

DIVERSE CITY —Istanbul

Preface

The second outing of our new series takes us to Istanbul, a city undergoing rapid change that is transforming the media landscape. Monocle explores the city and its multiple media offerings that are influencing the nation.

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Istanbul, with its blend of cultures and easy access to all points East and West, is an ideal hub for journalists. While foreign correspondents have long been attracted to the city, local Turkish media is also in the process of getting a major facelift.

Like the country itself, straddling Europe and Asia, Turkey's media industry is layered and captivating. With hundreds of media establishments, ranging from underground radio stations to heritage newspapers that trace their foundations to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish media landscape offers myriad viewpoints and political persuasions. Like the rapidly changing urban complexion of Istanbul, Turkey's media is in the midst of systemic change that will permanently alter how news shapes the nation's consciousness for generations to come.

Hop into a cab in Kasimpasa, the home of Turkish president and former Istanbul mayor Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and you will probably find a copy of the right-wing *Yeni Safak* tucked in the driver's seat pocket. But if you happen to be in Moda on the Asian side of the Bosphorus, be sure not to mention the newspaper and prepare to find a copy of the Armenian bilingual weekly *Agos* instead. This split encapsulates Turkey's – and especially Istanbul's – diversity of media offerings.

"When I came to journalism we were still reading actual newspapers," says



01



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ISTANBUL

Population: 14 million
Newspapers: 36 national and 15 local
TV stations: 14
Radio stations: 5

New streamlined and independent media platforms are changing how Turks receive news.

The media helped change written Turkish to the Latin alphabet in the 1920s.



07

Major players

THE NEWS MAGAZINE

Penguen

Penguen, Turkey's leading satirical magazine, has ruffled the feathers of the country's ruling class since its 2002 launch. Former prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan sued the publication in 2005 over several caricatures of him. The magazine was acquitted but its reputation as an acerbic voice keeping tabs on the political establishment was sealed. With a circulation approaching 100,000, *Penguen's* cartoons are an ever-present subject of conversation in Istanbul's literary cafes. penguen.com

THE RADIO STATION

Acik Radyo

Acik Radio – or Open Radio – is the voice for Istanbul's intellectuals. The FM station started as a project in community radio with a focus on the metropolitan area of Istanbul. In its first 12 years the station received more than 38 media awards in Turkey for its coverage of everything from urbanism to the history of music. Nodding to its community roots, the station's 200 presenters and producers are all volunteers, except for those working on the morning show. After last summer's Gezi Park protests, Acik Radyo became an essential outlet for Istanbul residents disenchanted with mainstream media. acikradyo.com.tr

THE TELEVISION NEWS SHOW

5N1K

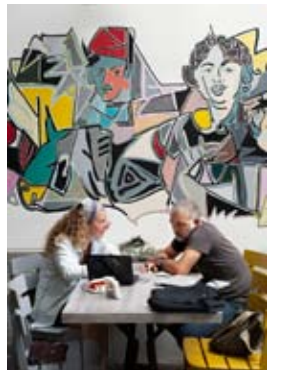
Unlike his on-air persona, Cuneyt Ozdemir is softly spoken and guarded in person. The anchor of CNN Turk's popular news programme *5N1K*, Ozdemir administers a dynamic and fresh perspective in the Turkish media. Building on the success of *5N1K* he recently launched *Dipnot*, an online news platform and current-affairs magazine. "We have a different news culture in Turkey," he says over coffee before catching a plane for a reporting trip in Gaza. "Every week we create Turkey and the world again. Life as a journalist here is always changing." tv.cnnturk.com/5n1k

THE INDEPENDENT WEEKLY

Agos

Journalism in Turkey is a dangerous business and the recent history of Istanbul-based Armenian bilingual weekly newspaper *Agos* is a startling example. Known for his edgy and provocative commentary, Hrant Dink, the former editor of *Agos*, was assassinated outside the newspaper's offices in Istanbul in 2007. The paper never missed a beat though and continues to deliver excellent coverage with a circulation of roughly 9,000. For many in Turkey, *Agos* is a symbol of, and rallying cry for, press freedom in Turkey's increasingly polarised media landscape. agos.com.tr

