# MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES AND DEMOCRACY IN AN ENLARGED EUROPE

## THE INTELLECTUAL WORK OF THE 2007 EUROPEAN MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION DOCTORAL SUMMER SCHOOL

TARTU UNIVERSITY
PRESS

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# INTRODUCTION

Poster production phase © Anne Laajalahti

# Introduction:
# Participation and learning.
# The intellectual work of the 2007
# European media and communication
# doctoral summer school in Tartu

Nico Carpentier

## 1. THE SUMMER SCHOOL'S HISTORY

The Summer School was established in the early 1990's by a consortium of ten (Western) European universities, initiated by the Universities of Stendhal (Grenoble, France) and Westminster (UK). From then on, these participating universities have organised annual summer schools for communication studies PhD students, which lasted for one or two weeks and took place in a wide range of locations, including Grenoble, Lund, Barcelona, London, and Helsinki.

Already in 2002, ECREA (the European Communication Research and Education Association, in the form of one of its predecessors, ECCR) became a member of the Summer School consortium. This partnership allowed opening-up the Summer School to PhD students that came from other universities than the consortium partners. ECREA's membership also contributed to the realisation of one of its ten objectives, which is '*to encourage, support, and where possible, publish, the work of young researchers in Europe.*'

In 2005, the Summer School moved for the first time to the Department of Journalism and Communication of the University of Tartu. The University of Tartu also coordinated and organised the Summer Schools of 2006 and 2007, supported by a grant from the European Commission (as an Intensive Program). In 2007, it ran from 20 until 31 August 2007. During the 2005–2007 period, the consortium was expanded in order to

bring 'new' and enlarged Europe's expertise and students into the Summer School tradition. This expansion resulted in a present-day consortium of 19 participating universities: Amsterdam (UvA), Barcelona (Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona), Bergen, Bremen, Brussel (VUB), Budapest (Eötvös Loránd), Cracow (Jagiellonian), Erfurt, Helsinki, Jönköping, Kaunas (Vytauto Didziojo), Ljubljana, London (LSE), London (Westminster), Lund, Roskilde, Grenoble (Stendhal Grenoble 3), Stirling, and Tampere.

In line with this process of expansion, the Program Committee selected the theme 'Media technology and democracy in an enlarged Europe' for the 2007 Summer School. This theme allowed the Summer School to combine the consortium's material expansion with a content-related focus on the notion of European expansion and the related strong need for further European democratisation, all within the context of mediatisation and communication. The intertwining of the organisational and content-related issues led to the following four objectives of the 2007 Summer School.

1/ to provide an intercultural and multilateral dialogue between academics of new and old EU member states focusing on an enlarged Europe, participation and the European knowledge society,

2/ to provide mutual support for doctoral studies in Media and Communication at the expanding network of the partner universities and ECREA,

3/ to expand the collaboration to universities not yet members of the network,

4/ to create a respectful but critical dialogue between academic researcher, governments, civil society and media industries focusing on new demands and developments in media within an enlarged Europe and a European knowledge society.

## 2. THE PEDAGOGICAL AND DIDACTICAL APPROACH OF THE SUMMER SCHOOL

The twelve-day 2007 Summer School was based on a combination of lectures, workshops, student-workshops and working visits. Traditionally, especially the Summer School lectures are related to the yearly theme of the Summer School, but nevertheless still manage to address a wide range of topics. The academic staff from the partner universities, complemented by media industry, grassroots journalism, and museum institu-

tion representatives, is responsible for these lectures, part of which can be found in this publication.

The core format of the Summer School is nevertheless based on the so-called student-workshops, which are oriented towards providing the PhD students with extensive and high-quality feedback. For this purpose, the following specific procedure was used. After their application is approved, participating PhD students each send in their 10-page papers. On the basis of the papers, the PhD students are then divided into three groups or flows, and each student is attributed a lecturer-respondent and a student-respondent. Moreover, a so-called flow-manager (a member of the academic Summer School staff) is also attributed to each of the flows. These flow-managers coordinate the activities of the student-workshops' flows for the entire duration of the Summer School.

During the student-workshops, each PhD student presents his or her project, which is then commented upon by the student-respondent, the lecturer-respondent and the flow-manager, and finally discussed by all participants. At the end of the series of student-workshops, a joint workshop is organised, where the diversity of paradigmatic, theoretical and methodological approaches is discussed, combined with the intellectual lessons learned at the Summer School.

More than in the previous years, the lectures and student-workshops were complemented by a series of other workshops. These other workshops provided the PhD students with more practical training on issues related to making posters (which resulted in many of the pictures included in the book), publishing, abstract-writing, interviewing, discourse analysis, ethnography, doing fieldwork, and research ethics. A second group of workshops informed participants on issues related to the European research landscape and the European educational landscape. The working visits gave the participants more insights in Estonia's media and governmental structures.

## 3. The people / the hall of fame

At the 2007 Summer School, 40 PhD students participated.
The first flow group consisted of Alenka Jelen, Frank Boddin, Anna Tous Rovirosa, Chloë Salles, Maarit Jaakkola, Riikka Haikarainen, Katrin Bornemann, Veronika Kroenert, Zoe Sujon, Laurie Schmitt, Maja Turnšek, Kathleen Arendt, Iren Schulz, and Caroline Düvel.

Aleksander Sašo Slaček Brlek, Katharina Kleinen-v.Königslöw, Magdalena Pitala, Wilberforce S. Dzisah, Sergio Barrera Perea, Janne Halttu, Todd Steven Graham, Wim Hannot, Núria Simelio Solà, Isabelle Gourdin-Sangouard, Richard Baerug, Ilija T. Tomanic, Janna Mari Svendsen, and Floris Mueller were the second flow group.

Ahmed el Gody, Itir Akdogan, Manuel Dupuy-Salle, Janis Buholcs, Andréa Medrado, Laura Aymerich Franch, Jeremy DePauw, Helle Sjøvaag, Cicek Bacik, Otim Lucima, Ira Virtanen, and Anne Laajalahti formed the third group.

All of their abstracts, and a selection of six chapters based on their work, are included in this publication.

The Summer School also had 23 academic lecturers: Auksė Balčytienė, Bart Cammaerts, Bertrand Cabedoche, Denis McQuail, François Heinderyckx, Gregor Petrič, Hannu Nieminen, Jo Bardoel, Jostein Gripsrud, Julian Gebhardt, Kaarle Nordenstreng, Lars-Åke Engblom, Louise Phillips, Manuel Pares i Maicas, Maren Hartmann, Marju Lauristin, Nick Jankowski, Nico Carpentier, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Richard Kilborn, Tobias Ollson, Tomasz Goban-Klas, and Xin Xin.

In addition to the Summer School lecturers, the programme also included presentations by Alvar Lumberg, an Estonian grassroots journalism activist and Raivo Suni, the director of the Estonian Public Broadcasting Research Centre, and talks by the guides of the Public Broadcasting Service, the Parliament (Riigikogu) and the Estonian Arts Museum (Kumo), who provided valuable insights into Estonia's media, politics, culture and history.

Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt was the coordinator of the Summer School, supported by the Program Committee, which consisted of Kaarle Nordenstreng, Peeter Vihalemm, Maren Hartmann and Nico Carpentier. The latter two, together with Bart Cammaerts and Hannu Nieminen, acted as the Summer School's flow-managers.

## 4. THE EVALUATION

The 2007 Summer School was characterised by a high level of student (and lecturer) satisfaction. During the evaluation workshop at the end of the Summer School and in the (written) individual evaluations, the

participants expressed their enthusiasm about their Summer School experience. The following citations from the individual feedback forms provide us with a good overview of the most common reactions to the general (evaluative) questions:

- Overall very positive experience! I have learned a lot. In terms of self-confidence, interacting with other researchers, theories and methodology, a wide range of media/communications topics, especially new media perspective.
- This kind of school can be a boost in a situation where student is stuck or run out of ideas – because there we had lots of ideas all the time.
- Although – I have learned a lot, much of what I have learned, will become 'visible' after the summer school. In general: very valuable.
- Further, I would like to stress on the benefit from other schools of thinking i.e. having different universities and lecturers adds to the value of the experience.

The Summer School remains a rewarding but very intensive experience because of its duration, as these two citations illustrate:

- Last week's assignments were a bit too much and were they really necessary? […] The schedule was tight until the end of the SuSo.
- Very little time by one's self. But even if fatigue does kick in pretty fast, the fast pace also gives good intensity to these 2 weeks.

At the same time, the Summer School evaluations have also produced a large amount of critical advice for future improvements of the Summer School format. Mostly the advice focused on requests of more free time as outlined above, but also asking for some concrete topics and more flexibility in participating in lectures and student workshops:

- There are several kinds of research approaches or traditions and I think this would be a good lecture to have, as in the Summer School there are several traditions from different countries.
- Perhaps 2 'skip' tokens should be given to students so they can miss one lecture and/or workshop. This would help to create some air in the programme.
- Maybe a lecture/workshop on qualitative data analysis pro-grammes? A lot of people are doing qualitative work and this would be useful.

## 5. THE SUMMER SCHOOL BOOK

A significant part of intellectual work of the 2007 Summer School is included in this book. Because to the theme of the Summer School, the strong focus on notions of democracy and participation comes as no surprise. Democracy is seen as the first structuring key notion of this book. In applying this concept, it is avoided to reduce it to a more centralised and elitist form of societal decision-making. This implies that the mere legal-procedural articulation of democracy and the narrow definition of the political (as the political system) is also avoided. In contrast, in this book democracy is seen as a more decentralised version of societal decision-making. This then implies that a more substantial and/or culturalist perspective necessarily supplements the legal-procedural perspective, and the broad definition of the political as a dimension of the societal complements the more traditional focus on politics.

The importance of media within the social and within our democratic and civic cultures can hardly be denied. Theorising (and researching) this importance has nevertheless turned out to be a hazardous task, given the lack of stability of the social, political and media spheres. Moreover, these spheres are crisscrossed by a diversity of ideological projects, a phenomenon which unavoidably influences our academic gaze. The inherently ungraspable nature of our 'realities', and the radical unpredictability and contingency of the role of media in our complex societies have made the grand media narratives superfluous, and invite us to investigate localised media and communicative practices. In many cases the prominence of a diversity of media systems in our daily lives have generated a phantasm of all-encompassing media power, banning other social systems to the backbenches. This common sense position has trapped media studies scholars in a peculiar position, which Kaarle Nordenstreng (2004: 13) has called the '*paradox of media studies*', where *'our task is to deconstruct the naïve view that communication is the core of society and we specialise in undoing media hubris.'*

Like many other social and political systems, media systems do offer us a substantial range of democratic possibilities. In more traditional-liberal approaches (linked to competitive-elitist variations of democracy) the informational role of media – facilitating citizens' informed choices – is emphasised. Public sphere theory, in close connection with deliberative democracy and pluralism tend to stress the more collective character of this informational exchange. Extensions of the public sphere model also allow focusing more on representational aspects of the media, again broadening the scope of the media's democratic possibilities, this time by

looking the ideological constructions on politics, on the political as such, and on the political media can produce for its audiences. Finally, invoking Brecht's dream of turning every receiver into a transmitter, more radical models of (media) democracy emphasise the importance of more direct forms of participation, point to the empowering role media can play, and criticise the power imbalances that prevent media from playing this empowering role.

These different approaches, with their very different focal points, do not necessarily exclude each other when suggesting building blocks for the media-democracy relationship. Information, representation and participation can all contribute to the workings of democracy. At the same time, care should be taken not to become trapped in the reductive definitions of these three concepts, as different approaches unavoidably suggest different articulations of these key concepts. Especially the meaning of participation has been softened-down (through the imposed synergy with notions as access and interaction). As participation is the second structuring key concept of this book, care is taken not to unnecessarily reduce its significative span and to use non-exclusive definitions of participation.

When focusing on the relationship between media and participation, we need to distinguish between participation 'in' the media and 'through' the media, in a similar way that Wasko and Mosco (1992: 7) distinguished between democratisation 'in' and 'through' the media. Participation 'in' the media deals with the participation of non-professionals in the production of media output (content-related participation) and in media decision-making (structural participation). These forms of media participation allow citizens to be active in one of the many (micro-)spheres relevant to daily life and to put their right to communicate into practice. Second, these forms of micro-participation are to be considered important, because they allow people to learn and adopt a democratic and/or civic attitude, thus strengthening (the possible forms) of macro-participation. Verba and Nie (1987: 3) summarise this as follows: '*a participatory polity may rest on a participatory society*'. Although mainstream media have attempted to organise forms of audience participation, especially alternative media have proven to be more successful in organising more deepened forms of participation in the media.

Participation 'through' the media deals with the opportunities for extensive participation in public debate and for self-representation in the public spheres, thus, entering the realm of enabling and facilitating macro-participation. Starting from a broadly defined notion of the politi-

cal, consensus-oriented models of democracy (and participation) empha-
sise the importance of dialogue and deliberation and focus on collective
decision-making based on rational arguments à la Habermas. Other
authors (Fraser, 1990; Mouffe, 1994) stress more conflict-oriented
approaches. They point to the unavoidability of political differences and
struggles and see the media as crucial sites for struggles for hegemony.
Both consensus- and conflict-oriented models enable to stress the need
for citizens to participate in these processes of dialogue, debate, and
deliberation.

In this book, a first section addresses issues related to technology,
democracy and policy. In a first chapter Denis McQuail provides us with
an overview of the sometimes-difficult relationship of communication
and technology, and communication studies' attempts to move beyond
causal and linear approaches of this relationship. In the second chapter,
Jo Bardoel analyses the changes in Public Service Broadcasting, and its
transformation into Public Service Media. Finally, Hannu Nieminen
describes the potentialities of and requirements for the democratisation
of the EU's communication policies.

In the second section of this book we have a closer look at journalism,
and its potential democratic role. Auksė Balčytienė's chapter keeps the
focus on the EU, but zooms in on the relationship between journalists
and EU spokespersons, and the advantages online information might
offer to improve the coverage of the EU. Bertrand Cabedoche zooms in
even more with a chapter on Online Municipal Bulletins, whilst still
analysing the relationship between journalism and local authorities, and
between information and PR.

The third and fourth section of the book deal directly with participa-
tion. In the third section, Nico Carpentier first discusses two theoretical
frameworks that allow analysing the complexity and diversity of
participatory media organisations. In turn, Andréa Medrado has a closer
look at one of the classic types of participatory media organisations,
namely community television. Her analyses of a community television
station in a Brazilian favela illustrates how participatory media organisa-
tions never fully manage to live up to the (theoretical-ideological)
expectations, but still manage to be extremely socially relevant. Bart
Cammaerts' chapter also nuances the celebratory approach to alternative
/ new media, by taking a deep look at blogs as sites of racist discourses.
The third section nevertheless ends optimistically (which is of course
dependant on the perspective), with Tobias Olsson's analysis of the
empowering capacity of an adbusting website and network. He adds to

this case study a plea for research that combines the analysis of producers, content and users.

In the fourth section of this book, the emphasis on participation is maintained, and combined with a focus on citizenship. Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt's chapter researches the participatory intensity of three Estonian initiatives that aim to enrich political participation in a representative democracy. In addition, Maja Turnšek looks at how political participation has been complemented by civic participation. Building on Dewey's approach, she analyses the almost contradictory impact of (market) globalisation and individualisation. In turn, Zoetanya Sujon's chapter evaluates the new approaches towards citizenship that have grown out of new media theories, and discusses what they have to offer compared to the 'older' approaches of citizenship. Finally, Katharina Kleinen-v.Königslöw nuances another academic-political hype, by questioning the often-assumed integratedness of national public spheres, by reverting to an analytical model developed for the analysis of the European public sphere.

The fourth section of this book adds a more cultural and representational angle to the debate. First Manuel Parés i Maicas outlines the complexity and diversity of 'the' European cultural identity. In the second contribution of this section, Tomasz Goban-Klas deals with Europe's constitutive outside – the US – revisiting the debates on Americanisation. He shows that the US media products are still very much on the (Polish) minds. Finally, Janne Halttu analyses the representations of one of the contemporary rifts in Europe: the war in Iraq. His analysis looks at the relations between the press and the positions of different national and foreign authorities.

Two sections are kept separate in this book (as they are placed in the second part). The sixth section deals with methodology, and contains a series of chapters that are related to the Summer School's workshops. Nicholas W. Jankowski and Martine van Selm first deal with research ethics, and look more specifically at the ethical issues raised by internet research. Louise Phillips' chapter on discourse analysis provides us with an overview of the potentialities, capacities and limitations of the different strands of discourse analysis. In the next chapter, Xin Xin discusses the do's and don'ts of fieldwork, providing us with a practical overview of its characteristics and possibilities. This overview is complemented by a brief case study on Xinhua. Richard Kilborn's chapter contains a summary of the interviewing workshop he moderated at the Summer School. This chapter contains a treasure of practical advice on interviewing. Finally, Gregor Petrič focuses on network analyses, debat-

ing its relevance for communication studies. He also illustrates his arguments with a case study on the political economy of search engines.

The seventh and final section contains a moment of self-reflection. Anne Laajalahti's chapter starts with a more general theoretical reflection on interpersonal communication competences, which is part of a research project that analyses the communicative competences of doctoral researchers in the public sector. A second chapter, written by Frank Boddin, Todd Graham, Laurie Schmitt and Zoetanya Sujon, provides us with a per definition imperfect overview of how doctoral communication studies are organised in Europe. To generate this overview, the authors report on the Summer School's workshop on the European education landscape that they co-organised. In the last chapter of this book, François Heinderyckx reflects on the identity of communication researchers, and how they oscillate between migration and sedimentation, between discipline and field, and between openness and protectionism.

The book ends with the abstracts of the projects of all 40 PhD students that participated in the 2007 Summer School. Throughout the book, a series of pictures of the posters (produced during one of the workshops) are included, in combination with four photos selected from the immensive Summer School archive. Ilija T. Tomanic produced the cover. Our special thanks to our photographers: Itir Akdogan, Kathleen Arendt, Anne Laajalahti, and Ilija T. Tomanic.

## 6. A FINAL WORD OF THANKS

The Summer School is supported by a wide range of individuals and institutions. The (old and new) consortium partners, ECREA and the EC all provide invaluable support to this long-standing initiative. Lecturers and flow managers have over the years invested a lot of energy in lecturing and providing PhD support. The PhD students themselves have shown an eagerness which can only be admired and applauded. Of course, most of the credit goes to the organisers: the members of the Program Committee, the Faculty of the University of Tartu and especially to the Summer School coordinator, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, who made it all possible.

Even this book illustrates the intensity of the ongoing collaborations, with its many contributors, editors and language editors. Being produced within an almost impossible time frame (for a second time), this book bears witness of the Summer School spirit, which every year creates a unique learning experience. For this, all involved are thanked (in all the

Summer School languages) for their intellectual investment and the (learning) pleasure they have generated: thanks to you all, merci pour vous tous, danke euch allen, bedankt aan iedereen, aitäh kõigile, paldies visiem, gracias a todos, gràcies a tots, tack till er alla, tak til jer alle, kiitos teille kaikille, grazie a tutti voi, kærar þakkir til ykkar allra, köszönöm mindnyájatoknak, takk til alle sammen, obrigado a todos, go raibh míle maith agaibh, shukran, najlepša hvala vsem, ačiū jums, dziękuję bardzo Wam wszystkim, asante sana and hepinize teşekkürler.

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## Websites

The European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School
   http: //www.comsummerschool.org/

The Researching And Teaching Communication Book Series
   http: //www.researchingcommunication.eu/

The European Communication Research and Education Association
   http: //www.ecrea.eu/

The ECREA Young Scholars Network
   http: //young.meso.ee/

The Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency
   http: //eacea.ec.europa.eu/

The University of Tartu
   http://www.ut.ee/

# PART ONE

Estonian public broadcaster visit – © Itir Akdogan

# Section one:
# Technology, democracy and policy
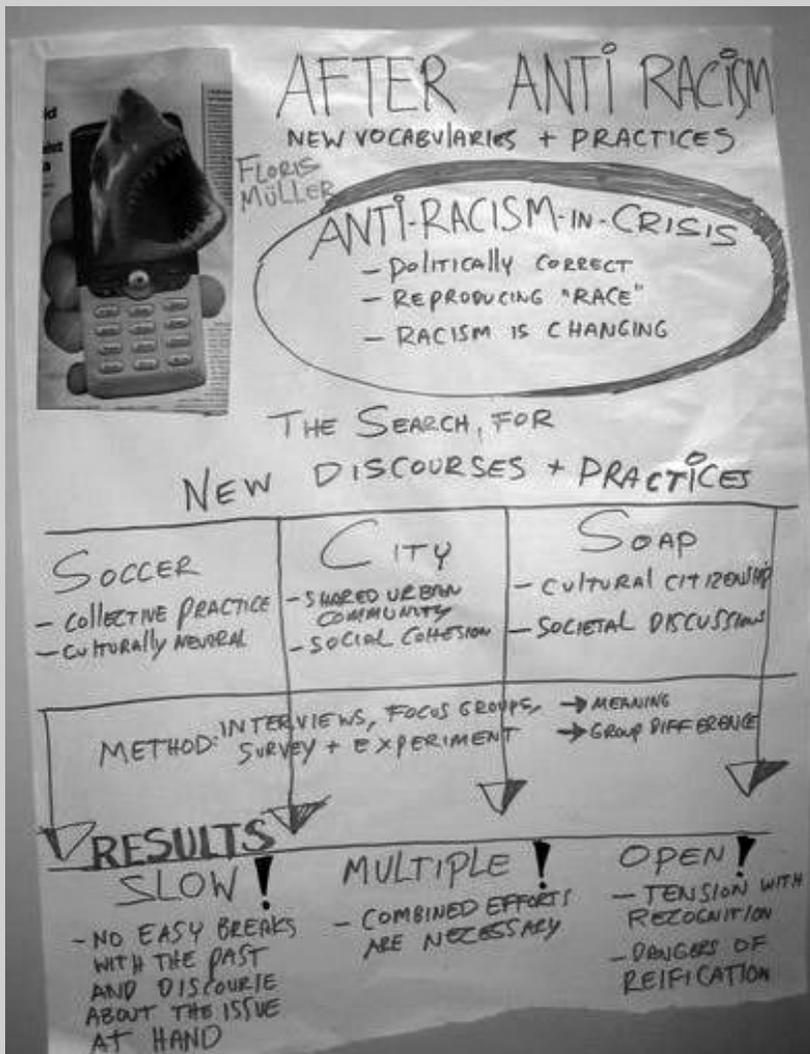


Poster by Floris Mueller

# Communication and technology: beyond determinism?

Denis McQuail

## 1. A 'TIME-LINE' OF THEORIES ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Debates about the relative contribution of material and social or cultural forces in human development were once quite common and they have a tendency to resurface from time to time, as is the case at the present time. Material forces are often embodied in specific technologies and certain kinds of technology have lent themselves especially to deterministic thinking, for instance in relation to medical science, transportation and some types of machinery. Communication has often been an object of interest for similar reasons, with simple and self-contained technologies apparently leading quite directly to profound change in many aspects of social life and ultimately to other technologies, and so on. The early identification of mass communication as an object of study in the social sciences involved an implicit element of determinism, although it also reflected theories of sociology and social psychology that emphasised the subordination of individuals in the modern industrial to centralised and oppressive forms of political control and work discipline. The technologies of mass communication were harnessed to these forces rather than bringing them into being. Gradually, however, the deeper social and cultural origins of the conditions of the twentieth century society were lost to view and attention focused on the (technological) means by which these conditions were maintained.

Efforts to trace the effects of communication technology usually involved a chronological listing of successive inventions in communication techniques with the intention of matching them to critical moments in world history. This is the original time-line referred to above, beginning usually with the invention of primitive means of recording infor-

mation for practical or ritual purposes of early societies or with the representation of scenes from life in the form of paintings and carvings (e.g. Schement and Curtis, 1985). The development of written languages required a series of inventions for inscription, storage and transport, leading to social and cultural consequences of content recorded and disseminated. The invention of printing in the West in the fifteenth century (an earlier date can be found in the East) is at least closely correlated with a series of revolutionary changes that ushered in the distinctively 'modern' era of scientific progress, Enlightenment and industrialisation. Only the most primitive theory initially connected the two. The connection imputed is usually a causal one, but not determinist in any strict sense, since history does not deal in necessity. Today the inescapable conclusion has to be that material and other forces always interact with each other to produce outcomes that are never fully determined or predictable. Nevertheless, the pursuit of chimerical causes and effects has been in integral part of the history of communication research and theory.

Going beyond these remarks, we can propose the following very summary 'timeline' of ideas that covers only the last century or so and deals essentially with the rise and possibly approaching fall of mass media.

The main entries in the 'timeline' are described in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Main phases of thinking about effects of communication technology

1. *The age of mass production and dissemination (early 20$^{th}$ century)*
2. *Differential channel and vehicle effects (1920's to 1950's)*
3. *Medium Theory (early 1960's –)*
4. *Technology of Demassification (late 1960's –)*
5. *Counter technology theories (1970's & 1980's)*
6. *New media and the Information Society (late 1970-s – early 1990's)*
7. *Web theory and the Network Society (1990's – )*

These entries can be explained briefly as follows.

## 1.1. The age of mass production and dissemination (early 20$^{th}$ century)

The study of mass communication centred around an ideal type of an applied technology, in which the technological features often received most attention and were treated as determinants of the media institution and related behaviour. Devices for multiple reproduction and dissemina-

tion of sound, images and printed words were the key to influence. These devices were typically highly centralised in their point of origin and one-directional in flow. They were also organised within large-scale state or capitalist enterprises, limiting access to the deployment of the technologies. These secondary features were linked together by the imperative to have efficient contact with the 'masses'. The mass media were thought to sustain if not actually produce the supposed masses. The element of determination was present mainly in the expectation of extensive and uniform effects, in line with message content (uniformity of content being a consequence of standardised reproduction on an large scale) produced largely within the control of a ruling elite (Mills, 1956). The effects were manifested in collective behaviour of the public as audiences, consumers and voters and in opinion and attitude formation.

## 1.2. Differential channel and vehicle effects

More experience with and closer study of the mass media in operation led to a more nuanced view of technological 'effects'. The motive for closer examination was mainly the wish to use the means of communication for more effective and efficient persuasion in advertising, training, propaganda and public information or for purposes of 'development'. To this end the component sensory channels of the mass media were isolated and assessed comparatively in order to see which were most effective for what purpose or with which sub-group. It was generally assumed that message or content could be treated as the same in all channels. The process of communication was seen from the perspective of the purposeful sender with the power to choose the most appropriate technology. In practice much research came down to a comparison between print, sound and audio-visual media as represented by newspapers radio and television or film. Despite some evidence of variable affinity for different media and of varying rates of adoption of successive media, that could not easily be assigned to purely technological factors, this phase of thinking was not very rich in discovery.

## 1.3. Medium theory

The underlying principles of medium theory were publicised although not pioneered by the Canadian, Marshall McLuhan, who wrote an imaginative and innovative study of the effects of printing (*The Gutenburg Galaxy*, 1962). This posited deep and lasting psychosocial effects from the linearity and rationality that print imposes on thinking and accounts of

experience (compared to earlier, pictorial, oral and handwritten accounts). This was followed almost immediately by a more general thesis comparing different 'media' conceived as almost any symbolic artefact, but with an especial focus on television. Television was deemed by its very nature (of depth, openness and indeterminacy) to have more in consequence with oral and folk communication and in its world-conquering guise it extended a new way of understanding the world. Compared to the restrictive medium of print, television was portrayed as a 'cool' technology. This approach to assessing effects from technology is very different from preceding models tracing logical and necessary connections and steps between technology and its effects. It is even somewhat mystical but it caught something of the spirit of the time and offered a distinctive theory of the television medium that helped to explain its high status as the predominant medium of the age. An important precursor of McLuhan was the economic historian Harold Innis who had earlier forged a clear link between technology of communication and the rise and fall of early empires (*Communication and Empire*, 1950). His central argument was that it required a technology of communication that was flexible and portable to sustain an empire as extensive as that of Rome, while the earlier empires which had lasted long, but been localised, were based on communications carved in immovable stone. Innis had also pioneered studies of the essential characteristics of radio. A key element of his thinking that is still relevant is that technology does not so much determine, as *bias* human arrangements and practices by consistently favouring certain goals and solutions over others. In this way it can give overall form and direction to change that has many actual causes. The tradition of such work has been quite fruitful, especially in the study of media effects of more subtle and long-reaching kinds (e.g. Meyrowitz, 1985; Beaudrillard, 1988). Numerous minor but sometimes important features of television practice can also be accounted for by the possibilities opened up by specific technologies (e.g. hand-held cameras, ease of recording, satellite transmissions, use of recording devices, etc.).

## 1.4. Counter-technology trends (1970–1980)

The technological bias of the field received correcting influences from two sources, firstly by a 'rediscovery of people' that occurred at quite an early stage and basically disputed the notion of powerful mass media influence. Both group and societal relationships as well as individual wants and needs were seen as more determinant of any effect and also of

the uses made of technology in the first place. It is people that choose both the technology and the message and it is in this choice that the source of effects can be found. This does not exclude the possibility of some influence from particular kinds of technology, but such influence has to be traced by more complex paths than were initially envisaged.

The second theoretical tendency with a similar effect came from the rise of linguistic theories that emphasised the text as a repository of meaning and also the role of the reader as a 'decoder' of texts. The former is represented by different schools of semiology and structuralism, later various forms of discourse analysis. The essential point in this discussion is that the technologies in use were always secondary to the symbol systems chosen, even allowing for the fact that technologies such as photography and film (later video) do have fundamental consequences for the symbolic language and thus for the communication process. Again, textual theory did not exclude some influence from technological innovation, but only in combination with certain cultural conditions. The contemporary or subsequent emphasis on 'reader' interpretation as a key to meaning led to further modification of the deterministic outlook, with influence being shaped by somewhat unpredictable construction of all aspects of the communication experience.

Under the same 'counter-technological' heading, we could also include much theory of post-modernism that largely devalued and rejected the possibility of intervention by technology for logical ends.

Despite these apparent 'setbacks' to the technological determinist approach, it was possible for those inclined to this mode of interpretation to see the points mentioned as valid and as helpful contributions to the understanding of communication process at a certain level of detail, but still not undermining the view that fundamental changes in the overall societal context of communication could occur on the basis of new technology. In a sense, these counter-tendencies could be seen as necessary corrections to the simple early theories of powerful mass media.

## 1.5. Demassification technology (later 1960's onwards)

Returning to the more deterministic tradition, an intermediate step between mass communication and the age of new media was taken around the same time as the phase just described. This specifically pointed to the role of technology in social change. The technologies in question were developments that all in some way modified the ideal type of mass communication by challenging its centralising, massive, 'vertical' one-

directional characteristics. The technologies in question were rather mixed, including cable distribution for television, miniaturisation of radio reception, cassettes for recording and replaying sound, local sound broadcasting, photocopy machines, hand held film cameras and others. These were all technologies that had an impact before the main effects of computers were experienced (and before computers were personalised) and between them they seemed to offer a challenge to the dominance of state and commercial big media, with a potential for empowering individuals and small groups with the means of expression and intercommunication. Ideologies of fundamental change or even anarchy and libertarianism were harnessed to help foresee the large potential effects or, more modestly, visions of participatory democracy based on interconnected local communities. Attributions of determination by technology were subordinate to social theory but a new pathway was being opened that encouraged such ways of thinking.

## 1.6. New media and the Information Society (1980–1995)

The beginning of a distinctly innovatory 'telematic' age, based on the application of computers for communication rather than calculation and routine data organisation and recording begins somewhere close to 1980, leaving aside various experimental stages of development. The world was woken up to the enormous new possibilities stemming from the combination of telecommunications and computers and at the same time a seemingly new dominant form of society was recognised that offered an escape from the somewhat sterile debates about mass society, capitalism, communism and libertarianism. A new range of technologies made their appearance, not just as ideas but as accomplished and available services, albeit at a primitive stage of development. Primacy could have been claimed for the innovation that heralded the internet, known generically as 'viewdata', harnessing the interactive potential of computers to the telephone system for making information available to individual citizens. The most advanced system was the French Minitel, which had no real equivalent elsewhere. In fact it was some time before the reality of diffusion and practicality could up with the hype, and less revolutionary technologies, including teletext, video recording, computer gaming learning devices, telefax, plus the widespread innovation of satellite television, made more impact. In short, there occurred a seeming explosion of possibilities for individuals to engage in sending and receiving communication, unhindered by distance and gradually by cost.

Much research was stimulated into the adoption and diffusion of technologies as well as to effects (e.g. Rogers, 1986).

The 'communications revolution' of the 1980's was based on many different technologies and equally on certain critical important social trends and changes. The general notion was closely related to the rise of an 'Information Society' in succession to the industrial society that had been established by the 'industrial revolution' of the nineteenth century (Webster, 1985). In its emerging form, the main factor in the creation of wealth was no longer land, capital and machinery but knowledge of all kinds and the information work associated with its production, application, consumption and circulation. Key features were the rise of service industries, the 'weightless' economy and the exponential increase in flows of information globally. Once the transition was accepted as real and irreversible it was a short step to seeing the single critical factor as the complex of 'information and communication technology' (ICT) that was a necessary condition of change. On this basis, technological determinism flourished again. It was also technology that was forcing a convergence of cultures (via globalisation) and of political systems and forms of regulation.

The late twentieth century 'communications revolution' not only affected social systems but also appeared to introduce new patterns of behaviour and social relationships as a consequence of computerisation. Direct human communication and interaction was replaced to some degree by computer mediated relations, which were liable to be less authentic, more isolating and manipulative as well as potentially enlarging the range of social contact and experience in a new 'virtual' sphere. The long-term consequences were and are still not really open to assessment, but the hypothesis that some fundamental change has entered human experience as a direct cause of technology remains plausible.

## 1.7. Web theory and the Network society (1995– )

Theories of the Information Society were in many respects a residue of thinking about post-industrialism and were mainly inspired by a reflection on the scale and quantity of change in the sphere of work and production. More 'qualitative' ideas about culture and relationships, as summarised, were largely inspired by the earlier critique of massification and the prediction of an end to mass communication. A genuinely new body of theory, essentially a new branch of the 'medium theory' of McLuhan and others, emerged with the goal of evaluating the implica-

tions and effects of the world wide web as it began to be developed and diffused in the 1990's, especially in the United States. There were many contributions aimed at filling this need, drawing on the notion of 'cyberspace' and the extraordinary new capacities opened up for contact and communication at a distance and at great speed, seemingly across all the barriers that have traditionally shaped and limited human interaction. These capacities not only encouraged new 'virtual communities' to be self-constructed, but also seemed to provide for unlimited access to stored knowledge and experience and instant access to the attention of any and all others connected to the web. The defining marks of the new 'cyber-age' were to be freedom from external control and physical constraints of almost every kind, new forms of togetherness and an expansion of horizons of experience without known limit. Many of the ideas already developed about the demassifying effects of communication technology were incorporated in Web Theory. We are still at a stage where powerful influences on almost anything can be hypothesised without any reality check. For the time being at least, technological determinism of a familiar kind has been given new life and plausibility, to judge only from observation of many specific concrete changes in ways of doing things and the range of possibilities for what can be done in almost all human affairs. The foundations of solid institutions of society, rooted in familiar rules and routines, are being shaken (see Castells, 2001).

At the level of society, theory directs attention at fundamental processes of disembedding and deterritorialisation that points to shifts in geo-political alignments or helps to explain those that have occurred. At the turn of the century the idea of a Network Society emerged as a more developed version of the Information Society (van Dijk, 1999). It was qualitatively different in recognising the interdependence of many circles of contact and communication that provided an organic and flexible basis for human activity. Information in this concept is much more than a commodity or resource. The essential point here is that a network society is essentially enabled by communication technologies that facilitate extensive and interactive communications of all participants in any social activity. The internet, even in is early primitive forms, is a necessary condition for network societies to form and flourish, even if they are the product of other dynamic forces.

## 2. Reflections on the 'Timeline of Theory'

Underlying the account given are several unresolved oppositions and ambiguities, as well as alternative normative perspectives and world-views relating to technology and its possible effects. There is also a variety as well as imprecision about concepts and terms used. For instance the term technology can refer to actual machines, or to the know-how that enables machines to be made, or to the specific application of certain technology, or to the institution in which uses of technology are organised (e.g. the press, or broadcast television), etc. etc. Supposed effects of technology can be very immediate or very distant in time. The well-known problems of both stating clearly what is meant by causation (there is no single version) and of demonstrating any chosen causal proposition inevitably arise, even if they are usually brushed aside at this level of generality. It is also evident that in the field of communication there has been a tendency to seize upon any seemingly new technology of transmission (especially) and to make predictions, which are then made obsolete by further technical developments. This holds up fundamental progress in this way of thinking. Amongst the various alternatives that have been explored or compared, two primary dimensions help to organise the 'space' of thinking, one being an axis that extends from dealing with very direct concrete effects from a specific technology (e.g. telegraphy enables messages to be sent very rapidly over long distances) to general notions of a given medium changing the mental outlook on the world and the character of human experience (as in McLuhan's ideas about 'hot' and 'cool' media or Baudrillard's ideas about 'hyper-reality' created by media). The second dimension represents the choice between effects from a medium and its messages on the one hand and society and culture on the other. These two dimensions are shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2:** Main dimensions structuring theories of effects of communication technology

```
                        MECHANICAL
                            |
                            |
                            |
                            |
    MEDIA ----------------------- | ----------------------- SOCIETY
                            |
                            |
                            |
                            |
                        MYSTICAL
```
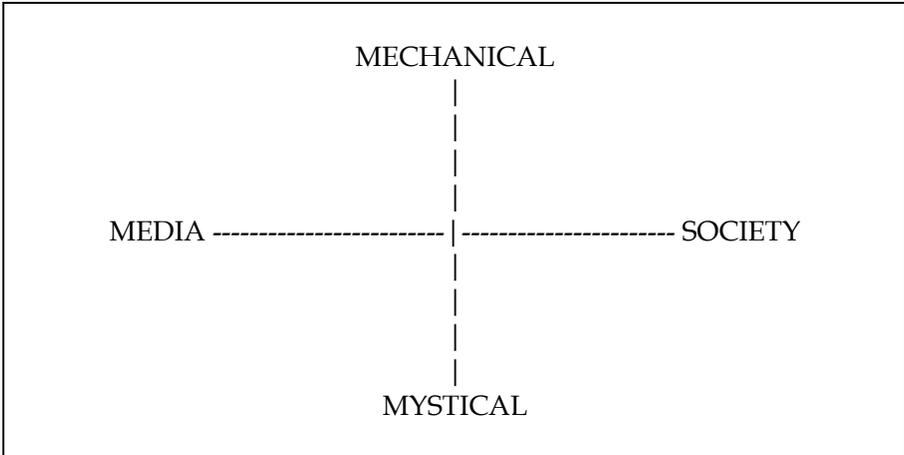
A major complication of the approach from technology arises from the great diversity of 'functions' of communication and of the sub-processes involved. They include: the transmission of information; persuasion and control; gaining attention; cultural, religious and artistic expression; entertainment and yet more.

## 3. THREE MAIN EXPLANATORY PATHWAYS

The central uncertainty concerns the identity of the pathway by which certain consequences that we may attribute to 'technology' became apparent in human society. The résumé of thinking given earlier was intended as a resource for finding answers to this kind of question. A reflection on the main lines of thinking summarised suggests that there are three main variants of a pathway to be followed by influence from communication technology:

1/ The pathway of *essentialism* which involves an attempt to identity some intrinsic characteristic of a communication technology or medium that is thought to have direct consequences for people directly concerned as producers, audience, users, etc. Or it makes a difference because it interacts with some human condition or characteristic (e.g. audio-visual media can communicate to non-literate people more easily than can printing). Essentialism may involve the assumption that a particular use or application built into the design of technology will necessarily be used for the

intended purposes. It is also usually by an assumption that at any one time there is a *dominant* communication technology.

2/ The pathway of social *institutions* according to which change comes about by the activity of media cultural institutions in particular that select and filter certain technological innovations and adapt their practices accordingly. In this way the purposes and content, and the extent and kind, of media influence is adapted in unintended but significant ways. The general idea of a certain 'bias' being attached to a given type of technology fits this type of explanation.

3/ The pathway of *interaction* between society and technology: needs are experienced by society, usually as result of changing material and environmental circumstances, leading to the search for technological solutions. A cycle of change occurs in which the technology is not the prime cause, but it contributes by opening up new possibilities that come to be regarded as new needs.

A variant of this approach begins with some seemingly dominant feature of a given society at a certain moment that could both be an ultimate consequence of technological and also give direction to certain technological innovations. Examples include the following concepts that have been used to apply to a whole type of society: industrial; totalitarian; information; global; network; risk. There are not so many examples, but they are important ideas.

The historical record is inconclusive on the nature and extent of communication technology determinism, and research into the questions raised does not really help to choose between these three paths. Probably all three are at work in some degree. Despite the lack of conclusiveness, there have been many fragmentary and intriguing examples of apparent or possible effects from technology that makes it impossible to dismiss the whole approach. For instance, there is support for the following somewhat randomly chosen ideas:

- mass production and dissemination leads to standardisation and centralisation;
- printing is associated with linear, logical, rational forms and content;
- use of pictures accentuates personal and emotional tendencies in content;
- satellite transmissions increases actuality and globalisation of news;

- both radio and cable transmission support localism and decentralisation;
- the internet promotes social networking and formation of new kinds of 'virtual community'.

In Figure 3 an impressionistic overview is given of some of the potential consequences of ICT biases according to the three pathways indicated above. The entries are variables (with direction of effect in some cases reversible – hence +/–).

**Figure 3:** Proposal of variables hypothetically affected activated by particular forms of ICTs, according to three main' pathways'

| 1. Essentialism | 2. Institutional | 3. Societal |
|---|---|---|
| Interactivity (+/–) | Convergence | Disembedding |
| Machine mediation | De-institutionalisation | Delocation |
| Mobility | Access possibilities | Dependence |
| Choice | Control (+/–) | Security |
| Virtuality | Genre formation | Equality (+/–) |
| Speed and tempo | Role formation | Control (+/–) |
| Freedom | Economic model | Hierarchy (+/–) |
| Activity level | (bias towards) | |

## 4. SOME PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS ABOUT DETERMINISM FROM TECHNOLOGY

No general or firm conclusions can bed drawn from this excursion, although several points seem to this author to be supported. These can be summarised as follows:
- It is no longer useful, or even possible to speak of any single dominant mode of communication or medium.
- It is not helpful to speak of revolutions or decisive turns related to technology, although the competitive market situation of most media has a bias towards this kind of formulation.
- It is important not to ask the same questions again in isolation, but to take a long-term historical view of change.
- Significant historical and social change in our time does not have any close chronological relation relationship to ICT or media developments. Both types of change have a high degree of independence from each other, notwithstanding a mutual influence.

- Technological change in relation to communication, as elsewhere, works continuously for underlying reasons not always apparent. There is a permanent process of convergences and divergences in different spheres.
- The search for consequences of technological innovation is not a waste of time but cannot occur in isolation of other factors.
- It is helpful to provisionally deploy some overarching framework and view of society if only as a point of entry to studying the workings of communication technology.
- It is helpful, even necessary, either to adopt a normative perspective or recognise the normative dimension of technological influences and effects. Otherwise it is hard to assess significance or set priorities.
- It also looks as if creative imagination has a part to play in recognising what is or might be taking place, even it can also mislead (as can 'mechanical' thinking).

## 5. A footnote on policy concerns relating to ICTs

On the basis of the above-summarised thinking, we can identify a number of policy concerns that are still relevant, although priorities and also possibilities for action have changed as a result of communication technology change. In Figure 4, a suggestion is made for a very summary list of these concerns, divided into those which need increased attention and those which may have less claim than in the past (or cannot realistically be dealt with). All entries are open to debate and also need more explanation for which there is no space here. Two of the items appear on both lists because of conflicting arguments about the trends and influence of new media technology.

**Figure 4:** Policy concerns needing either more or less priority

| MORE PRIORITY | LESS PRIORITY |
|---|---|
| Public Sphere needs | Universal service |
| Crime and Security | Diversity |
| Public health and harm | Monopoly |
| Human rights | Morals |
| Accountability | Quality of content |
| Freedom of speech | Accountability |
| Consumer interests | Freedom of speech |

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# Public service broadcasting in a multimedia environment

Jo Bardoel

## 1. INTRODUCTION

New media technologies supplement rather than replace old media such as broadcasting and the press, and people tend to use old and new media next to each other according to the relative strengths and functionalities of these, old and new, media modalities. To the extent that the social acceptance of the new media proceeds and media consumption among the public changes, and this proves to be mainly a generation effect, public service broadcasting will have to follow its public. Consequently cross media strategies will become ever more crucial for PSB as well as the necessity to develop new genres and formats. As a result Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) will evolve towards Public Service Media (PSM) (Nissen, 2006).

## 2. NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

### 2.1. Convergence from promise to practice

New information and communication technology has become a reality in the life of almost all people in Europe by now and convergence – in which the traditional dividing lines between different media technologies are blurring – has become an everyday fact instead of mere fiction. The process of convergence (CEC, 1997; Bardoel and Van Cuilenburg, 2003; Nissen, 2006) has gradually developed over the last twenty-five years, beginning with the emergence of cable and satellite and of teletext and videotext systems by the beginning of the 1980's. By now conver-

gence has gone through most of its stages of development: technology, market, politics, programme content and, last but not least, media consumption. As so often it was technological advancement that triggered the development; digitisation, the transition from analogue to digital media production, has caused the gradual convergence of new and already existing media modalities. More information capacity and new communication patterns (from one way to interactive) were important characteristics of digitisation. From the 1980's the combination of cable and satellite has transformed the previously predominantly national and public television markets in Europe towards a single, more international and commercial, television market. In the meantime the number of commercial television channels by far outnumbers that of public channels, leading to 'dual broadcast markets' as a typical European phenomenon. This development was facilitated by liberalising policies, both at a national and at a European level, starting in Western Europe in the 1980's and continuing in the 1990's also in Eastern Europe. Especially the emergence of a liberalising European audiovisual policy (Directive Television without Frontiers, 1989) has played a key role here.

These structural changes in the television market have had a deep impact on program content; commercial channels and new, independent producers came with new, hybrid programme formats, blurring the formerly sacred boundaries between information and entertainment and between fact and fiction. The emergence of new computer related technologies in the 1990's has triggered the production of multimedia programming, in which different platforms – also a bright new concept – are combined. The ultimate proof that convergence has moved from promise to practice is that media consumption is shifting considerably. In several countries we see that television viewing, for the first time in over fifty years, is decreasing instead of increasing and computer related media use is going up, especially among younger generations.

## 2.2. Preconditions for public broadcaster's multimedia strategies

All this means that the stage on which PSB in Europe acts has changed completely. To the extent that the social acceptance of the new media proceeds and media consumption among the public changes, and this is already happening although it proves to be mainly a generation effect, PSB will have to follow its public. At the same time we see that the preconditions for multimedia strategies of PSB are much better than just a few years ago.

A first reason is that after two decades of 'dual broadcasting' in Europe, the demise of PSB is not as serious as forecast (Tracey, 1995; d'Haenens and Bardoel, 2007). Public broadcasters have adapted quite well to the increasingly commercial television and media context they have to operate in, although at the cost of major internal reorganisations and efficiency operations and by adopting more commercial management and programming strategies. Political and academic observers were concerned that public broadcasting would be contaminated by this commercial context and that both actors might eventually converge. At first glance this concern seemed justified, since around 1990 a new generation of management took the lead in PSB in order to make the old broadcasting bureaucracies 'meaner and leaner.' Consequently, programme schedules were changed in order to satisfy the audience and the advertisers. Recently, many public broadcasters have been quite successful in choosing a middle way between adaptation and purification that Hulten and Brants (1992) have called the 'compensation strategy' (Donges and Puppis, 2003; Meier, 2003). Hence PSBs have taken over certain orientations of private competitors such as competition and cost awareness (Blumler, 1992).

The second reason is that in the meantime almost no national or European authorities fundamentally question the PSBs' right to operate on new media platforms. Although the commercial sector has tried, and still does, to limit public broadcasting to the provision of free programme offering via open, analogue networks, both national and European Union politics allow public broadcasting to operate also on new platforms, provided that the new services fit in the public remit and do not distort competition. The many procedures still running at the level of the European Commission and the numerous policy debates demonstrate, however, that the struggle is not over yet. Although the overall attitude of the European Commission is not unfavourable toward public broadcasters (Ward, 2003), the latter run the risk that their playing field will shrink as a result of incremental decision-making and case law (cf. the European Court decision on the Altmark case on the incompatibility of State aid with the common market). Consequently, the PSB presence on all platforms, old and new, has to be legitimised more explicitly than before in order to ensure that PSB shows its distinctiveness and does not distort 'fair competition'.

A last but not unimportant condition that helps PSB very much in developing its multimedia strategy is the experience that the new media do not wipe out the old media as often forecasted ('from broadcasting to narrowcasting') and that public content production will remain impor-

tant in a context where technology is abundant but professionally pro-
duced content still relatively scarce.

## 2.3. ICT implications for public service broadcasters

Let us now take a closer look at the main characteristics of the new
media technology and its implications for public broadcasters. Old and
new media interact and adopt each other's functions. In the pioneering
phase of new media they often take over content and functions of older
media, which is a proper strategy to stimulate their acceptance, but in
the longer run the specific potentiality and functionality of the new
medium are discovered and further developed. In this way radio has
taken over functions from newspapers and television from both radio
and the press. Consequently new media technologies supplement rather
than replace old media and the 'functional equivalence' theory (Robin-
son et al., 2002) supposes that people use different media next to each
other and according to the relative strength and functionality of the
respective media. At the same time we see that among the public
changes in media consumption and the social acceptance of new media
only happen gradually, mainly along generations depending on
socialisation effects at a young age. The difficult thing about digital
media is that they both provide an alternative distribution mode for all
existing content (text, sound and vision) the old media catered for, but
also offer new features based on their distinctive properties such as a
sheer unlimited information storage and communication capacity. The
question which media modes – print, audiovisual or digital – will be
used in the future depends on the functional equivalence of these media
in the user's perception.

For public service broadcasters this means that they will have to
rethink their position beyond existing media and distribution modes;
what is our role in public information provision and how can we
develop a coordinated multimedia strategy (synergy) for that? It seems
to be a paradox: the more media and distribution modes there are, the
more irrelevant they become and the more crucial the question which
role a public provider wants to play in a new, predominantly commer-
cial communication context. We shall return to this question below but
first shall address the question which new distinctive characteristics the
new digital media have that the old media do not offer.

In the twenty-five years since the Dutch telecommunication experts
Bordewijk and Van Kaam (1982; McQuail, 2000) developed a new typol-
ogy of information traffic (from allocutory to consultative and conversa-

tional modes) it has become clear that interactivity is the most distinctive characteristic of the new media. Interactive media make it, more than classical media ever could, possible for participants to express themselves, to connect to others and to participate. Different levels of interactivity (Jensen, 1999) also allow developing and fine-tuning information and communication services according to the wishes of different target groups among the public. PSB's internet presence can also be used to extend its trusted brand across platforms and to create more loyalty and a better relation with old and new viewers. Ha and Chan-Olmsted (2004) indicate four interaction strategies that can improve the relation between broadcaster and its public:

1/ *information*-based features: for example background information that is complementary to news, sports, culture and other broadcasts;
2/ *programme*-based features: offering to viewers to choose or control the program supply, for example via EPG and on demand services;
3/ *fan*-based features: trying to involve fans of programmes and personalities and creating communities by online fora and chat rooms;
4/ *game*-based features: involving viewers in (game) programmes and offering the opportunity to play it themselves.

Research shows that different target groups have different expectations and demands in this respect, often related to their age and generation and depending on the period and the way they were brought up with the media. Older people usually begin their media menu with a traditional medium such as television or radio and look for further information on the internet, where younger people more often start on the internet and then come across PSB content. Young people are good at multitasking and for them new media consumption is as important as TV or radio, but for older generations – which are intentionally or unintentionally still the main target group of PSB – broadcast media are still dominant and internet presence is only of secondary importance. This also shows that cross media strategies are becoming crucial for PSBs if they want to reach out to all generations, including the young.

At present PSB's internet presence often is a product of 'shovelwaring' existing content to the new medium or of putting additional information, a by-product of the research done for the programme, instead of the result of a deliberate strategy to serve distinctive target groups by a cross media approach. New media strategies, also of PSB, are more often technology than demand driven, but by now first experiences and research evidence allow avoiding this pitfall. As a result of

these trends linear viewing habits will not disappear, but the time devoted to non-linear viewing will grow gradually. The BBC estimates that in ten years TV households will only spend 30 to 40 percent of their viewing time to linear, generalist channels. The audience will use more platforms and channels next to the currently available open broadcast channels. In order to maintain a reasonable level of audience reach broadcasters will decide to extend their portfolio of platforms and channels. The first step are thematic channels, and these will, to the extent that they are successful, change the function of the open channels to showrooms for programme supply on thematic channels and on 'on demand' platforms. Gradually these media and platforms will be linked as part of deliberate cross media strategies that try to keep the viewer's and listener's attention as long as possible. In general, brand building across media and platforms will become more and more important. Interactivity certainly is a central concept of the new media strategy, but we have to acknowledge that this concept is still quite broad and vague, and can mean anything from simple televoting to producing your own 'user generated' content.

This brings us to another aspect of the theme of PSB and ICT: the necessity for PSB to invent new genres and formats. The reasons behind this are not only technological – because of multi- and crossmediality and the changing media use we have discussed above – but also sociological. The classical 'emancipation politics' and the Enlightenment mission has evolved to 'life politics', as Giddens (1991) calls it, in which individual and not collective emancipation has become pre-eminent, and old divisions – such as between citizens and consumers and high/elite and low/popular culture – have blurred. PSB lags behind here, since it often still focuses on traditional tasks and formats, geared toward – to use the old distinction – citizens and not consumers or clients. PSB does also lag behind in producing hybrid programs since it often sticks to the classical division between information and entertainment. The result is that commercial channels and production companies, such as Endemol, have taken the lead here and are in effect much more innovative in inventing new formulas and formats. Hence it is important that PSB rethink its programme policy in relation to both these technological and so(ciologi)cial transformations.

## 3. Discursive struggle on the public broadcasting remit in Europe

The evolution from the old hegemony of the public broadcasting system to the new 'dual system' comprising both public and commercial broadcasters has increased the urgency for a definition of the further role and the concrete legitimacy of the public broadcasting and its positioning with regard to commercial broadcasters and new technology (cf. Bardoel and Brants, 2003). Consequently, from the nineties onwards and more than had ever been the case in the period of public broadcasting hegemony, the precise formulation of the task and the mission of public broadcasting became the subject of renewed attention. Sources of inspiration for this were found in academic literature on public broadcasting as well as in political statements that had been made more and more frequently over the years. According to an inventory by McQuail in 1992 (1992: 49–64) the mission statements of public broadcasting invariably contain the following recurring ingredients: 1) a commitment to universal service; 2) diversity and representativeness of content in political, social and cultural terms; 3) democratic accountability; 4) significant elements of public financing; and 5) non-profit goals. Unsurprisingly, this more elaborate defining of the distinctive characteristics and tasks of public broadcasting first came into existence in countries where public broadcasting had already lost its monopoly (Great Britain, Canada) or where it had never existed (United States). The frequently cited advantage of the BBC in this field is therefore also due to the fact that it had to prove and justify itself in a dual broadcasting situation far sooner than its colleagues elsewhere in Europe had to.

Even more important than these academic inventories are the attempts made by the political world to arrive at a common definition of PSB. An early and clear example is the nine requirements or mandates for public service broadcasting, as formulated in the Declaration of Prague signed in 1994 by forty countries at the Fourth Council of Europe Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy. In short, it is about (Council of Europe, 1994):

1/ providing a reference point for all audience members and a factor for social cohesion;
2/ providing a forum for public discussion;
3/ broadcasting impartial and independent information;

4/ developing pluralistic, innovative, and varied high-quality pro-
gramming;

5/ developing programmes both for broad audiences and minority
groups;

6/ reflecting different ideas and beliefs, aiming at mutual understand-
ing;

7/ contributing to a greater appreciation of the national and European
cultural heritage;

8/ scheduling a significant proportion of original productions, espe-
cially fiction;

9/ offering a programme range, which is complementary to that of
commercial broadcasters.

In addition to this tentative, non-binding resolution of the Council of
Europe, we should focus on the European Union and its Protocol on the
System of Public Broadcasting attached to the Amsterdam Treaty (CEC,
1997). In this Protocol attached to the European Treaty, member states of
the European Union explicitly endorse the concept that PSB is directly
related to the democratic, social and cultural needs of citizens and to the
necessity of maintaining pluralism in the media. In addition to this, the
protocol indicates that the European Treaty may in no way undermine
the competence of Member States to fund public broadcasting, insofar as
such funding does not affect trading conditions and competition in the
Community. The result of this compromise text between cultural and
economic interests is that the demand for a more detailed definition of
PSB and public interest becomes even more essential. Subsequently, in
its Communication on the application of State aid rules to PSB (CEC,
2001), the European Commission stipulates that the definition of the
public service mandate by member states should be as precise as possi-
ble. It is clear that on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity the Euro-
pean Commission leaves it to the Member States to formulate the task –
broad or small – of PSB, while at the same time making it quite obvious
that this task cannot be concrete enough. Over the past years the EU
Commission has taken many decisions on the matter of state aid for PSB.
From these decisions and settlements the following criteria can be
derived: 1) a clear and precise definition and proper entrustment of the
public service mission, especially regarding new media activities; 2) an
appropriate and transparent separation of commercial and public service
activities; 3) a proportional financing of PSB activities, avoiding
overcompensation and cross-subsidisation and thus undercutting of
prices for non public activities.

Consequently, PSBs are reformulating their mission statements in a more technology and platform-neutral way to bring content to the public wherever it goes. As already mentioned, most national governments in Europe recently allow PSBs to expand its activities in the digital domain, although the conditions about the nature, scope and financing of these new services, compared with the core activities of radio and television, vary considerably from country to country. In many countries the main conditions are that the new services should contribute to the fulfilment of PSB goals, that they are related to the core activities in traditional broadcasting and that they – in fact the other side of the same coin – should not cannibalise on the core task. In the new BBC Charter digital activities are explicitly part and parcel of the PSB remit, but every new or modified BBC service has to be assessed by a 'public value test', checking both its contribution to the public interest and its impact on the commercial market. Also other countries, like Denmark, plan to develop a similar public value test, in which both PSB and the competition authorities are involved and for which the criteria of the EU Communication on State Aid for PSB apply.

## 4. REFORMULATING THE PUBLIC SERVICE MISSION FOR A NEW TECHNOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

### 4.1. From transmission to communication

The evolution from a mainly transmission mode – or in Bordewijk and Van Kaam's typology (1982) 'allocution' – to a proper communication mode is undoubtedly the main change Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) has to go through in order to become real Public Service Media (PSM) in the new multimedia environment. The combination of one-way media technologies and the Enlightenment-oriented paternalistic assignment of the last 80 years has produced a primarily supply-oriented rather than a demand driven culture within PSB institutions. The transition from scarcity to plenty has serious audience implications. The public becomes more active and volatile, and is not waiting on PSB to figure it out. Whereas PSB prioritised transmission, PSM must instead prioritise communication.

Serving the public is all too often considered as simple populism or, even worse, consumerism that does not fit to a public mission or institution. Serving society means contributing to the social deliberation in a Habermasian sense (Bardoel, 2006) and this assignment means that the

editorial function of PSB becomes even more vital asset for PSM. All these changes require a major mental and cultural shift, and some PSB institutions are already trying to make this shift, whereas others still stick to the old-fashioned assignment or paternalism. Throughout Europe, public broadcasters are defining new relations with '*the society they operate in and are mandated to serve*' (Søndergaard, 1999: 22). Public broadcasters have first and foremost to redefine their relation to the public and to re-establish their relations with civil society. Although the public, as their main stakeholder, should be the primary frame of reference, many PSB institutions have kept the people and civil society at a distance, while politics and the government served as the preferred partner in the past. This is another consequence of the tradition of paternalism, and more or less inherent to the pedagogical imperative practiced by public broadcasters.

## 4.2. From public service broadcasting to public service media

As we have previously seen, PSB 'as it is' is not taken for granted anymore, in many countries and certainly from a European or European Union perspective. The European Union continues to consider PSB as an exception to market conditions, but PSB it is too central in the European media landscape to be treated merely as an exception. Treating it as an exception may in effect function as an attempt to squeeze PSB into shrinking borders and narrower spaces step by step. But by tradition, PSB with a broad mandate is a European invention and a key cultural institution in Europe. Treating it mainly as an economic entity does underestimate its role, contribution, and importance, not only in historic terms, but also in the context of its future contribution to the media culture and ecology in Europe.

PSB is also not considered as a standalone institution anymore, but PSB/PSM is increasingly considered as instrumental in safeguarding a sound media ecology in any given society, of which both public broadcasting and independent journalism are crucial components. This implies that both from a political and from an economical or market approach PSB/PSM is legitimised and assessed on its ability to produce positive externalities, to compensate for market failure and to produce evident and if possible quantifiable 'public value' for society.

Some see these new conditions as a threat for a full-scale PSB, but – given the track record of pure commercial competitors – it can also be considered as an important asset. There is, according to Donges and Puppis (2003), a growing disappointment about the impact of the

'dualisation' of broadcasting because private channels are overwhelmingly entertainment-oriented while public channels carry more politically relevant information (Porter, 1999: 36). Fifteen to twenty years of commercial competition has shown that it not automatically produces more diversity against lower costs, and this experience might create a more positive climate vis-à-vis PSB/PSM than only a few years ago. Consequently, PSM remains to be an, and maybe the most, important component of the public domain in an ever more commercial media landscape.

## 4.3. From institution to programme

At the same time it should be acknowledged that the reinvention of European public service broadcasting also affects the (debate on the) present organisation and institutionalisation of PSB. The social control of public broadcasting has been institutionalised in different ways, centralised or decentralised, politically controlled or in the form of a public service, for which the BBC model became leading (Jarren et al., 2001: 49). The EBU Digital Strategy Group (2002) still considers PSB as an 'island of trust' amidst multimedia companies offering linear broadcasts and online programmes. According to this Group the public service evidently needs a strong institution to carry out this mission. The alternative option of the 'distributed public service' is not seen as a viable solution, as it may have many drawbacks. In most West European countries, there still is considerable support for the current public broadcasting institutions, notably in the United Kingdom:

> If we listened to those who wish to restrict the BBC to becoming a limited provider of minority interest content, we would risk destroying the virtues of an institution which can play a vital role in preserving a common culture of tolerance and debate, and one which can implicitly transmit the values of British society to all parts of our society and around the rest of the world. In return we would have to hope that the market would provide the same outcome, despite evidence from other societies that this is not the case (Green, 2005: 37).

The alternative of de-institutionalising PSB by introducing public programme funds comparable with policies *vis-à-vis* culture and the arts has been proposed several times, especially in countries that reconsidered their public broadcasting system, but almost no country – except New Zealand – dared to take that far-reaching step yet. At the same time theorists of the new (media) economy state that state support for a single

institution that caters for vulnerable productions for a general public becomes outdated under fundamentally changed market structures in which the 'long tail' (Anderson, 2006) makes large organisations and high investments unnecessary.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Europe has now experienced a dual broadcasting system for 25 years. In many ways the situation today is about assessing and re-defining what the dual broadcasting system ought to mean now and next, and what the position of PSB/PSM must be in that completely new context. What we have seen to date is a lot of change, but most of that has really mainly been internal. The pressure has been building for at least 10 years to re-define and better establish the public service remit in light of a deeper, clearer understanding of the new social and technological context and the growing complexity of relations with other stakeholders.

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# Towards the democratic regulation of European media and communication

Hannu Nieminen

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the last twenty years, the media and communication landscape in Europe has transformed dramatically. Digitalisation and computerisation of information have resulted in the convergence of the areas of media production and consumption which had traditionally followed different economic and regulatory paths. The commercial logic of the print media stood in contrast to other functional logics, such as the universal service principle of telephony and the public service principle of broadcasting. The result has been a long period of regulatory adjustment as different logics have clashed both in national and European wide regulatory regimes. The commercial logic appears now to emerge as a winner, promoting a neo-liberal regulatory framework.

At the same time the ambitious project of European integration, started after WWII, appears to have run out of steam. Even the European Union itself speaks of a legitimacy crisis in its documents. One of the remedies that has been proposed is the improvement of European media and communication policies and the development of the European public sphere. It is hoped that increasing public inlets and ways for citizens to participate in public debate in European issues would promote more support for the EU and European integration process.

The basic argument in this article is that the commercial logic followed in the European media and communication regulatory policies is in contradiction with the aim to open up and strengthen the European public sphere. It is my view that the basis of the EU media and communication policies should be re-defined, and for this purpose I will propose an approach to European media and communication regulation, which is based on the concept of citizens' communication rights. Initially,

I call my approach **a proposal for a democratic regulatory framework for European media and communication.**

## 2. THE MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION POLICIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

In the early summer of 2005, the European Constitution was rejected by French and Dutch voters. The reactions of the European heads of states displayed a state of shock: '*Europe is not in a state of crisis – it's in a state of profound crisis*', the then-president of European Union, Luxemburg's prime minister Jean-Claude Juncker is reported to have said in June 2005[1]. As the process of European Constitution was effectively halted, the European Commission declared a period of reflection in June 2006, which was to be used for an extensive and wide scale public consultation about the future of Europe[2]. The period was officially declared over in January 2007, but without any clear outcome[3].

A major emphasis during this period of reflection was paid to improving the communication and PR-activities of the Commission, as several central documents from that period show. These include:

- Action Plan to improve communicating Europe (20 July 2005)[4];
- Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate (13 October 2005)[5];
- White Paper on a European Communication Policy (1 February 2006)[6]; and
- Period of Reflection and the Plan D (10 May 2006)[7].

In the following, I will study three policy areas that appear to be either directly or indirectly initiated and affected as a result of the period of reflection more closely: a) the improvement of the European Commission's communication and PR-work; b) the emphasis on media pluralism in Europe; and c) the promotion of the European public sphere.

### 2.1. Improving the European Commission's PR-work

A lot of emphasis in the documents mentioned above is put on the reform of the communication and PR-activities of the European Commission. The basic message is that the reason for the recent crisis of the European Union does not lie in the EU policies but in their ineffective communication to the European public at large. Obstacles that have been in the way of effective communication include especially the following three:

- The Commission's communication activities are criticised as being insufficiently coordinated and planned; the messages were not linked to citizens' interests and needs, but instead, '*current campaigns focus on the political elite and media and fail to portray the benefits and consequences for day-to-day life in a direct and understandable manner*'; and the strategies were focused more on financing campaigns than developing dialogue and communication[8].
- Constant tensions between the European Commission and the member states have been negatively reflected in the public debate: '*Ending the blame-game, both by Member States and the European institutions, is an important change that must take place*'[9].
- The media has not played its part in promoting the European agenda and vice versa. The media coverage of European issues '*remains limited and fragmented*': between the reporting of major events such as European Council meetings there are periods when '*there is no comprehensive cover of EU affairs*'. Regional and local newspapers '*generally give little space to European issues*'. In television and radio, '*time devoted to political information and to European issues is squeezed still further and competition for "television space" has increased*'[10].

The solution, as suggested in the documents, is rather obvious: the Commission's communication work must be improved, it should become more professional, more resources should be allocated and new methods and new technologies must be applied. All this is aimed at listening to and meeting the needs and aspirations of European citizens: '*The European Commission is therefore proposing a fundamentally new approach – a decisive move away from one-way communication to reinforced dialogue, from an institution-centred to a citizen-centred communication, from a Brussels-based to a more decentralised approach*'[11].

## 2.2. More emphasis on media pluralism in Europe

As stated above, according to the White Paper in 2006, one of the reasons for the lack of popular support has been the negative exposure of European issues in the media which has resulted to the bad image of the EU. The recent interest in media pluralism in Europe can be perceived as an attempt to answer to these concerns. In January 2007 the European Commission announced a '*three-step approach*' to media pluralism. According to this approach '*the notion of media pluralism is much broader than media ownership; it covers access to varied information so citizens can*

*form opinions without being influenced by one dominant source. Citizens also need transparent mechanisms that guarantee that the media are seen as genuinely independent*'[12].

This is a new approach for two reasons. Earlier, the Commission has been reluctant to discuss the issues related to media pluralism, as it is closely related to questions of media ownership and media concentration. Although these issues are in the era of satellite-television and internet increasingly transnational in character, they have traditionally been left to the realm of national legislation. The second reason, related to the former, is that the authorities in general are traditionally reluctant to regulate the printed media as it easily leads into accusations of curbing the freedom of the press.

It is not clear where the three-step approach will be leading. The first step was the publication of Commission's working paper in January 2007, which sets the basis for the discussion.[13] The main aim seems to be to establish empirical indicators that can be used in measuring the level of pluralism in EU member countries. For this purpose, as a second step, i.e. a major independent study, is being commissioned. The third step will be the establishment of the indicators on the basis of a wide scale consultation process.[14] No clear indication is presented, however, how these indicators will be used, or what measures would follow as a result of the consultation.

## 2.3. Promoting the European public sphere

Although the main thrust of the documents presented above appears to originate from many modern PR- and corporate communication manuals, they also include elements that go much further and indicate a deeper understanding of the crises that the EU faces. The White Paper on a European Communication Policy (2006) discusses in certain length the necessity and the prospects to create a European public sphere, which is referred to, among others, with such attributes as inclusiveness, diversity and participation.[15] The development of the idea of the European public sphere is restricted almost exclusively to the White Paper, however, as in other documents it is only referred to once or twice, without explaining or contextualising it further.

This attempt to bring not only a Habermasian vocabulary, but also normative-theoretical insights of deliberative democracy into the debate on European communication policy is not accidental but deliberate. That is further underlined by several public presentations of the European Commission's vice president Margot Wallström, who is also the commis-

sioner for Institutional Relations and Communication. Echoing closely some interventions in the academic debate on the prospects for the European public sphere (see e.g. Risse, 2003; van de Steeg, 2002), she stated in January 2007: '*It would be very important, from the "public sphere" perspective, that issues of common interest – for example energy, security, climate change, social Europe – are discussed more or less at the same time, by people across the European Union, and possibly within a common framework of values*' (Wallström, 2007).

In the same speech, she also joined the debate on communication rights, central to the ideals of deliberative democracy. In defining the values and principles that should guide the EU's communication activities, the starting point '*can only be the citizens and their democratic rights*', which she listed as follows:

- '*The right to full and fair information about decisions that affect their lives, wherever they are taken;*
- *The right to hear and compare different opinions and points of views;*
- *The right to debate issues of common interest;*
- *The right to express their views and to be heard*' (Wallström, 2007).

Unfortunately, Margot Wallström's has been a rather lonely voice among the commissioners. After the publication of the White Paper in February 2006, the concept has appeared only occasionally in the EU documents, and even then it was without any wider democratic-normative framework.

## 3. EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE AND CITIZENS' COMMUNICATION RIGHTS

The emphasis in the EU documents on the European public sphere does not come from nowhere. In the last ten years or so, it has been a subject of increasing interest in European social and political research.[16] A number of projects are additionally funded by national research funds.[17] Defying oversimplification, the main thrust of the projects mentioned above can be described by the words of the subtopic '7.1.1. Towards a European Public Sphere' in the EU's FP 6th's Specific Programme 'Integrating and Strengthening the European Research Area'.[18] In the call text the aim of the research is indicated as: '*The objective is to provide integrated perspectives on the roles of different social and political actors and assess their contributions towards the articulation of diverse public communicative spaces in Europe, as components of the broader public sphere*'[19].

Even if some reference is given in the text to the study of the role of media policy and media economy in relation to the conditions for the European public sphere, these issues are weakly articulated[20]. What seems to be missing both from the FP6 call and the research projects presented above are approaches that would concern the role of the EU's media and communication policy more directly, i.e. the challenges that the development of a European public sphere poses to the European-wide regulatory framework of media and communication.

## 3.1. Citizens' communication rights

In what follows, I will take Margaret Wallström's statements concerning the European public sphere and citizens' rights as my starting point. I will not discuss the theoretical-conceptual basis behind the ideal of the public sphere, as this is a subject of another debate (see e.g. Nieminen, 2006). Here I will adopt – along with Wallström's speech and the formulation in the FP6 call – the EPS as a normative goal that represents an attempt for a more democratic Europe.

I will instead focus on the concept of citizens' democratic rights, which were central in Wallström's speech. I will, however, go one step further than her formulation. In my interpretation, she was not speaking of citizen's rights in general, but of rights that can more precisely be called communication rights: '*The right to full and fair information… The right to hear and compare different opinions… The right to debate issues of common interest… The right to express their views and to be heard*' (Wallström, 2007). Following Wallström's argumentation, the implementation of these rights is a condition for the realisation of the European public sphere.

Obviously there have to be different means to realise these rights in practice. Some of them have to do with the function of public administration, some of them with the political system more generally. I will restrict my study here only to the role of the media, and my question is: how can we make the European media system serve citizens' communication rights better?

Although the concept of communication rights has been a part of academic vocabulary for some time now, it does not appear to have been developed very systematically. Most often the concept has been discussed in reference to the late UNESCO's New World Communication and Information Order (NWICO) as well as to the more recent World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) (Hamelink, 2003; Padovani,

2004; Servaes and Carpentier, 2005; Mueller, Brenden and Pagé, 2007). In recent years there have also been increasing attempts for an analytical definition of what constitutes communication rights, or – as the issue has also been approached – the right to communication (Birdsall and Rasmussen, 2000; Birdsall and McIver Jr, 2002; Statement on Communication Rights, 2003; Birdsall, Rasmussen and McIver Jr, 2003; McIver, Rasmussen and Birdsall, 2004; Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2007; Hicks, 2007; Padovani, 2007).

Although communication rights have not been internationally codified and they do not have legal status as such, many scholars argue that all their essential elements have been confirmed many times by the international community in international treaties and conventions by the UN and its organisations [21], the Council of Europe[22] and by the European Union[23]. In sum, communication rights can be divided in four main categories (see also CRIS, 2005; Nieminen, Aslama and Pantti, 2006; Moring and Nieminen, 2006; Wallström, 2006):

1/ the right to information, which concerns the claim for facticity and accuracy of public representations;
2/ the right to orientation, which concerns the plurality and diversity of opinions that are publicly offered or available;
3/ the right to social and cultural communality, which refers to the availability of a rich variety of cultural representations, including those of both art and entertainment; and
4/ the right to self-expression, which includes access to channels and platforms where citizens can make themselves heard and seen, and also listened to.

The problem is, however, that although these rights have been internationally agreed and confirmed many times, it has not been possible to collect them into a unified framework and adopt them as a part of international law. It is not because there has been lack of attempts: both the NWICO process in the 1970's and the WSIS in the early 2000's were examples of this. Both of these processes also clearly show the difficulties of having communication rights universally recognised, and they also make visible the reasons why this has not been successful (see e.g. World Press Freedom Committee, 1981; Irani, 1998; Sussman, 2001). The result is that there is no coherent international regulatory framework or institutional structure whose responsibility it would be to oversee the execution of citizens' communication rights. There are some monitoring agencies (for example, European Audiovisual Observatory, European Institute for the Media, Institute of European Media Law, and EU Monitoring and

Advocacy Program of the Open Society Institute) and several civic organisations (for example, Communication Rights in Information Society CRIS, The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, and Campaign for the Freedom of Information), but there is no single legal instrument to guarantee the deployment of these rights.

## 3.2. Towards a democratic regulatory framework

What would the communication rights perspective, outlined above, mean from the point of view of the European media and communication regulatory framework? One way of assessing the realisation of communication rights should obviously be to measure the media performance, that is, to ask to what degree the 'end product' does fulfil citizens' communication rights. However, by studying only media publicity we do not get very far: all fundamental decisions concerning access, availability and dialogue are made before the 'end product' phase of the media process. We need more tools in order to get beyond the media publicity and to have a better reach in terms of the decisive moments in media production. For this purpose, the value chain analysis can offer us some tools (see Fine, 2003; Dale and Simonian, 2005).

In a simplified version, the basic value chain model for the media industry is comprised of four basic elements: content creation; editing and packaging; distribution; and reception (the terms may differ according to their usage) (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Value-chain model of media production
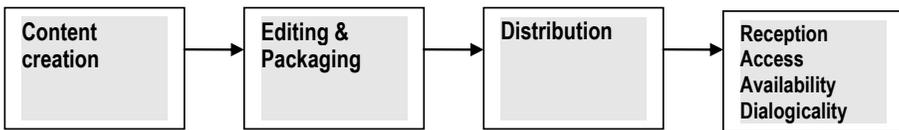


In each phase of the value chain, crucial decisions are made that affect the so-called end product (a television programme, a newspaper, a website). From our normative point of view, all these decisions have an impact to how the final media contents meet the criteria of citizens' communication rights. Today, all the phases of the media value chain are regulated through different pieces of legislation. Mostly this is the work of national level of regulation, but increasingly the media is regulated on European (EU) and also on a global (WTO, ICANN, ITU) levels (see Ó

Siochrú, Cirard and Mahan, 2002; Dupagne, 2003). More practically, this means e.g. that

- in the phase of content creation, not only national legislation but more and more international contracts and conventions regulate the interpretation of copyright;
- the phase of editing and packaging is regulated through several different legislative regimes: copyright law, criminal law (e.g. libel, indecency, secrecy), and competition law;
- the phase of distribution is regulated by audiovisual and telecommunication directives of the European Union.

From the point of view of democratic regulation, I am especially interested in such legislative measures that are both *proactive*, that is, aiming at steering action beforehand instead of reacting only afterwards, and *positive*, that is, supporting favourable behaviour instead of just prohibiting non-favourable.

By mapping out different pieces of international and national laws and acts that regulate media and communication in Europe, and by connecting them with the respective phases in the value chain model of the media, we may eventually be able to draw a picture of the European regulatory framework in its wholeness, as the schematic presentation shows (see Figure 2). That would then allow us to make well-informed judgements on the realisation of citizens' communication rights in Europe today[24].

**Figure 2:** The regulatory framework for media and communication
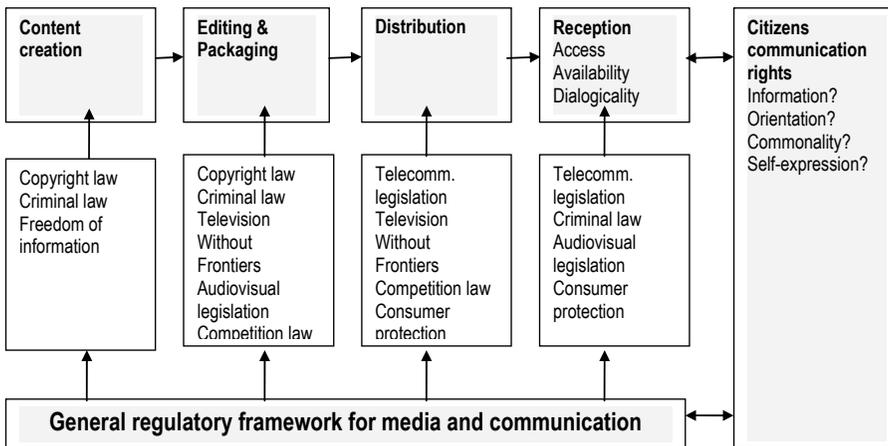
It is, however, true that the legal framework is only one – although the most important – part of the regulatory system. Media and communication are also increasingly regulated by different forms of self- and co-regulatory means – codes of conduct, ethical councils, in-house rules etc., which should also be taken into account[25]. These self- and co-regulatory means are still mostly national, and there does not seem to have developed any trans-national self-regulatory regime in almost any branch of media and communication, except in the area of marketing and advertising where the International Chamber of Commerce has shown leadership[26].

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

My main argument in this paper has been that if the European Union is serious about achieving an increase in genuine democratic legitimacy, its media and communication policies need a radical change. Today, the media and communication system is an evenly central part of our European democracy as the institutions of representative democracy are – or even more central. European democracy needs a functioning European public sphere, where topics of common interest can be discussed by citizens at the same time, sharing the same information and orientation, in different parts of Europe and in different European languages (see e.g. Risse, 2003). Today no such European public sphere exists. What is needed is a consistent all-European policy to create overall conditions for the public sphere to develop. I call this a policy towards creating a democratic regulatory framework for European media and communication.

I developed the argument in two stages. I firstly discussed the ways the European Commission attempts to use the media and communication policies in solving the EU's present crisis and how it has employed the notion of the European public sphere in its crisis management. In this context, special emphasis was given to the endeavours by commissioner Margot Wallström and her efforts to incorporate the Habermasian sense of the public sphere into the European Commission documents.

Secondly, I outlined a proposal for a new democratic regulatory framework for European media and communication. The proposal is based on the concept of citizens' communication rights, which, although not internationally and officially codified, have been established through international treaties and conventions. These rights consist of four components: rights to information, to orientation, to social and cultural

communality, and to self-expression. The problem is, however, that the actualisation of these rights is dependent on the specific media and communication system, which may or may not be supportive. That is why public regulation is needed to balance and equalise different social interest groups' access to and availability of the media, and to level different barriers to critical public dialogue.

It is not enough, however, to assess the actualisation of communication rights only on the basis of media publicity as it reduces the regulatory means to concern only media contents and media distribution. Crucial decisions affecting the so-called end product (a television programme, a newspaper, a website) are made in all preceding stages of the media production process. All these decisions have an impact to how the final media publicity meets the criteria of citizens' communication rights.

Today, all phases in media production are regulated at least to a certain degree through different legislative or self- and co-regulative means. What I propose is to develop a systematic approach, based on a value-chain model of analysis of media production, which can assist us in creating a comprehensive picture of the present regulatory framework of European media and communication. Basing on this, we could then ask for example:

- How is consistent the European regulatory framework from the normative point of view in general? Do we find contradictory elements that could be used then in our attempt to democratise the framework?
- What normative goals do we find its different components serving today, and how do they relate to citizens' democratic communication rights?
- What kind of regulatory measures at each phase of the value chain would serve citizens' communication rights best?

These questions might also lead us to establish a set of transparent criteria for each phase in the value chain in order to steer and control the media production fulfilling its democratic functions as desired. Another question is what these criteria should be and how they should be enacted.

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19    FP6 Specific Programme, p. 16.

20    In regard to media economy, the reference is the following: '*The role of electronic and print media should be examined in terms of agenda setting and generating debate and controversy in relation to cultural, societal, political and economic matters, with particular emphasis on European issues; the implications of media concentration or variations for the pluralism and integrity of information could be examined in this regard*.' (FP6 Specific Programme, p. 16.)

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# SECTION TWO:
# JOURNALISM
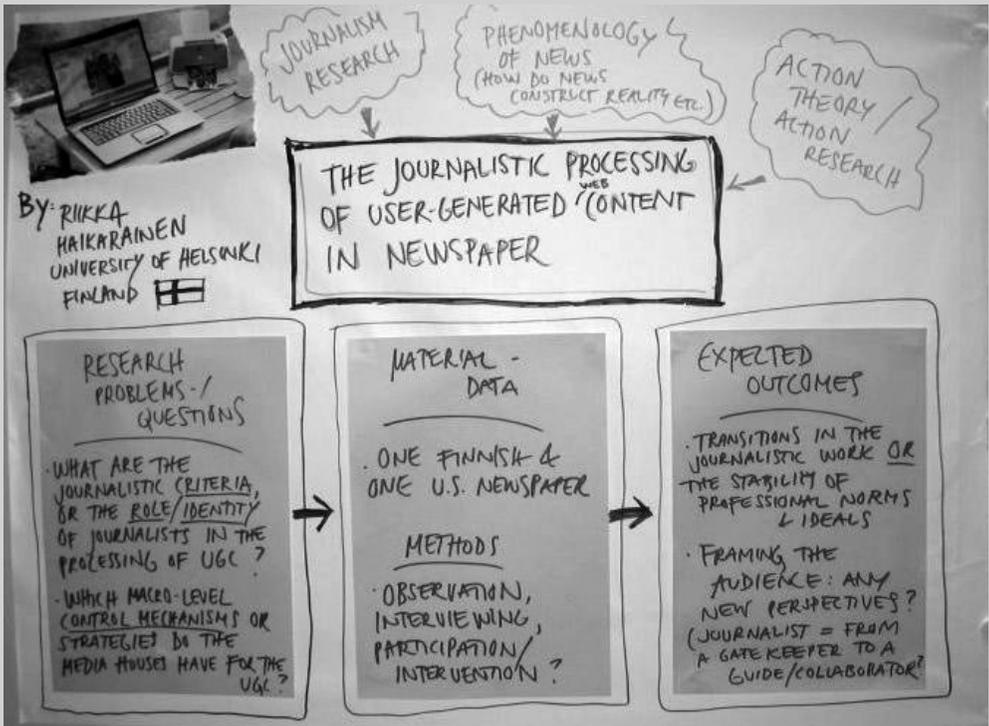


Poster by Riikka Haikarainen

# How to meet journalistic aims in European communication? Redefining the potential of online EU news offers

Auksė Balčytienė

## 1. FOREWORD

This chapter looks into the research findings of the Adequate Information Management (AIM) project[1] from a new perspective. It seeks to show that there is an increasing need to redefine the potential of new media technologies in EU communication in three ways – as means of information, communication and production. As the AIM project has shown, 'communication' (e-mailing, consulting online) and 'production' (webcasting online, reporting online, blogging) are both intensively and extensively used by both EU institutions (e.g. the spokespersons of the European Commission) and journalists (working in Brussels and in their home offices).

From a journalistic point of view, however, there is a research need to redefine the potential of new media as means of 'information'; or to put it more precise – as means to provide analytical information offering transnational and alternative views on European policy issues. The AIM project and other research dealing with media reporting on European matters made it clear that there are obvious problems in the process of EU communication. In short, the main problems are that media across Europe 'domesticate' EU issues (focussing on their national political agendas) and that transnational (pan-European) views are missing (Machill et al., 2006; Meyer, 2005; Peter and De Vreese, 2003).

This chapter proposes that alternative information platforms,[2] which offer rich and varied information with alternative views and transnational perspectives, could become useful sources of EU news for journalists. By offering rich information and recognising the common interests

of citizens in a pan-European context, these news sources may help journalists to develop the *analytical skills* that are necessary to get background information on complex EU matters and develop a shared sense of 'Europeanness', which, possibly, could in turn enrich the news that is reported.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

When researching the role and function that new media technologies can play in European democracies (in particular), European communication (in general) becomes an interesting research field. Due to the multifacetness and complexity of the research perspectives (focussing on different actors, or having different levels of analysis, such as the national or the trans-European level), this approach can open new perspectives to look at old questions in journalism research. New light can be shed on the problems of 'communicating Europe' through the analysis of the working routines of (and channels used by) political actors trying to reach the citizenry (and having to cope with the national media). Similarly, the theories of news selection and agenda-setting can be revisited by taking the potential of interactive media into account (for e.g., as offering different perspectives on European information).

Generally speaking, in the context of European news production, the utilisation of new media technologies (internet portals, mobile phones, satellite broadcasting) has become of crucial importance. Political actors understand the growing importance and usability of new media technologies: for instance the recently announced *White Paper on a European Communication Policy*[3] attributes a substantial role to the internet. The media, too, have increased their investment in the development of new media journalism projects.

In this chapter the potential of new media is analysed by making use of two approaches. First, the news management and communication strategies, and the working routines of the two actors (the spokespersons of the European Commission and the Brussels correspondents) involved in the process of EU communication will be briefly discussed.[4] Second, the role of technology will be debated, focussing on the potential it has for EU communication – concentrating on the global availability of online sources which offer varied and rich EU information.

## 3. COMMUNICATING EUROPE AS A CHALLENGE

Political communication takes place when political messages are re-produced by the media. From the perspective of political actors, news management is related to political public relations such as deciding on the timing for public announcements, on how the information should be spun, and on a wide range of other issues related to the communication with journalists. From a media perspective, the news management is related to giving publicity to political messages according to the rules of particular news organisations. The norms governing the interaction between journalists and their political news sources thus become highly significant in order to describe any particular (European) political communication culture. In this context, it is important to question the roots of these norms – are they rooted in a media logic or a political logic? What are the working routines of each of the actors playing an active role in this process? Which channels are being used for information and communication?

Popularly speaking, the concept of news management is associated in political communication with the way political actors deal with the media. News management is aimed at influencing, changing, piloting and controlling the journalistic everyday business and is considered to be a PR function. From a media perspective – if it is presented as above – it is mainly understood as an outside strategy. In this top-down approach to news management, political and other actors seek to determine the media agenda. But news management can also be understood as a process internal to media organisations, which covers different phases of news production such as the choice of information sources, value judgments, assessments of news relevance, and news presentation. To sum up, news production is an active process, which is manifested through the journalistic processes as gate-keeping, decision-making, and agenda-setting, and where top-down and bottom-up strategies of information management are combined.

Indeed, the concept of news management is relevant to describe the procedures that are applied within the contexts of news manufacturing. In EU communication, news management is understood as a three-step-flow process, where European institutions provide information to the foreign correspondents in Brussels (1st step), who in turn select and edit the news, and feed it to the media at home (2nd step), which from their part inform the citizens of the European countries (3rd step). This kind of arrangement is quite common for foreign news coverage, however, as will be demonstrated in the next parts of this chapter, the Brussels' news

site still has its particularities concerning European – as foreign news – reporting.

## 3.1. The working routines of the spokespersons of the European Commission – a bottleneck of EU communication[5]

In EU communication, the spokespersons of the European Commission (the Commission) are the intermediaries between the Commission and the media (and indirectly the citizens of the European Union). In their daily routines, the spokespersons follow the agenda of the Commission and plan the events-communication. Their job involves weighing and balancing information, combined with limiting many voices to one. Spokespersons control the distribution of news and seek to distribute a coherent message. They plan what to communicate, whom from the DG to give the right to communicate to, and when to provide 'low or no communication at all'. In this process, numerous channels are used, and activities performed, both officially (organising press releases, midday briefings, press conferences) and confidentially (organising meetings with journalists in unofficial situations).

From the spokespersons' point of view, the so-widely discussed problem of 'communicating Europe' (i.e. the information deficit, the lack of public debates on EU issues, etc.) has several aspects. The first problem is related to the complexity of political issues. Generally speaking, the European Union is addressing things that are not easy to comprehend. To put it more precise: the EU is talking about directives, regulations, the integration of markets, the interconnectivity of networks, security, etc. The second problem is related to political and administrative procedures, i.e. to the length and complexity of the decision-making processes of the Commission. Two or three years may pass by, from the time when the legislation has been adopted by the Commission until the citizen will be affected by this legislation. Due to the specificities of their communicational structure (with the different affiliations of the spokespersons, their multi-tasking and the collaborative efforts to find a common ground in order to speak in 'one voice', etc.), the spokespersons have to be selective, and they can only have limited attention for the broader media landscape and for the media in those countries with a small number of correspondents present. Thus, they have their preferred journalists and media companies (e.g., the news agencies, the *Financial Times*). The third issue they raise is that the EU is in many ways, geographically but also mentally, very far away from the daily lives of the 'average' citizen.

To avoid these problems, the spokespersons try to reach citizens by applying a long-term communication strategy, which is based on a multi-channel method (combining media with the internet) and which is aiming for long-term effects. The spokespersons mainly deal with the press corps in Brussels, as journalists located in the member states are considered being too far away. This implies that much of the success in EU communication also depends on the resources that Brussels-based national media have, as for instance the number and competence of journalists from the different member states, and the type of medium the journalist is working for (TV, newspapers, news wires, etc). In short, journalists in Brussels are seen as 'customers' to whom the spokespersons aim to 'sell' the Commission's messages.

In general, the spokespersons look positively at the changes introduced by the Commission's new communication strategy. Spokespersons support the idea to give Europe a more 'human face', to 'go local' by investing more resources into the representations of the member states, to improve the corporate image and to invest more in new technologies, etc. However, it is also very obvious that these change will be very difficult to implement due to the complicated nature of the procedures for finding a common ground, and the problems related to re-thinking strategies that have been already implemented (e.g. the internet websites of different DGs).

To conclude this part, the major policy principles shaping the European communication from the point of view of the spokespersons are related to the following issues. They need to speak in one voice, avoid involvement in national debates, manage the complex and bureaucratic language (which is seen as an inevitable part of the working process – it is considered necessary to stress all technicalities in order to demonstrate the level of consensus that was reached), plan and manage the information distribution and use the available variety of communication channels.

## 3.2. Media approaches to EU news reporting: contextual means to transnationalise journalistic practices

Previous research has shown that Brussels has a unique information culture with its own rules, norms and source hierarchies (Baisnee, 2002; Raeymaeckers et al., 2007). For most Brussels correspondents, this communication culture differs dramatically from what journalists are used to at home. Getting to know this political communication culture requires time, resources and a professional attitude. While working in

Brussels, journalists have to be flexible and switch between different frames of reporting, such as the transnational and the national, the global and the local. At the level of the national frame – as research on media reporting on EU matters has shown – the highest probability for the EU news to enter on the national agenda is to 'domesticate' these news items (i.e. to nationalise them by trying to find an angle that fits the national political agenda). In other words, national relevance – the implications of EU decisions for national politics, economies and the life of citizens – is the most important and common selection criterion for journalists covering the EU[6].

In particular, it seems that this contradiction between the journalists' national affiliation, on the one side, and the supranational topics they are asked to cover and the transnational environment within which they operate, on the other, materialises in two aspects: professional practices and news values. When in Brussels, journalists obviously work in an international milieu. They face distinct newsgathering rules, an organisation and attitudes of their sources that can be radically different from what they are used to in their homeland. The transnational character of the Brussels 'newsroom' creates many opportunities for journalists to meet and communication cultures and practices to merge. Journalists go through a certain learning-by-doing period and they develop many common elements in their communicative practices. Eventually, their daily routines become fairly identical: in the mornings, normally, correspondents scan some international morning papers, listen to international news services, check online newsletters, go through invitations to organised political events such as midday briefings, and then communicate with the news editor at home about the priorities for the day. The sources that journalists access are also relatively similar. In this way, national differences tend to diminish, because professionals use the same working procedures and because news tends to be very similar in content and in framing.

To conclude, the Brussels' journalistic microcosm creates the opportunities for a transnational journalistic culture to emerge. Very frequently, journalists share the same sources, and come to similar interpretations and evaluations of what has happened. Brussels has thus become – for journalists – a socialisation opportunity and a place for cooperation.

## 3.3. Where do political and media objectives clash?

In spite of many contextual possibilities for a homogeneous communication culture to emerge, there are – from the journalists' point of view – serious problems located at the 2nd level of EU news mediation (in Brussels). Here, the concept of 'adequacy' in news management can be used to understand the goal-oriented behaviour in the tripartite relationship between the different partners in EU communication, namely the EU institutions, the media and their national audiences (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Different partners in EU communication and the means of influencing their behaviour (adapted from Balčytienė and Vinciūnienė, 2006).
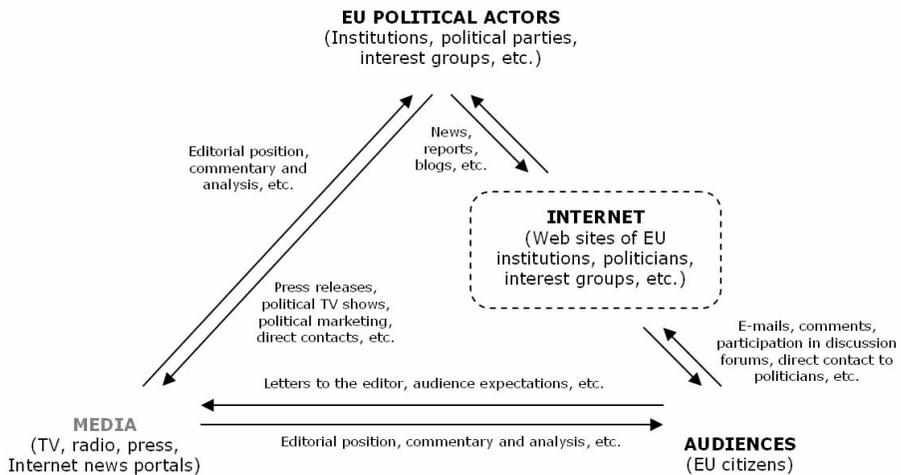


As became clear from the news production analysis, the problems of 'communicating Europe' (such as the lack of transparency, the complexity of issues to be communicated, etc.) are based on structural and organisational conditions. Moreover, these news management processes are affected by social, cultural, political and economic conditions and dynamics. The professional work routines of both actors decisively determine the shape of the European information. The political news sources – the spokespersons of the European Commission – do deliver rich information and use various means for communication, but they also aim to maintain a balanced (mono-vocal) perspective and seek to communicate achieved results. The media, in contrast, value unsolicited access, issue relevance and are interested in matters that related to proc-

esses, which renders them dissatisfied with the current situation. Therefore, one of the major problems of 'communicating Europe' is not based on the *quantity* (research shows[7] that numerous channels and sources of EU information are indeed available), but rather on the *quality* of the information processing.

The weakest aspect in the European information management process is the lacking of sufficient *analytical capacity* in the 2nd step of the mediation process – namely, at the point in time when news is selected and interpreted by the Brussels correspondents. Exactly at this point the major differences between the transnational political communication context of the EU institutions and the national journalistic culture occur. Journalists do not accept the Commission's PR – indeed, they remain very sceptical about any kind of clear journalistic pre-production of information by the staff of the Commission. Journalists also do not see the Commission as capable of engaging in interpretations and analyses of its own information output (because the Commission follows the 'speaking in one voice' policy, avoids national views and communicates on what has been achieved rather than disclosing conflicting views and background information on the decision-making process). Therefore, having little opportunities to look behind the scenes of the decision-making process, journalists lack the *analytical skills* (to question factual details, to interpret background information, to find relevant arguments, and to analyse the received information) to move beyond the pre-prepared statements of the Commission.

One way to get out of this vicious cycle is to increase the capacity of the Brussels correspondents to bypass any kind of PR-like strategy of the Commission and to find other kinds of sources offering them fresh insights and background information concerning key policy issues. According to the interviewed journalists, more readiness from the side of the EC representatives (Commissioners and senior staff) to engage in meaningful debates and to express their own views and analytical arguments is considered to be indispensable as well.

## 4. INFORMATION OFFERS ONLINE AND TRANSNATIONALISATION OF EUROPEAN REPORTING

Taking into account the EU's communication problems – the overflow of information, the lack of transparency, the bureaucratic jargon, the pitfalls of cross-cultural misunderstandings on all levels and concerning all aspects of politics, etc. – independent online news sources could become

of crucial importance for journalists to gain insights into EU policy-making processes and could offer more diverse (and sometimes conflicting) perspectives on European issues.

Indeed, the existence of a knowledge-based society obviously changes the role of new media technologies, as they are being used as means of information, communication and production. An indirect finding of the AIM project was that reporting on Europe increases with the advent of a younger generation of professional journalists that rely on a clearer and more active understanding of the European dimensions involved in their daily trade (AIM Research Consortium, 2007b). The AIM study confirmed that most of the correspondents read media websites and check online information from governments or other official bodies. They use the internet quite frequently and do not often bother to participate in pre-planned events (such as the midday briefings or press conferences) because they will not be able to ask questions anyhow. Following the press conferences on the internet provides them with sufficient material. The correspondents also find it helpful that official documents and reports are made available online without any delay, so that they can get a view on what is going on. In addition, effective search features allows them to find new inspiration and new topics for their work. Journalists also turn to weblogs, online communities and forums to find out what is being discussed online and where news might develop. One problem, however, is that the editors also have access to most internet sources at home, and are demanding more justification for the correspondents' presence in Brussels than was the case some years ago. At the same time there are justified concerns that internet news, especially when provided by do-it-yourself journalists, can lead to error, rumour and propaganda. But it is also considered that amateur reporting offers valuable perspectives on news, which is often missed by the traditional media, especially when the number of traditional foreign correspondents is in decline.

In short, there is a growing tendency to rely on more than institutionalised information systems concerning European affairs. A strong trend, based on technological developments within the world of the internet, points into the direction of non-institutionalised, non-governmental, non-administrative and clearly transnational information.

Indeed, there is a wide array of alternative online communication platforms available which offers all kinds of insights into European matters[8]. These are ranging from those offering specialised information to the ones that can be accessed by general audiences. An important and distinctive feature of these platforms is their transnational orientation, which is especially useful for journalists to get access to background

material and to other views on policy matters than those communicated by official sources in official documents.

## 5. OUTLOOK AND FURTHER RESEARCH NEEDS

It appears that there are old questions (concerning information selection and management) and new questions (reacting to social changes) that journalistic theory and political communication research need to address. In this chapter, the need to redefine the role of new media technologies is stressed on the basis of three kinds of uses: as a means of information and transaction (for policy research and analysis), as a means of communication (for e-mailing, chatting, interviewing, and consulting), and as a means of production (for producing new media journalism, weblogging). From the news production and work routine perspective, it appears that both actors (the spokespersons and the media) are increasingly using the internet as a means of communication and production. In the light of the problems of 'communicating Europe' there seems to be a yet unexplored potential of the internet as means of (alternative, independent, analytical and transnational) information.

This chapter aims to stress the yet unfulfilled need for journalists to gain access to procedural aspects of political decision-making (such as conflicting views, background information and opinions). It is proposed that online information, and more specifically interactive platforms which are widely available and are already used by some journalists, become a possible solution to at least some of communication problems discussed above.

Indeed, several processes evolving towards more radical changes in EU communication can observed in relation to new media and interactive technologies. First, institutional re-arrangements are taking place at the EU level: the Brussels microcosm ('newsroom') is rapidly changing due to a combination of subjective changes (where more spokespersons with degrees in communication and media related fields are recruited, and where the EU information policy is moving towards the more active use of new media) and objective changes (where the structure of Brussels press corps is changing because of the arrival of a new generation of journalists). Second, in all European countries the media field is rapidly restructuring itself, and evolving towards more intensified forms of competition, and towards a more commercialised form of news production (applying the new logic of news production 'as fast and as cheap as possible'). New technologies are now actively being used to fill the holes

in the market. Third, the technological awareness of citizens is constantly growing, which affects the development of alternative platforms offering independent and personalised access to EU information.

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NOTES

[1]   Eleven countries took part in the 6th FP AIM project, which ran from 2004 to 2007. Its aim was to analyse specific news production processes (EU information selection, analysis, editing, presentation) that resulted in EU coverage in the mass media. Information about the project is available online at http://www.aim-project.net (accessed on August 2007).

2    In this chapter the concept of 'alternative online platforms' is used to describe new kinds of information sources offering diverse and, most importantly, varied information from a transnational point of view. As will be demonstrated by a number of examples in the following sections of the chapter, these platforms have become 'mainstream' in many cases, and are known and fairly actively used by journalists. Their 'alternative' character is defined here by contrasting the content they offer online with the national media's urge to 'domesticate' (i.e. to national-ise) EU news.

3    http://ec.europa.eu/communication_white_paper/doc/white_paper_en.pdf (accessed in August 2007).

4    The role of audiences is not addressed in this study but with the growing impor-tance of alternative online platforms (such as internet news portals, weblogs, chat rooms, online forums and other kinds of virtual meeting spaces) this needs to be addressed in future studies.

5    The working routines of the spokespersons are summarised on the basis of the information that was gathered in interviews of the AIM project. Researchers from eleven European countries studied the media's impact on the development of (a) European public sphere(s). For this project, the Belgian and Lithuanian research-ers interviewed spokespersons of the different DGs (for more information, see AIM Research Consortium, 2007a). In the spring of 2006, 14 spokespersons (out of the total number of 32 listed in the DG Communication's *Guide for journalists*) were interviewed.

6    It is of course possible to find news about the EU as a political entity, but this is often only reported in times of major crisis, by the newspapers read by elite groups, by some public broadcasters and by some news agencies.

7    One common result of all national reports of the AIM project was that they showed the wide availability of communication channels (both official and unofficial) that are used by journalists (AIM Research Consortium, 2007a).

8    Consult, for example, such projects online as 'Europe media monitor' (http://press.jrc.it), 'Euro Topics' (http://www.eurotopics.net), 'EurActiv' (http://www.euractiv.com), 'EuroZine' (http://www.eurozine.com), 'EU Obser-ver' (http://www.euobserver.com), 'Café Babel' (www.cafebabebl.com) and others.

# Information and communication: do these terms constitute absolute opposite practices and concepts? Remarks on Online Municipal Bulletins (OMBs) within the context of everyday life

Bertrand Cabedoche

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Information/communication, a terminological issue

It is not uncommon in French academia (and beyond) to distinguish or even oppose *information* and *communication*. A majority of journalists claim that their social legitimacy lies in defending democracy against every kind of power, whether it be economical or political. From this perspective information is isolated from communication, whether it be in relation to practices or products. Journalists often state that this is a question of their professional identity. In addition, they very often argue that the indelible separation has historical roots. According to them, *information* refers to 'critical thinking' (which expressively designates journalism), while they see *communication* as linked to propaganda, mainly referring to advertisements, commercials, as well as to local, regional, national and international political discourses which are typical features of this 'mediatised communication' period. Observers – aware of the functionalist research tradition at the beginning of the 20th century – also point to Lasswell in this regard, who defined three fundamental roles or 'functions' for media in society: 1) the role of watch-dog over essential values (among others democracy); 2) providing adequate and alternative responses to social and political challenges by connecting social actors within a community of newspaper readers; and 3) passing on a social and political heritage.

Recently, questioning these assertions has become more legitimate and necessary as the overall media landscape has been subject to radical transformations. The current media landscape is characterised by two phenomena that reinforce each other: *commodification* on the one hand and *concentration* on the other. Both are a result of the growing involvement of private investment funds into media capital. The main consequence is that productivity and profit – understood here as short-term economic benefits – have become the key imperatives in media organisations and media production. Many researchers, however, also point to a symbolic consequence: the *multinational media and communication holding* ('la holding de communication') (Blanchot and Padioleau, 2003).

One might be lead to think that the traditional dichotomy of information versus communication would have disappeared from journalists' representations. However, a majority of journalists – and perhaps more so than ever before – do not consider themselves to be involved in the changes that are occurring within the current media landscape. They continue to believe that their main social legitimacy consists in defending democracy. In addition they tend to believe that information *should* be isolated from communication, as this (as mentioned before) touches upon their professional identity.

At the same time, another change in the landscape of news production is the *digital revolution*. An immediate consequence of this is the increase of '*informationalisation*' (Miège, 2004). This social phenomenon first of all relates to the increasing impact of mediatised communication. This is to say that media are now covering every social field, and every dimension of social action. Secondly, *informationalisation* also refers to new trends in news production. Organisations communicate and adapt their own information strategies, bypassing mass media mediation. Furthermore, immediately accessible and short-term facts have become more important in producing news, not requiring any professional skills in terms of (for example) writing. Besides this, producing news beyond specialised scopes is on the increase as well. Reacting to *informationalisation*, many journalists believe that they are facing a huge crisis concerning their social legitimacy and identity. In journalistic practices, topics that used to be considered as communication-oriented have now become topics for information and news (e.g. the balance sheet of a private firm). At the level of journalists' meta-discourses, new trends in producing news media are challenging their identity. This implies an increased competition between professionals (journalists versus PR), but also more competition between professional journalists and non-professionals. Such an observation requires us to broaden the notion of the public

sphere and to speak in terms of the coexistence of different and partial public spheres, not necessarily working towards the publicness of opinions (Miège, 2004). At the same time, such an observation leads us to also consider public information to be the result of the work of news producers beyond professional journalism, even beyond any professional field.

Journalists often consider their own practice as exclusive. They would argue that all these practices and meta-discourses lead to a confusion between various kinds of 'products' – sometimes called '*news*' – whoever the producer is. So, for many journalists who think that the partition between information versus communication is still relevant, the 'digital revolution' firstly brings more rigidity. Not unlike the 20th century functionalists' intellectual projects, this reinforces their own appreciation regarding their still intact social utility. They still claim that communication designates 'bad' content produced by non-professional journalists, both PR professionals' writings and user-generated content (UGC). These kinds of ideas put journalists in a structurally media-centric position. But even from that position, they need to accept that the professional journalists' news coverage can be critiqued. Generally speaking, this willingness is limited by journalists' refusal to accept what they consider as 'deviations' from their (corporate) duty. Many would argue that these 'deviations' are the result of 'bad practices' in relation to journalistic deontology. They would say that we must react against these critics, and assume a 'higher ethical sense', because journalism – and democracy with it – is threatened.

Ultimately and curiously, a similarity appears, as both journalists and media managers are radicalising the distinction between information on the one hand and communication on the other. But as Miège (2004) has pointed out, media managers only took this position at a time when they were not yet able to fully control the new communication technologies. They were waiting for a *golden age.* Nowadays, media managers (or tycoons) can afford to erase the distinction between information and communication, while many journalists still cling onto it. Media managers first and foremost consider themselves 'champions in communication' when they work in a multinational media holding, which are called 'communication conglomerates'. Communication practices are more and more considered as a competitive advantage in managing a profitable economic system and as an efficient arbitration tool when politically managing a society or a culture.

During this same period, in the French academic community, two paradigms have been challenging each other. One focuses on the threat of editorial legitimacy, as journalists are increasingly defending private

interests, in which case we must speak of a *journalism of communication* (Charon and de Bonville, 1996), or a *market journalism*. Opposed to this, is the view that journalism cannot be reduced to a slave of market interests. Journalists are still mainly defending public interests and as such it is still legitimate to speak of *editorial journalism,* which defends public interests (Mathien, 2001). But in spite of this apparent polemic, the two opposing paradigms actually confirm the distinction that journalists often make: information provides the social legitimacy for journalists as part of an intellectual field, and communication needs to be resisted, because it threatens the good practice of journalism as the fourth estate. As Miège (2004) argues, this debate illustrates the difficulty of thinking outside a dichotomic relationship. Particularly in journalism studies a normative, moralistic view is favoured, for example focusing on the adoption of an advertising frame by many newspapers, and the unmasking of this 'distortion' as a form of communication and not information.

The dichotomised way of thinking is far removed from a communication studies tradition. Ever since communication studies were established, propaganda has been analysed as the origins of journalism. Exchanging news came first in the wake of big trade. Round about the same time, city and court chancelleries were building a sustainable network of news circulation for the exclusive use of the civil service power (Habermas, 2006: 27–37). All that is to be considered as *proto-journalism,* as we could not yet speak of the publicness of news. This would not happen until the 17th century. When this publicness was established in the middle of the 17th century in Western Europe, public news became strongly dependant on private writings from traders, working as gatekeepers. Professional news was developed according to market rules. At the same time, the public authorities' interests evolved in the same way by publicising press information, but this time to the benefit of the state administration. This press was immediately and systematically forced to serve the interests of those holding political power. It was only during the last third of the 17th century that a number of news magazines were added to the range of daily newspapers. At the same time an upper to middle class public sphere emerged as a social opponent to the State (Habermas, 2006: 32–34). More recently, commercial propaganda is highlighted when analysing news media, as advertising is becoming the main financial resource for mainstream media, and even an exclusive one for free newspapers ('presse gratuite'). Finally, and traditionally, in communication studies, modern '*techniques de communication*' as an object of research is dealing with technical issues on the treatment of information, as well as with artistic expressions, materials for producing or

disseminating programmes, pedagogical methods, and communication tools for news media.

## 1.2. Object and methods

As a team of researchers[1], we initiated a deep reflection on this topic, taking a number of precautions. First, we wanted to do the research without a moralising view, mainly to understand the social game from the actors' perspective, without adopting a normative posture. Second, we chose to work on a less-studied object: very often, to analyse relationships between social actors in the field of public information, one needs to work on traditional media, for example on daily newspapers. However, one encounters a growing number of 'public expressions', especially with the development of websites, directly managed by the sources themselves (the sources' media or '*les médias de source*'). This is for instance the case when a territorially bounded institution – a city – wants to publicise on its own public services without any mediation, editing its own *Online Municipal Bulletin* (OMB). But curiously, this area is still under-studied, despite its obvious relation to information. We are talking here about public information, or … about public communication – the hesitation is significant. The object of research is the so-called '*information on public services*'. To aid the conceptualisation of the relationships involved in producing and distributing information, the information about public services on a city hall's website (what is called in France a '*cybercommunality*') was analysed.

We started from the journalists' assertion that there is an indelible dichotomy between information and communication. Two hypotheses are possible. First, if there are many differences between an OMB and a *Traditional Local Newspaper* (TLN), maybe journalists are capable of making such a distinction (however, this could be still questioned). Secondly, if there are a lot of similarities between an OMB and a TLN, journalists are certainly in no position to make such a distinction.

We analysed OMBs with a methodology generally used for analysing and comparing newspapers, based on Roselyne Ringoot's method (2004). This method first defines the morphology of the medium (format; segmentation; distribution of pages …); second, the articulated journalistic identity (name of the medium; identity of the authors; categorising functions of columns and external pages, angles, titles…); and finally, the *polyphonic writings* (the identity of the interviewed personalities and official VIPs; content; goals as expressed in interviews; kinds of discourse…).

The first results of our analysis of OMBs (which were published throughout 2005) allowed us to locate four monographs, published by four main cities in Brittany: Rennes, Brest, Lorient and Vannes.
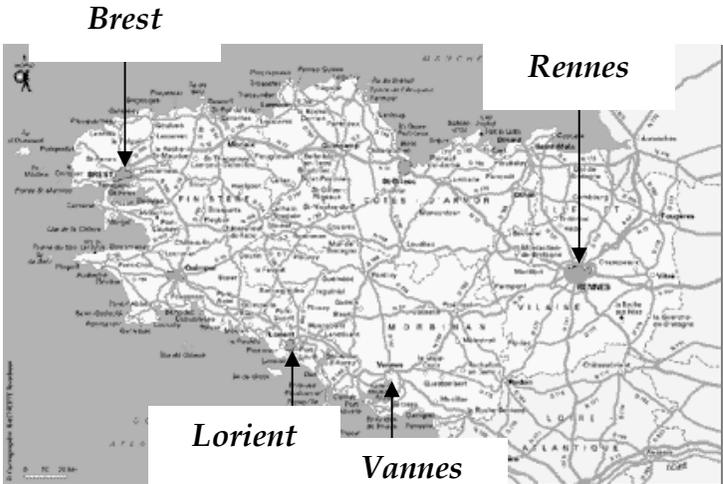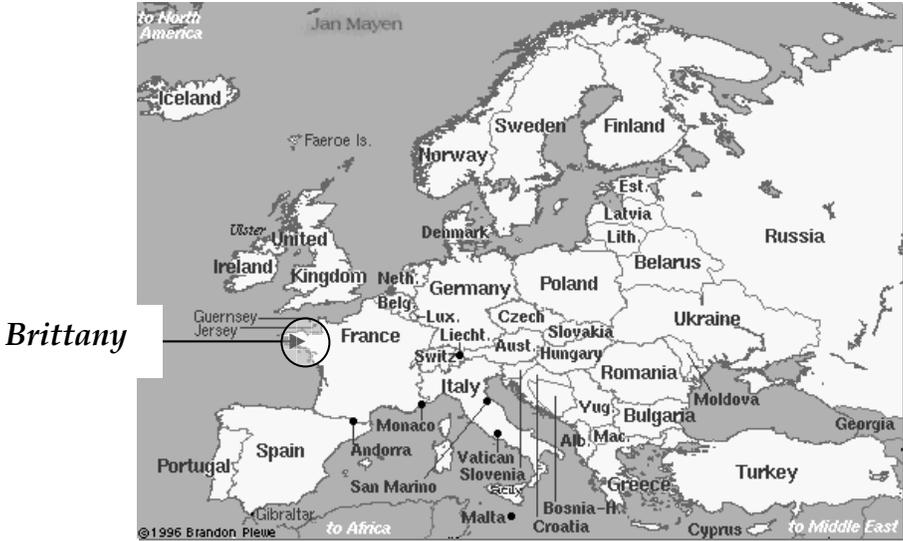
The following stage in our research was to complement the analysis of the websites with qualitative interviews of webmasters and the people in charge of these four OMBs. Finally, we focused on the main similarities that were found in the OMBs, and then compared them with the characteristics that journalists usually attribute to Traditional Local Newspapers (TLNs).

## 2. Should we speak of hybridisation?

### 2.1. A relatively structured similarity between an OMB and a TLN

OMBs and TLNs both use the same system for referring to a geographic territory: this can be a town district, an urban community or simply a seaside ward. Another similarity has to do with reporting periodic news: just as is the case with TLNs, an OMB is concerned with immediate and time-bound news. Both TLNs and OMBs thus serve the function of providing a localised and temporarily confined overview of events. But the analysis also revealed that, in most cases, OMB stories are permanent feature stories: a lot of information has to do with the history of the territory; with permanent city services as well as municipal functions and the traditional management of public departments (such as rules and processes). This necessitates a correction: the main function from an OMB's perspective is to construct a regional identity. But this can be also one of the functions of TLNs. An additional similarity is that an OMB does not contain any commercial advertisements (in line with the function of the public – and not private – service). At the same time one could say that avoiding commercial advertisements has now become very difficult for TLNs (and for mass media more in general), particularly when media groups are investing in free newspapers, which draw their income mainly or exclusively from advertising.

One other common point could be that in an OMB, sources could be sometimes identified in the same way as in a TLN. Sources are sometimes identified when an OMB is providing an administrative document (the function here is that of providing evidence), and in reproducing content from a TLN. This leads us to observe that relationships between those news producers (journalists and non-journalists) can be complementary, and are not per se competitive. If this is the case, the function of an OMB becomes to be socially useful. But here again, differences between OMBs and TLNs can be observed: for the most part, sources in an OMB are rather vague or even unknown. There are no references as to which municipal department has provided the news:

online municipal workers are isolated from other municipal workers. Only a few hypertext or email links are added, for instance when a city department responds to a local need (providing links to the postal and phone yearbook, or to a cinema schedule). We can call this the alert function of the OMB.

On a third level – the news volume – we can observe a real convergence: the length of OMB writings usually corresponds to that of short articles, reducing its function to delivering facts. One could observe that journalistic writing is progressively leaning towards producing short and concise articles. But our interviews also showed that there were no genuine reflections about the structure of writing, as is the case in TLNs for example. The shortness of the articles can be explained by the need to provide practical information (and by not including comments). Furthermore, because e-administration is still at an early stage, an OMB provides administrative documents, even though a citizen cannot submit them electronically. Documents are often still processed manually. In the future, the trend will become even more apparent: the development of e-administration might transform city workers into providers of basic information, although these city workers are not qualified as journalists. At this point in time, OMBs function as distributors of practical information.

## 2.2. Distinctive content of an OMB and a TLN

Two questions are possible: is an OMB a tool for communication (in an instrumental sense)? Or is an OMB a medium for information (in an 'objective' sense)? This is a long-standing issue addressed by studies on municipal papers (the offline traditional municipal bulletins, see for example Christian Le Bart's (2000) work). In his research, Le Bart began with a clear hypothesis: municipal papers are a direct promotional tool of local politicians (a communication tool). But in concluding, he felt less certain: municipal publications seem to have become professional journalistic news-magazines, supporting the provision of information. And he also found less promotion for politicians in the municipal news content (and more comments, as is the case with traditional journalism).

Is it possible to reach a similar conclusion for OMBs as Le Bart did for offline municipal bulletins? We isolated some indicators for an apparent open-minded experimentation in our four OMBs. These indicators are: every point of view is welcomed; and every local actor is expected to have a voice. But an OMB presents a significant difference in this regard: there is no space reserved for the opposition, but neither is there any

guaranteed space for the elected representatives (for the mayor, for example). Three factors may explain this (on the basis of our preliminary results and interviews): an OMB wants to have a permanent online presence, unaffected by changes in political representation (only in one case was a representative directly in charge of an OMB); an OMB wants to increase its readership; and an OMB wants to promote regional assets and identities, rather than a specific local politician's abilities.

So, is it possible to speak of a specific writing style in OMBs? We tried to find examples of jargon in our OMBs. But contrary to our expectations, we did not find any administrative jargon. This might be explained by the fact that content is mainly concerned with facts about administrative processes, and because a common language is used with the ambition to connect social actors.

In fact, we were rather thinking about the hypothesis of a shift towards a less-suspicious journalistic rhetoric. The temptation was real: political rhetoric is not present in the OMBs that were analysed. Journalistic frames are applied (they used the 5W rule, and applied techniques to increase the accessibility – pictures and caricatures, titles and subtitles…) Similarly, columns are organised in a journalistic way: '*La Une*' (the front page), '*Actualité*', '*Dernière heure*', '*Flash Actualités*', … The interviews with the OMB actors provided a number of answers: some webmasters came from a journalistic tradition; and as such, the journalistic frame is a strong reference for writing in an OMB. Yet, we were not totally convinced. For instance, articles are rarely attributed to an author in an OMB, while this is a distinctive feature of journalism. Because of that attribution, s/he is considered to be the author, s/he can then claim certain rights, and can be trusted to perform certain duties. On the contrary, we became convinced of the existence of an exclusive OMB identity, without having a well-defined pre-conception. This OMB identity might very well be the result of a clear intention from the part of politicians, to give more autonomy to writers? Or maybe this OMB identity is the result of a lack of professionalism from the part of OMBs? Practices reveal an essential versatility.

Our main explanation was gradually emerging: an OMB is primarily used to promote the fact that elected representatives really pay attention to citizens' concerns. On the one hand, an OMB appears 'neutral', but on the other, the OMB always refers to the same sources. On the one hand, an OMB is using journalistic practices, but on the other hand, it publishes traditional administrative content. So, it could be argued that an OMB mainly promotes a positive image of a local sovereign power: it knows

the local problems; it controls the local resources, and efficiency promotes local social actors.

At this stage of our work, we were able to define several reasons to explain the emergence of OMBs:

1/ One reason is the existence of a public service logic ('*logique servicielle*'): an OMB diffuses information about the public services and complements other media sources as well as information from local actors; this could be characterised as a strategy for complementarity.

2/ Another reason is the logics of incitement ('*logique incitative*'): an OMB promotes local dynamics, it supports entrepreneurial thinking for, from and within a regional entity, as well as supporting and reinforcing a local identity. An OMB also often aspires to give ideas to elected representatives in order to resolve local challenges. This could be characterised as a strategy for reciprocal 'emulation'.

3/ A third reason could be described as a logics of experimentation ('*logique expérimentale*'): an OMB supports citizens' expectations, respects citizens' views and values, as well as citizens' participation in political decision-making. This could be characterised as a strategy for strong citizenship.

## 2.3. OMBS AS AN EXPERIMENTATION IN CITIZENSHIP, AS WE QUESTION *NEW JOURNALISM*?

What used to be called *new journalism* is now described as *civic journalism* (or *public journalism*). This concept emerged at the end of the 1980's, in the work of authors such as Charity (1995; 1996), Merritt (1995) and Rosen (1999) (see also Watine, 1996; 2003b). The civic journalism tradition defended new functions for journalism: journalism must allow citizens to debate public issues raised by these citizens themselves; journalism must reduce the amount of negative criticism; journalism must promote social activities connected with the public in which a journalist is integrated as a social actor (the so-called community connectedness). All started from a number of convictions: citizens are interested in journalism, because they are seeking a harmonious public life. Citizens want to be more involved in public life, but they do not participate as they should, because public life does not provide them with the right resources and procedures to do so. In other words, journalism has a role in promoting citizens' debates.

New journalism has given rise to new professional practices. Journalists give considerable thought to the way they organise their interviews, forums, panels, and debates. They must participate in public life in order to produce news that reflects citizens' experiences and expectations. They must ask for citizens' advice in producing news. And more so, nowadays, such journalistic practice promotes an active role for citizens in collecting, producing and diffusing news in contrast to traditional journalism (the so-called *citizen journalism*, or *participatory journalism*).

Is it possible to speak of new journalism in OMBs? Of course, information technologies seem to favour political interactivity. One of the elected representatives, indirectly in charge of an OMB, said during one of our interviews: '*we are working to develop direct democracy*'; '*technological mediation is the most efficient method to return to a direct relationship with the citizens*'; '*information technologies allow for reciprocal transparency and a real dialogue with citizens, conviviality and a new happiness*'; '*we are coming to a new age: the network society, which demands modernising city management*'.

But all of this must be – and is – critiqued in the academic debates on the relationship between politics and the internet. The above-mentioned quote clearly refers to a problematic technological-determinist position. Moreover, this quote raises the question as to the precise nature of this democratic logic they are referring to? Is it an advisory one or a deliberative one? And what is the reality of this democratic logic? Is it a genuine intention to enable participation, or is it part of a '*démocratie évènementielle*' (event-based democracy), where the most important issue is to create an online communication environment rather than to consider the content (Pailliart, 2000)? In relation to OMBs, two observations come to mind. First, within the framework of OMB experimentation, local politicians do not share their power or authority: they for instance exclusively define the scope of debates (even if it is difficult to detect). By using information technologies, local politicians attempt to rehabilitate politics and policies, but clearly on their own terms. Secondly, a gap can be observed between official discourses and the reality of online democracy (as Fortin and Duncan (2004) conclude with respect to websites of the city of Quebec). Public interaction in an OMB is conceived from a top-down perspective, and political authorities launch forums on pre-determined issues and modalities, and moderation systematically erases radical ideas, or what is deemed to be merely rumour.

## 3. TO CONCLUDE: OMBS CONCEIVED AS BUILDING A SPECIFIC RELATIONSHIP TO CITIZENS

First, we must add a new logic to complete the previous three frames – the public service logic, the inciting logic and the experimental logic. This fourth logic is an elective logic. A representative must justify the use of public finances to the collectivity of citizens. For that purpose, an OMB provides a better platform for politicians than traditional and official means of communication (this is not necessarily a better platform for democracy). We would call this a strategy for circumvention.

**Figure 1:** The logics of an OMB

| LOGIC | NATURE | ROLE | STRATEGY |
|---|---|---|---|
| A public service logic | An OMB adds | An OMB is a good way to diffuse information and to complete other sources on the local field invested | A strategy for complementarity |
| An inciting logic | An OMB works | An OMB fosters local dynamics, supports entrepreneurial thinking and gives ideas | A strategy for reciprocal 'emulation' |
| An experimental logic | An OMB supports | An OMB is an experiment for citizens, demanding accountability from politicians and allowing for citizen participation in political decision-making | A strategy for citizenship |
| An elective logic | An OMB is a duty | An OMB is a better platform than official channel | A strategy for circumvention |

However, despite the addition of this elective logic, the question remains whether an OMB should be considered as a communication tool, and not as an informational tool. However, attempting to answer this question risks bringing back the erroneous dichotomy between information and communication, which I discussed before. Unavoidably, we would be echoing journalists that speak of an ideal-type of journalism, in view of journalism exclusively offering inspiring messages, and working to foster democracy and liberty. Unfortunately, these assertions can be seen as an increasingly contested myth, both at the level of professional ideology, marked by the advance of media industrialisation and commodification

(Le Bohec, 2000), and in view of speculation, as new journalism must first prove that it is a realistic, economically profitable and sustainable concept.

So, how can we avoid becoming locked into this debate? In this regard, we need to keep in mind that more and more researchers are studying journalism in relation to other (social and political) systems. This has given rise to the notion of hybridisation of journalism (Watine, 2003). In fact, a lot of practices cannot be defined as purely communicational or informational, but they are rather situated in between. And when researchers are studying social relations, they have become more careful not to reduce social interactions to one kind of relationship (many journalists for example often overemphasise conflicts when they describe their own relationship with PR professionals). Many other options are available in this regard, such as resistance, avoidance, alliance, temporary collaboration and permanent partnership (Cabedoche, 2006). Lastly, neither a technological determinism, nor a social determinism, can explain social change (see Miège (2004) versus Castells (1997–1999)).

All of this means using concepts created for journalism studies to study other social actors. Take for instance, the 'reading contract' ('*contrat de lecture*') created by Eliseo Veron (1984). News is seen as a social process, and several factors are involved in this process; news is a product and this product can be defined by an implicit agreement between media and audience. This '*Contrat de lecture*' emerges as a crucial concept to analyse and understand an OMB. The concept explains the misappropriation of journalistic practices: OMB-managers do not enlarge the public frame; and OMB-managers do not want to assume journalistic responsibilities; and neither do they aspire to replace a traditional medium. In short, OMBs are not creating a new style.

Moreover, the '*contrat de lecture*' concept enables us to explain that OMB-managers are preserving the '*consumer habitus*' (Veron, 1984). OMB-managers work to build, maintain and feed the relationship with citizens; in doing so OMB-managers focus on the writing process: how to express what one wants to say, more than the substance of what one is attempting to communicate. This is why journalistic jargon can be efficient, but not only this kind of jargon. A lot of technical jargon was identified as well, much of it related to the use of computers (e.g., lists of compatibilities, functionalities, particular environments, …), with no attempt to make things accessible to a wider public.

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## Note

[1]  Denis Ruellan and Florence Le Cam from the University of Rennes 2, and Bertrand Cabedoche from the University of Grenoble 3.

# SECTION THREE:
# COMMUNICATION AND PARTICIPATION
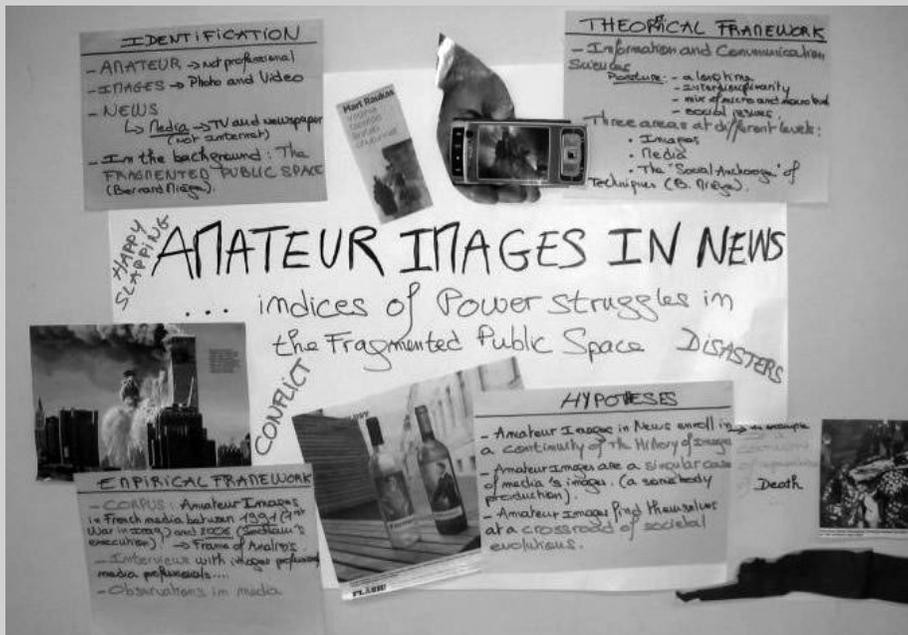


Poster by Laurie Schmitt

# Theoretical frameworks for participatory media

Nico Carpentier

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The success of the new generation of media technologies – in combination with their presupposed interactive and even participatory nature – feeds the assumption that we are living another new communication revolution. In order to evaluate and value the contemporary (media) transformations, and the possibilities of the (mass) media to contribute to a participatory-democratic culture, we ironically need to ignore the media and their technologies (at least in a first phase) and to focus on the political-ideological processes which provide the discursive context for these media organisations and technologies. Only by taking this long but inevitable detour, it becomes possible to even begin to understand the democratic role(s) of the media and especially participatory media in the 21st century.

The conceptual starting point of this chapter is that participation is a politically-ideologically contested notion, and that the role of (participatory) media is intrinsically linked to these debates. For this reason, this chapter reflects on the participation debate, as a condition of possibility for the analysis the media's role in this debate. The complexity of these participation debates entraps us in a painstaking process of including what is participatory and excluding what is not, a process which is complicated by the fluidity of all key concepts that are involved in this operation. In a second part of this chapter we can use these debates on participation (and access and interaction) to develop a first typology of participatory and semi-participatory organisations, which generates a first matrix to map the field of participatory media. But even after having (temporally) fixated and delineated these concepts (for analytical purposes), the diversity that characterises participatory organisations requires to move beyond the mapping exercise. In order to fully grasp

the identity of these participatory organisations, a second typology is introduced, this time not aimed at delineating concepts but at diversifying and combining them. In this third part, four different theoretical approaches are combined to provide a (hopefully) increased insight in the world of participatory organisations. Given the diversity in this world, it is argued that the identities of specific organisations are always unique combinations of these four different theoretical approaches.

## 2. THE KEY CONCEPT OF PARTICIPATION

The key concept of participation has been used in a variety of ways and domains, and its success has not necessarily been to its advantage. Already in 1970 Carole Pateman wrote that *'the widespread use of the term […] has tended to mean that any precise, meaningful content has almost disappeared.'* (1970: 1) There are two ways to deal with this contingency of the notion of participation. A first strategy is based on the expression of regret for the significatory chaos, combined with the attempts to undo it by (almost archeologically) unravelling the authentic meaning of the concept of participation. This strategy is relatively old: already in 1969, Arnstein published her ladder of participation, which had the following 8 steps: manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, and citizen control. From a slightly different angle, the OECD (2001) developed a three-stage model (information distribution, consultation and active participation), which nevertheless structurally resembled Arnstein's ladder. Considerably less critical and radical than Arnstein's model – as the bottom and top steps of the ladder were eliminated), we are offered the following definition of participation, which is '*a relation based on partnership with government, in which citizens actively engage in the decision- and policy-making process. It acknowledges a role for citizens in proposing policy options and shaping the policy dialogue – although the responsibility for the final decision or policy formulation rests with government*' (OECD, 2001: 16). This definition carries with it the echoes of one of the classic definitions of participation, developed by Pateman in her 1970 book *Democratic Theory and Participation*. Here, Pateman distinguishes between partial an full participation, where partial participation is defined as '*a process in which two or more parties <u>influence</u> each other in the making of decisions but the final <u>power</u> to decide rests with one party only*' (Pateman, 1970: 70 – my emphasis). Full participation is seen as '*a process where each individual member of a decision-making body has equal <u>power</u> to determine the outcome of decisions.*' (Pateman, 1970: 71 – my emphasis).

All the definitions and approaches have a common – almost messianistic – concern towards the concept of participation: they want to protect and rescue it. The tactics used are relatively similar, because they all consist of creating a difference with 'other' practices which are only nominally participatory, and which can then be unmasked as forms of 'pseudo-participation'. The second strategy to deal with this significatory diversity distances itself (at least in a first phase) from the question of differentiating between authentic participation and pseudo-participation, but focuses on the significatory process that lies behind the articulation of participation as part of a political-ideological struggle. From this perspective, the definition of participation is one of the many societal fields where a political struggle is waged between the minimalist and the maximalist variations of democracy and politics. It is a struggle between two political-ideological, archetypical models, where on the one hand - in the minimalist model – democracy is confined to processes of representation, where participation is limited to elite selection through elections, and the political to the domain where political elites organise their decision-making processes. On the other hand, in the maximalist model, democracy is seen as a more balanced combination of representation and participation, and the political is articulated as a dimension of the social (Mouffe, 1997; 2000), which can play a role in the sphere of political decision-making, but also in other societal spheres (such as the economy, culture, and media, to name but a few).

The definition of participation is an important part of the confrontation between both models, and its specific meaning shifts depending on the specific model that makes use of this concept. As mentioned before, this is not a mere academic debate, but a political-ideological struggle for the taken-for-grantedness of how our political realities are defined and organised. It is also not a mere semantic struggle, but a struggle which is lived and practiced. In other words, we structure our practices at least partially on the basis of the idea of participation. This causes the definition of participation not to be a mere outcome of this political-ideological struggle, but positions it as an integrated and constitutive part of this struggle. To put it slightly too unnuanced: it is the beginning and ending of this struggle, because the definition of participation allows us to think, to name and to communicate the participatory process (as minimalist or as maximalist), and because this definition is simultaneously constituted by our specific (minimalist or maximalist participatory) practices. The definition is partially constructed through practices, and partially constructs and structures these practices.

The second strategy to deal with the significatory diversity of the concept of participation is not as disconnected from the first strategy (looking for authentic participation) as might appear at first sight. There are namely three components from the first strategy which are worth salvaging.

1/ Taking a closer look at the definitions used in the first strategy, it becomes reasonably easy to distil the core issue in this participation debate (and the political-ideological struggle that lies behind this debate). The concept that features repeatedly in these definitions – in many different forms – is power, and more specifically the way that power is distributed in society. Some prudence is in place here, though, as power is often reduced to the possession of a specific societal group. