



## AINĀRS DIMANTS (1966 – 2024)

Ainars Dimants, among the few researchers of media studies and journalism in Latvia, was a bright and irreplaceable light. Those who knew Ainars will remember his passion, energy, loud voice and good laugh. However, his contribution to journalism and media studies research will be what has already become an important part of Latvian social sciences for many.

Although communication sciences at the end of the 20th century and the start of the 21st century developed in various exciting directions, Ainar Dimant's focus was always on the development of Latvian journalism and professional media. This interest and

many research works were based on his values – belief in the role of professional and responsible media, in the importance of quality and diverse journalism in the development of democracy.

A review of his publications and books, shows that each work was a new path, a turning point. Starting with his doctoral dissertation “Die Entwicklung der Massenmedien in Lettland nach der zweiten Unabhängigkeit” [Development of mass media in Latvia after the second independence] defended at the Free University of Berlin in 2003, he showed the ability to connect the analysis of historical events with current processes. Ainars Dimants was the first to analyze self-censorship in Latvian media science. He was the only Latvian researcher who evaluated in detail the internal and external processes that affect journalism, editorial work, professional values of journalists and their impact on society.

His focus was also on the development of media systems. Ainars viewed the transformation of the Latvian media environment in the European context. His research on the influence of Scandinavian media corporations on the development of Latvian media is important. He constantly introduced innovative ways of thinking in his studies. For example, following the development of European media, he began to study the social corporate responsibility approach of Latvian media. This led him to study public media and media management, as well as media regulation.

Professor Ainārs Dimants was born on May 6, 1966, in Auce, Latvia, which was then part of the USSR. He had a profound interest in journalism from an early age, started his journalism studies at the University of Latvia in 1984, attained his diploma *cum laude* from Lomonosov State University in Moscow in 1990 and his master's degree from the University of Latvia in 1996.

During his period of study in the late 1980s and 1990s, Dimants not only started parallel work as a journalist in the newly developing free press of Latvia (he was a reporter in Moscow for the national daily *Diena* (1990-1992), worked for influential *Lauku Avīze* (later *Latvijas Avīze*, of which he was a deputy editor-in-chief for a while) and Latvian Television). Dimants was also active in social and political life taking part as a student in two congresses of The Latvian People's Front (1988-1989) and later being one of the founders and leaders of the European Movement Latvia.

Throughout the formative years of Latvia's re-established democracy, Ainārs Dimants emerged as a public intellectual advocating for democratic values and freedom of expression. He argued for socially responsible media standards, editorial autonomy, and the prevention of political interference and over-commercialization in media. Over the subsequent decades, he assumed several prominent positions in professional institutions, including Chairman of the Board of the Latvian Union of Journalists (2007) and involvement with the Latvian Association of Journalists (from 2010). He not only ardently defended the democratic media, but also promoted their development by becoming the Chairman of the National Electronic Media Council. During this period, the internet news portal of public media was established, and the concept of PSM's development was created. Professor Dimants introduced ideas concerning media literacy and media education long before they were included in Latvian media policy.

However, the most important part of his life was devoted to academic study of communication, journalism and media and the development of the media and communication study field in Latvia. His academic endeavors spanned various Latvian and international universities, including the University of Latvia, Riga Stradins University, Vidzeme University College in Valmiera, and the Higher Education School for Business „Turība.” He co-founded the Media Institute in Riga in 2004 and served as its Chairman of the Board until 2012. Additionally, he assumed editorial responsibilities for the journal „*Akadēmiskā dzīve*” (*Academic Life*) from 2006 onwards and held the status of expert in communication science at the Latvian Academy of Science and was a leading researcher at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the University of Latvia.

Ainārs Dimants played a pivotal role in establishing media studies centers at several Latvian universities. Most notably at Riga Stradins University, where he led the Department of Communication Studies, and the Higher

Education School for Business „Turība”. He contributed to the development of Riga Stradins University’s first doctoral study program in communication science, encouraging his students to study complex communication issues. Ainārs Dimants openly and critically analyzed both the media environment and the performance of his colleagues in academia. At the same time, he was one of those representatives of the academic environment who gave development opportunities to others.

Ainārs Dimants was active in attracting foreign researchers. He translated and supplemented the book „Journalism. Teaching and Manual” by Stefan Russ-Mohl, which has been an important teaching tool for several generations of young journalists. In 2021, he translated and published Klaus Beck’s book „Media and Communication Sciences”. His last book *Latvijas prese 200 gadus no “Latviešu Avīzēm” līdz digitālo mediju laikmetam* [The Latvian press in 200 years from „Latvians’ Newspapers” to the age of digital media]<sup>1</sup>, which was published at the end of 2022, is a huge work that covers two centuries of Latvian media development. The book analyzes many media aspects, including Latvian media policy, media research, professional media organizations and their activities. The book is the most important source of documental and theoretically embedded discussion of Latvia’s media system ever published in Latvia or abroad.

It is not possible in this space to provide the full list of activities performed by Ainārs Dimants in the field of media study. Dimants started with practical journalistic activity, proceeded to management, then regulation. He researched, taught and published about journalism and media. The most recent interest of this distinguished scholar was the language used to discuss media and journalism. Professor Dimants was a driving force behind the terminological discussion between linguists and media scholars in Latvia in order to create the terminological base that would allow further successful study and development of media and communication discourse in academia, industry, policy and society in general.

Professor Ainārs Dimants’ multifaceted contributions to journalism, academia, and societal discourse have left an indelible mark on Latvia’s media landscape and academic community, reflecting his unwavering commitment to democratic principles and scholarly excellence.

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1 Dimants, A. (2022). *Latvijas prese 200 gadus: no “Latviešu Avīzēm” līdz digitālo mediju laikmetam: Latvijas plašsaziņas mediju sistēmas vēsture no pirmsākumiem līdz mūsdienām*. Latvijas Mediji.