- 01 'Midye' (mussels stuffed with rice) for sale and a newspaper kiosk
- 02 Cem Erciyes, weekend supplement editor for 'Radikal'
- 03 Organised chaos in the 'Hurriyet' offices
- 04 'Hurriyet' employee at work
- 05 Editorial meeting in the 'Hurriyet' offices
- 06 'Radikal Kitap' book-review supplement
- 07 International basketball game shown on a side street near Taksim Square
- 08 Pim, a kitchen and patisserie in Karakoy's Tophane neighbourhood
- 09 Istanbul from above
- 10 Cafe outside 'Hurriyet' building
- 11 'Hurriyet' office in Kemalpaşa



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Cem Erciyes, weekend supplement editor for *Radikal*. A typically dishevelled newspaper man, Erciyes is adapting to a transforming media environment from behind piling stacks of daily papers. "With the shifting political climate, increasing crackdown on journalists and lack of enthusiasm for print, the industry is completely different from when I started." *Radikal's* mix of reportage and centre-left commentary has shifted online save for a number of weekend supplements that appear in sister paper *Hurriyet*.

The dwindling advertising and declining readership, prevailing trends affecting media globally, have made Turkish newspapers subject to political influence and often nefarious business ownership. In the late 1980s when Turkey was opening to the West, late president Turgut Ozal began grooming select columnists to break important stories. Within 20 years, columnists – as opposed to editors or reporters – gained a reputation as the arbiters of influence in Turkey (*see interview, overleaf*). Business conglomerates, often associated with political



10



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movements of various stripes, added tension to the media picture by painting coverage in partisan colours.

“At one point during the Gezi Park protests last summer there was the same headline and article in more than eight newspapers,” says independent journalist Andrew Finkel. “It was like news copy was being written in a central office in Ankara and then sent to newspaper editors.” Indeed, many commentators have waxed more critically on the state of Turkish media over Gezi Park, something borne out in international smirking at the roll call of identikit newspaper front pages.

For Turkey and the international community, Gezi Park was a turning point with regards to the integrity of the Turkish press. This issue resurfaced last December when a far-reaching corruption probe was carried out against senior government officials. The media entered a state of catharsis and few independent voices were heard. Newspapers viewed the event in purely black-and-white terms.

Although the spectrum of printed views is limited, the sheer number of newspapers on offer in Istanbul provides access to information for a multicultural city. In Istanbul alone there are more than 30 different newspapers, TV stations and radio stations to satisfy even the most discerning media observer – and these days there are plenty of the latter. — (M)



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- 01 Corner shop in Beyoglu
- 02 Andrew Finkel, editor of 'P24'
- 03 Delicatessen restaurant in the smart Nisantasi neighbourhood
- 04 Bookshelves in the 'P24' office
- 05 Delicatessen is a favourite hangout of CNN Turk anchor Cuneyt Ozdemir

The essentials

The canteen Delicatessen

Drop into Delicatessen on any given afternoon and you will likely be vying for a table with the city's media professionals, journalists and designers. Made up of a restaurant, bar and artisanal convenience store, Delicatessen is the city's best bet for a modern take on Turkish classics. delicatessenistanbul.com

The after-work hangout Geyik

It is only natural that a coffee roastery and cocktail bar under one roof would be a magnet for journalists. Blending the favourite addictions of most journalists — coffee and alcohol — Geyik is the latest addition to Cihangir's increasingly crowded bar scene. With the ability to seamlessly move from a simple flat white on deadline to Old Fashioneds after edits, Geyik has entrenched itself as a favourite local for the city's media. +90 546 790 5015

The coffeehouse and interview venue Kafe Ara

In a city steeped in coffee tradition, journalists are rarely hard-pressed to find an inviting coffeehouse to conduct interviews. Tucked in an alley just off the main pedestrian street of Istanbul's European side is Kafe Ara. Borrowing its name from one of Turkey's most celebrated photographers, Ara Guler, it is the premier venue to steal an interview with anyone from a social activist to a high-ranking politician. With perfectly prepared Turkish coffee, Kafe Ara is like a second office for local and foreign journalists alike. kafeara.com

The newsstand Dunya Aktuel

Nestled in the seaside hamlet of Bebek is the city's best newsagent for foreign and local press. An Istanbul institution, Dunya Aktuel stocks the latest editions of everything from Turkish paper *Taraf* to *Corriere della Sera* as well as a large selection of books. dunyastore.com



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Q&A

Barcin Yinanc Opinion editor/senior columnist, Hurriyet

A veteran of the Turkish newspaper establishment, Barcin Yinanc began her career in 1990 at one of Turkey's prominent daily broadsheets, *Milliyet*. After working as a TV reporter and analyst in Ankara, she settled into her current position as opinion editor and columnist at *Hurriyet* and the paper's English edition, *Hürriyet Daily News*. With a substantial and diverse following, Yinanc's interviews with everyone from foreign dignitaries to those shaping the debates about Istanbul's future are legendary in the Turkish media industry.

Monocle: *In Turkey, columnists wield commanding power in the media landscape. Why and how did this become the standard?*

Barcin Yinanc: Turkish readers like shortcuts. On the whole they are less interested in raw information and more in the interpretation of information and events. Maybe this is happening across the international media world but in Turkey it feels especially acute. I don't have sociological research demonstrating this phenomenon but I have the feeling that the Turkish reader is mostly bored with rough and objective information. Under late president Turgut Ozal in the late 1980s the media industry began to change in Turkey. As if peering into the future of news production, he saw an opportunity to manipulate information by using newspaper columnists. He began to speak directly with columnists and leak major stories to them. He would invite columnists to his home, call them at all hours of the night and invite them on diplomatic trips abroad. It was revolutionary for Turkey at a time when the country was opening up to the international community.

M: *What is the state of Turkish print media?*

BY: I am a very conservative and technologically retarded person so my answer is emotional and subjective. In the past we had piles of newspapers we would read at our desks in the mornings. Sometimes

66

There is still an urge in Turkey to have a physical paper in your hands. People want tangible items. We just need to find creative ways of maintaining these urges

99

we have interns working in the office, who now go straight online for their morning news. Only the top editors get these glorious stacks of morning papers. Despite this I personally don't think the print media will ever die. Look at the book-publishing numbers in Turkey. There is still an urge in Turkey to have a physical paper in your hands. People want tangible items. We just need to find creative ways of maintaining these urges.

M: *What would you say to a young journalist attempting to make it in the Turkish press?*

BY: Don't enter this business unless you are truly dedicated. This is not the place for easy fame and the industry in Turkey requires a lot of sacrifice, especially when it comes to making money while maintaining high ethical standards. In other words, if you want to be a good journalist don't expect to get rich. Young journalists need to broaden their horizons beyond simply attending journalism school. The events of the last year, from Gezi to Syria, demonstrate that journalists need to be versed in everything ranging from economics to international relations in order to fully grasp the story.

M: *Is social media helping or hurting the Turkish press?*

BY: It is a difficult question and one that reveals where you stand on the ethics of journalism. Of course, journalists require a certain amount of experience in order to control their public statements and maintain a high standard of objectivity. The line between reporting and the reporter's own opinion has become blurred in the social-media age. This needs to be



corrected. I have 24 years of experience in the industry and I often hesitate about which of my personal views I will share on internet platforms. We need to have a debate about where reporting starts and stops and ask to what degree you are free to express your opinions on these new platforms. Objectivity is still sacred to a journalist and our profession. To be sure, social-media platforms give voice to many here that would otherwise be silenced, such as journalists who have been fired over political positions. But that doesn't mean we should expect or wish for the internet to replace traditional newspapers. Some of our papers are as old as the republic itself and therefore we should protect their legacy.

M: *Is Istanbul a media city? How do journalists interact with the environment here?*

BY: When the Gezi Park events erupted a year ago you could see journalists all over the city. Obviously this was a bit of an exceptional case but it underlines an important point: Istanbul is and always has been a city full of stories. Due to political tension in the country, the streets are full of newsworthy events. The only major drawback in Istanbul as a journalist is the sheer size of the city. Because of the traffic, journalists can become stuck in sort of ivory towers. The *Hurriyet* headquarters are far from the city centre. For some this could feel like detachment from the beating heart of the city but given its size we have the opportunity to uncover new and different stories in this area. All of this is to say that Istanbul's size and layers of complexion make it an ideal city. It has been one for thousands of years. — (M)