors stayed on, including those whom Bobosikova had fired weeks earlier.

Presumably the outcome of the Czech Television seizure was a victory for press independence—that was the common consensus in news accounts everywhere—but another view, carefully articulated at the Santiago conference by Jeremy Druker, editor of *Transitions Online* in Prague, was that the rebels (as they called themselves) may have paid a bit too dearly for their cause. "The journalists behind the protests did a great job of manipulating their own media," Druker said, "and were not at all independent or objective in their coverage of their own demonstration." Ironically, Hodac had argued before resigning that one of his goals was to make Czech Television more professional. He also had said he wanted to make the service more efficient in the face of increased competition and a continually dwindling audience share.

Strategies for Media Sustainability

The Russian and Czech experiences, no less than Chile's or any number of others, raise several questions about the matrix of media sustainability and, as Monroe Price calls it, the "ideal form of sustainability." For a brief time at the Roundtable there was discussion on this subject in terms of the optimal mix of not-for-profit and for-profit private media, public and private sources of revenue. That discussion ranged broadly between the "BBC model" of social democratic journalism with its direct state subsidies and the

"American" model of liberal journalism, with its reliance on the market and indirect state subsidies (through the tax code, antitrust law, postal regulations, and so on). The participants soon agreed, however, that this subject was treated extensively elsewhere (including, notably, in other Aspen Institute publications)[40] and probably was of limited relevance to the experience of transition societies. Eventually, they gave detailed attention to three strategies for promoting media pluralism that most believed were economically sustainable and supportive of the democratizing features of civil society.

- *Build coalitions between media organizations and NGOs.* In some cases this might mean actually developing media capacity for an NGO so that it makes an independent contribution to the mix of media in a society; it also could mean providing media outlets with programming on important public issues or educating journalists and media organizations about the role they play, for better or worse, in civil society development. Several conference participants, for instance, encouraged media literacy programs (for the general public and for journalists, who often know too little about the effects of their work) and various forms of media criticism (e.g., program monitoring, academic studies, ombudsmen).
- *Develop unconventional uses of traditional media and experiment with new media to reach underserved or marginalized populations and promote civil society development in ways that mainstream media may not or cannot.* Video and audio recordings on tape or CD-ROM are relatively inexpensive and allow easy distribution of programming. Entertainment and other non-news media—television soap operas, videogames or novellas, even public relations campaigns—can be as effective as news and public affairs programming, maybe more so, in promoting democratic values.[41] The Internet, of course, can open access to people who are not professional communicators and allow them to take part in shaping civil society and the practice of journalism.
- *Learn and apply the basics of management—economics, financial accounting, and marketing—and use them to secure loans and other sources of capital.* A clear subtext of the Santiago

> conference was that journalism organizations in post-transition societies, whether for-profit or not-for-profit, cannot ignore the demands and opportunities of the market. In this regard, developing and sustaining the core business is only part of the challenge.

With some variation, these strategies are the same as those taught in media seminars at leading management schools—which typically emphasize the need to articulate clear organizational values and then make them operational through joint ventures, experiments and learning projects, and a more sophisticated understanding of audiences and their needs.[42] The virtue of these strategies—indeed, what makes them effective—is that they are mutually reinforcing. Three case studies at the Santiago conference illustrated how they might work; interestingly, one had its origins in the women's movement, another in advertising, and the third in journalism; two were not-for-profit, the other for-profit.

Radio Jurnal Perempuan, Indonesia

In the tumultuous transition period that followed the fall of Suharto in 1988, the number of Indonesians living in poverty has increased from 20 million to 80 million, said Gadis Arivia, chief editor of *Jurnal Perempuan (Women's Journal)*, and the impact of the change has been felt most acutely by women and children. Unemployment among women is high; the price of contraception, which was once affordable, has jumped substantially even as incomes have fallen; anemia among pregnant women as well as maternal and infant mortality have significantly increased. So too have domestic violence, rape, and sexual harassment. Saying "democracy without women is not a democracy," Arivia described her organization as an NGO engaged in nonpartisan "committed journalism" that sought to demand access for women to decision making in the public and private sectors and to encourage "positive representation" of women in the mainstream media.

Jurnal Perempuan, which has received grants from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Royal Dutch Embassy, is a 5,000-circulation journal read mostly by academics and professionals. More interesting, at least in the context of the Santiago conference, are the organization's other activities. One is training

academics and journalists to be more aware of gender issues in their teaching and reporting. That effort includes advocating for women journalists, who make up 30–40 percent of the reporting corps in Indonesia but rarely get the best assignments and almost never break into management. A second activity is *Radio Jurnal Perempuan* (*RJP*), a 20-minute weekly radio program for women that airs on more than 100 stations across the country's thousands of islands. The program is distributed on audiotape and now on CD-ROM and, according to Arivia, is heard by 5 million to 6 million women every week. Actually getting the program on the air, however, was not easy. The men who make the programming decisions at radio stations did not care much for *RJP's* content or its audience demographic, so "we paid for the first three months to get radio stations to put Indonesian women on the air," Arivia said. Even now, some stations cut stories from the program that they don't like. As the program found its audience, "we bargained again and got the price down, and now we don't pay at all. Now we ask our station partners to contribute, and about 60 percent do. We try to attract sponsors, and many are interested, but they are not always the sponsors we like. We have The Body Shop, which is excellent. Philip Morris is very keen to advertise, and the money is tempting, but it's Philip Morris. Nestle wants more passive and domesticated women than what we cover."

Regional Reach Limited, Kenya

A second case study focused on providing video programming to the large rural populations in Africa who are out of reach of virtually all media except state radio. With cooperation from the government (which provides security), the for-profit organization Regional Reach Ltd. in Nairobi provides free televisions and videocassette recorders (VCRs) to rural communities, placing them in central village locations. People then congregate to watch entertainment and news programs that Regional Reach provides on VHS tapes, said Rose Kimotho, a former advertising executive who founded and now directs the service.

A typical tape starts with the state television program, Kimotho said, but then moves on to subjects such as farming, AIDS, football, music, and religion. Revenue for the service comes from advertising, but some programming is provided through partnerships with not-for-profit organizations—churches, for example, and USAID, which paid for 40 television sets and VCRs in return for free distribution of its messages on

AIDS and malaria. The service operates in 200 village centers and has about 1 million adult viewers each month; as Regional Reach moves from VHS tapes to terrestrial broadcast transmission, Kimotho said, those numbers will increase. "For many of these people," she said, "it's the first time they've ever seen a TV. It's like being in a theater—it's very quiet. There are many runners from our area who so far as anyone remembers just left the village and went somewhere else. So we have programs on athletics, and they see these people running in Europe, in color and on TV. The impact is amazing—it's the first contact they have with the wider world. Until now it was just government news on the radio."

Media Development Loan Fund, Czech Republic and United States

No one at the Santiago conference spoke more directly to its topic—or the participants' concerns—than Konstanty Gebert, a writer for *Gazeta Wyborcza* and former vice president for the Media Development Loan Fund (MDLF), which has offices in Prague and New York.[43] Saying that grants "are fine under dictatorship and transition," Gebert objected that they also are short-lived, tied to the goals of the grantor, and "corrupting—both literally, and in the sense that they make us comfortable with not being accountable to financial money." On that conviction, he and several colleagues created MDLF in 1996 to promote editorially independent and financially self-sustaining media in developing democracies. A private foundation, MDLF is a not-for-profit, "mission-oriented" venture capital fund that provides low-interest loans and other forms of financing to media firms in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, Asia, Africa, and Latin America; MDLF's own list of donors and lenders includes government agencies (e.g., from the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Sweden) and NGOs (e.g., the Open Society Institute and the MacArthur Foundation).

Importantly, with its loans MDLF also provides management training and assistance. "We want our money back," said Gebert. "We behave like a major investment bank, and one element of the loan contract is that on the management and business side we rule. We never interfere with editorial policies—editorial assistance is purely voluntary, technological assistance on the same basis—but the demands on the business side have to be executed. Our clients wind up improved journalistically, but also with business expertise that makes it possible for them to compete." Since its founding, MDLF has disbursed $15 million in loans, of which

borrowers have so-far repaid $3 million in principal and interest. No loans go to state media or to media with foreign ownership. "The whole idea is that it is possible to be independent and make a profit and not be killed by the loan," Gebert said.

As discussion at the Roundtable made clear, MDLF's approach to media sustainability is unfamiliar and even vaguely threatening to news organizations that still identify with the alternative role they played in the period prior to and immediately following democratic transition. (It is a safe bet that MDLF's approach also would appear unfamiliar and threatening to many media organizations in stable industrialized democracies, many of which have only recently begun to think seriously about strategy and do not face the obstacles—well-financed, competitive state media; little or no access to capital; restrictive press laws—that media in democratizing countries typically do.) According to Gebert, fewer than half of the media organizations that have sought MDLF's help have received loans. After working through the business plan with MDLF managers, some have decided not to take the loan.

Conclusion

Each of the foregoing examples draws on at least two of the sustainability strategies identified at the Santiago conference. Each suggests ways of thinking about media contributions to democratization that are conceptually and operationally different from the oppositional, crisis-driven, and donor-supported models that accompanied democratic transition and its immediate aftermath. Certainly in many cases—in the Balkans, for instance—sustainability can still be measured primarily by political objective: the need to provide information in an election, to incubate independent and professional media where there are none, or even to provide opposition or clandestine media in opposition to antidemocratic regimes. In societies in which democratic consolidation is under way, however, the problems of media sustainability mirror those of civil society and probably require similar responses: new and more varied kinds of civic and professional associations, perhaps less overtly partisan, that speak to a broader array of social needs and aspirations.

That said, the sustainability strategies discussed at the Santiago Roundtable raise issues that require further consideration from

journalists and NGOs, scholars and policymakers. The first issue concerns journalism's relationship to civil society and what kinds of journalism best suit the needs of post-transition democratizing societies. *RJP's* strategy of building a coalition of other NGOs, government funders, and private advertisers around the women's movement, for example, prompted a short discussion about whether such activity is an appropriate journalistic exercise or one that compromises (or at least risks) editorial independence. On the whole, the conference participants were enthusiastic about "developing models that bring civil society together with the press and force journalists to see themselves as part of a larger society, not just a club," as one described the process. Several conferees spoke favorably of "public journalism" (sometimes also called "civic" or "participatory" journalism), which some media scholars have suggested might have particular value in democratizing societies.[44] Although many of these associations clearly are valuable, as with civil society associations generally there is nothing inherently democratic or even "civil" about coalitions of media organizations, private firms, and NGOs—none of which can be called to account at the ballot box.

Moreover, where such coalitions do serve civil society goals, sustaining them may not be so easy. An issue that was central to the Roundtable topic but little discussed was whether *Radio Jurnal Perempuan* or any similarly popular news and public affairs medium could long survive its own success. Jeremy Druker of *Transitions Online* (itself a relatively new provider of high-quality news and information in Central and Eastern Europe) pointedly asked Arivia Gadis, for example, whether *RJP* might one day find itself "shut out" of the women's programming market as commercial stations realized that market's value and began to offer duplicative—if less sensitive or valuable—programming. The implication of the question is critical: Even if *RJP* remains a not-for-profit, high-quality service with no direct competition, other entrants in the women's programming market will increase the competition for audiences and revenues and thus deprive *RJP* of the flexibility it now enjoys in soliciting private and public support—a loss that inevitably will have consequences for its mission and its programming. In short, as the Ford Foundation's Jon Funabiki suggested, the forces that transform civil society associations in the period after democratic transition have their corollaries in the media

sector. Their effect *may* be detrimental to media pluralism, and thus to civil society, but not necessarily.[45] Again, much depends on what one values in a media system and what the system's goals are. In the post-transition phase, several conference participants said, consumer commercial media that are not especially political or sophisticated—soap operas, novellas, video games, advertising—also can be the most effective in addressing broad social needs such as literacy and family planning.

A final issue of importance to civil society development is the continued advance of telecommunications that allow reciprocal exchange of news and information and, as important, the means for ordinary citizens to join in and change journalistic practice. Despite the presence of two important Internet news organizations at the Santiago conference—*El Mostrador* and *Transitions Online*—Internet communications did not receive much attention there. Presumably, the omission owed in part to the relative lack of access that citizens in many transition countries have even to basic telecommunications; fixed-line telephone density in Africa, for example, is between 1 and 2 per 10,000 people, and according to the United Nations fewer than 1 percent of Africans have access to the Internet.[46]

Deployment of new technologies, from wireless telephony to satellites, will increase global access rates, and several thoughtful commentators have argued that as Internet use grows it will restructure power in a populist direction by politicizing mass audiences and making elites and political and economic intermediaries less important.[47] Internet communications can be effective in circumventing state repression or, at the least, pushing it into the glare of the international spotlight. In Zimbabwe, for example, the cellular company Ecoweb functions as an Internet service provider—effectively breaking the telecommunication monopoly held by the government—and features headlines from the *Zimbabwe Standard* and the *Zimbabwe Independent*, two independent newspapers that have been targets of government harassment.[48] In Russia, *Itogi*, the popular newsmagazine lost in the Gazprom takeover of Media-MOST, now publishes its "official" version on the Internet, calling the company's version a "fabrication."[49]

The counter-argument to these developments, and to the predictions for democratization that follow them, holds that in the United States

and in Western European democracies—where Internet use is highest and electronic information is widely available—there has not been a corresponding increase in political engagement. Although Internet communication may make political systems more fluid and accessible, one commentator writes, the long-term result may be pluralism of a more "fragmented and unstable character."[50] Journalists in some transition countries—Russia, for example—already have witnessed the rise of antidemocratic online communications; as Internet communication becomes more ubiquitous, it will change the contours of discussion about civil society and the media.

In the end, what may be most helpful to the sustainability discussion is a clearer statement of the values at stake in democratization and the operational measures by which a healthy civil society and a pluralistic media system are to be judged. Journalists must remember that they can aid in reporting and analysis, but they cannot always chart the course of democratic consolidation—and should not be expected to. Walter Lippmann once wrote that "the problem of the press is confused because the critics and the apologists expect the press to…make up for all that was not foreseen in the theory of democracy."[51] The Santiago Roundtable on Freedom of Expression made some significant strides toward sorting out the confusion, but as the third wave settles—as some democracies consolidate and others lapse—the interplay of journalism, civil society, and democratization will warrant continued close attention.

Notes

1. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 263.

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3. John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 275–301.

4. Ibid., 287.

5. Ibid., 289.

6. Ibid., 290.

7. Eugenio Tironi and Guillermo Sunkel, "The Modernization of Communications: The Media in the Transition to Democracy in Chile," *in Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 165–94, at 177.

8. Ibid., 170–79. Only in the final days of the Pinochet regime, in 1989, did the government authorize the creation of two private VHF television channels—Megavision and La Red.

9. Tironi and Sunkel, "The Modernization of Communications," 180.

10. Maria Eugenia Hirmas, "The Chilean Case: Television in the 1988 Plebiscite," in *Television, Politics and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Thomas E. Skidmore (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993), 82–95.

11. See Sebastian Brett, *The Limits of Tolerance: Freedom of Expression and Public Debate in Chile* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1998), 46–57.

12. For an excellent discussion of the legal and economic issues in Chilean media development, see Brett, *The Limits of Tolerance.*

13. Tina Rosenberg, "The Monochromatic Media of Latin America," *New York Times*, May 7, 2001, A20.

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15. See Bruce Bimber, "The Internet and Political Transformation: Populism, Community, and Accelerated Pluralism," Polity (fall 1998): 133.

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18. There is a large and recent literature on the subject of civil society. See, for example, Gordon White, "Civil Society, Democratization and Development: Clearing the Analytical Ground," Democratization (autumn 1994); John Keane, *Civil Society: Old Images, New Vision* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

19. See Michael Walzer, *Toward a Global Civil Society* (Providence, RI Berghahn Books, 1998), 1–7.

20. For discussion on the changing role of government vis-à-vis NGOs, see Jessica T. Matthews, "Power Shift," *Foreign Affairs* (January–February 1997): 50.

21. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 40–65.

22. "The Mythologies of Civil Society," *The Hindu*, November 5, 1998.

23. For a case study of civil society development under a weak state, see Michael Foley, "Laying the Groundwork: The Struggle for Civil Society in El Salvador," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* (spring 1996): 81–83.

24. Walzer, *Toward a Global Civil Society*, 23.

25. See John S. Dryzek, "Political Inclusion and the Dynamics of Democratization," *American Political Science Review* (September 1996): 475.

26. For a discussion on the development of civil society associations in authoritarian societies, see Catherine E. Dalpino, *Deferring Democracy: Promoting Openness in Authoritarian Regimes* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 52–72.

27. David Martin Jones, "Democratization, Civil Society, and Illiberal Middle Class Culture in Pacific Asia," *Comparative Politics* (January 1998): 152.

28. Ibid., 159.

29. Daniel del Castillo, "A 1,000-Year-Old University Takes on a New and Troubling Role," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 11, 2001, A47.

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31. See Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, 8–15; see also Michael Bernhard, "Civil Society After the First Transition: Dilemmas of Post-communist Democratization in Poland and Beyond," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 29, no. 3 (1996): 309–330.

32. See William Ratliff, "Development and Civil Society in Latin America and Asia," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (September 1999): 91–113.

33. See Appendix.

34 See Robert M. Entman and Steven S. Wildman, "Reconciling Economic and Non-Economic Perspectives on Media Policy: Transcending the 'Marketplace of Ideas,'" *Journal of Communication* (winter 1992): 5–19.

35. See "The News According to Gazprom," *Transitions Online*, 9–17 April 2001; "End-TV?" *Transitions Online*, 2–8 April 2001, available at www.tol.cz (last accessed October 1, 2001). See also *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Media Matters* 1, no. 9 (April 6, 2001): 4–7.

36. Peter Baker, "Russian Journalists Plan Rival Network: Ex-NTV Staff Facing Many Obstacles," *The Washington Post*, April 16, 2001, A12.

37. David Hoffman, "Russian Media Policy Linked to Soviet Era," *The Washington Post*, September 14, 2000, A24. See also Susan B. Glasser and Peter Baker, "Russian Network Seized in Raid," *The Washington Post*, April 15, 2001, A1.

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41. See Michael Dobbs, "Revolution by Focus Group," *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, December 18, 2000, 13.

42. See Michael E. Porter, "What is Strategy?" *Harvard Business Review* (November-December 1996): 61.

43. The Fund's Web site is at www.mdlf.org (last accessed October 1, 2001).

44. For further discussion on this point, see the 2000 report of the Aspen Institute International Roundtable on Journalism, *Journalism and Emerging Democracy: Lessons from Societies in Transition.*

45. See Bruce M. Owen and Steven S. Wildman, *Video Economics*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992, 147-150.

46. "Africa's Unwired Masses," Europe.CNN.com, May 11, 2001, available at http://europe.cnn.com/2001/BUSINESS/05/11/africa/ (last accessed October 1, 2001).

47. See, for example, Anthony Corrado and Charles M. Firestone, eds., *Elections in Cyberspace: Toward a New Era in American Politics* (Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 1996); Lawrence K. Grossman, *The Electronic Republic: Reshaping Democracy in the Information Age* (New York: Viking Press, 1995).

48. Mary Ebeling, "Going Global: The Internet Age and Freedom of the Press in Africa," paper presented at symposium on Technology and Development in Africa, University of Illinois, Champaign, April 26–28, 2001.

49. Maria Antonenko, "Will the Real *Itogi* Please Stand Up," *Transitions Online*, May 2, 2001, available at http://www.tol.cz.

50. Bimber, "The Internet and Political Transformation," 148.

51. Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Macmillian, 1922), 31–32.

Appendix

Sustainability: An Approach Toward a Matrix

by Monroe E. Price

Discussion paper prepared for the Aspen Institute International Roundtable on Journalism and Freedom of Expression, "Strategies for Supporting Sustainable Media Pluralism," March 13-16, 2001, Santiago, Chile.

Introduction

This short paper is designed to help shape discussion on "sustainability" of the media. Let's start with a possible model definition. A set of media are "sustainable" if there is reliable availability of sufficient revenues to achieve reasonable objectives, without so great a reliance on any single source of revenue as to force the radical changing of those objectives. This is a broad definition of sustainability; almost immediately, there are problems.

Reasonable Objectives

It is important to make explicit what "reasonable objectives" are included in the definition. For example, consider an available frequency for FM radio in a typical U.S. city. Uses of that frequency may be sustainable if the reasonable objectives include a wide variety of uses (country and western as opposed to classical music; talk radio but no news). The point is that sustainability is a function of the limits on objectives. If the objective is to have the medium contribute to civil society, to enrich knowledge about political issues, to reflect opposition views, then what constitutes the level of sufficient revenues will undoubtedly change. In other words, *although sustainability often is stated as the dominant goal, in fact, it is co-terminus with other goals, or dependent on them.*

In post-Soviet Russia and elsewhere, for example, many entities founded as "independent" broadcasters are said to have stopped news reporting altogether—they certainly have stopped reporting local news—and are engaged only in broadcasting pirated entertainment

programming of low quality, while waiting to sell out to the highest bidder. To be sure, the existence of these independent broadcasters ultimately may enrich the media environment, but their "sustainability" may be less interesting than that of other more public-oriented stations.

Alternate Models of Sustainability

When we speak of "sustainability," using the foregoing definition, it is likely that the description is about the functioning of the media over the long term in an already progressing transition. Let's call this kind of sustainability "mature sustainability." It is also possible that, at least in terms of newspapers (and often broadcasters as well), we have other assumptions about the conditions for sustainability. I turn to those later in this paper. Although different moments of sustainability arise, we ought always keep in mind the question of ultimate sustainability, in this mature or late transition sense.

So, at the risk of corrupting the meaning of the term, let's explore other models of "sustainability." This may be just another way of describing shifting "reasonable objectives."

Crisis Sustainability

Fondation Hirondelle in Switzerland has established crisis radio in potential conflict zones. One of the most controversial has been Star Radio in Liberia. Its function was to provide objective information in the run-up to an internationally monitored election. Sustainability was the capacity of the station to survive financially during the period of crisis.

Incubator Sustainability

In the first post-Soviet decade and in the period after the Dayton Accords, a large number of media were funded or initiated, perhaps with the idea that they were being nourished as "seedlings," with the understanding that not all would survive. There was a role for incubation, and there might be a set of assumptions about what constitutes sufficient sustainability for an incubation period. It would be expected that some entities begun in this fashion would not survive.

Strategic Sustainability

Governments (and foundations) may support media for a specific strategic purpose, whether acknowledged or not. For example, they supported media struggling in opposition to Slobodan Milosevic in the past couple of years, and they support clandestine radio in Iraq and Iran. The measure of sustainability is not what will keep these media operating in normal or mature transitions, and it is not even clear that these media would survive a transition. The test is what will allow them to perform effectively the function for which they are funded.

Cross-Subsidy Sustainability

Although the general model of media independence in the United States has a built-in context and set of assumptions about sustainability, a different model may render media "sustainable" if they are cross-subsidized for partisan reasons by an entity engaged in the political process. For example, a political party in a society that has competing party presses may support a newspaper or a broadcasting station. The measure of sustainability depends on the strategy of the political party.

Dependence and Sources of Revenue

This brings us back to the question of sources of revenue, diversity of sources, and dependence. Here we are on ground that is more familiar. We can say that what might be called a preferred U.S. model of "free and independent media" is an advertising-supported medium in which there is a sufficient diversity of advertisers that the particular newspaper or broadcasting station (or all of them together in a specific society) are not dependent on any single advertiser.

The search is for an ideal form of sustainability. Aside from the foregoing model, there are some others:

1. A benevolent (preferably rich) publisher creates an independent journal with an independent editor (*Harpers Magazine* or *Atlantic Monthly* may fit this model in the United States). There are shades of altruism, however, and not all benevolent publishers are of the truest hue.
2. Investors provide a long-term cushion for the development of a medium so that annual losses can be absorbed in the hope of

long-term profit. CNN might be an example (although it may just be something like CNN). In some way, General Electric's holding of NBC is an example. In these examples, the assumption (sometimes wrong) is that the investors are not interfering in the content or news slant of the medium; they merely want it to succeed financially over a long term.

3. The BBC model (or, to a lesser degree, the PBS model in the United States) is another example. In this model, there is an assumption that a license fee, somewhat shielded from political review by Parliament, provides "sustainability" without political interference. Because the millions of license fee payors provide the funds, the conditions (in our first definition) of diversity of sources and nondependence are met.

4. Another example is a mix of newsstand revenue, advertising revenue, and government subsidy such that no single source (particularly government subsidy) is the subject of dependence. It is an accident of each economy (contingent) that an entity can exist on disparate sources of support, none of which can sway the editor.

Less Ideal Forms of Sustainability

In terms of the starting definition, the greater the dependence (especially, but not exclusively, on the state), the further from the model of ideal sustainability one gets.

Some examples are as follows:

1. Sustainability by industrial giants that have a stake in the outcome of public debate and intend to use the media to produce the desired outcome. This was the supposed model of media sustainability in Russia.

2. Sustainability by state patronage through direct aid or through contingent control of support of the infrastructure.

Suitable State (or Foundation?) Contributions to Sustainability

How have states contributed to sustainability? In almost all cases, state aid takes the form of lower costs of operation. States have engaged in all of these techniques; all are potentially subject to abuse and have been abused. One might determine that some techniques are less susceptible to abuse than others. In other words, properly managed techniques allow states to contribute and still allow sustainability within the original terms stated above. They are tricky, however. Some ways are as follows:

- Subsidize mailing (United States and many states);
- Provide technical facilities (studios, editing facilities, U.S. public access rules, Dutch provision of central studio facilities);
- Provide newsprint;
- Subsidize distribution (sometimes through state ownership of telecommunications lines or newspaper and magazine distribution facilities; this approach is highly problematic);
- Provide printing presses;
- Direct assistance (payments to reporters, sometimes benefits to reporters);
- Tax relief (exemptions, etc.);
- Exemptions from payment of tariff duties on imports of equipment; and
- Low- or zero-interest loans or grants.

These are all ways that the costs can be lowered so that "sustainability" can occur at a lower level of revenue.

Some Final Considerations

I have left out the behavioral or cultural part of "sustainability." Obviously, there is the claim that some media can be "sustainable" if, and only if, media managers are trained to think in terms of sustainability. In this view, sustainability is only partly a function of the economy and the role of the state. The implication is that it is essential to have training of managers and (to some extent) journalists to define and achieve revenue goals through a diversity of income sources.

Another question has been raised: Has a combination of well-meaning donor efforts (public and NGO) sometimes contributed (unwittingly) to weakening sustainability by creating conditions for entry that are too easy to surmount, by providing expectations of support that lessen the impetus to diversify and become "independent," and by creating so much competition that the conditions of sustainability cannot be met? In this view, for example, there is a limit on advertising revenue that is available and an abundance of media competitors who are dependent on government and NGOs; thus, "ideal" or "mature" sustainability will not be achieved. Bosnia-Herzegovina may provide an example of this phenomenon.

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and Freedom of Expression

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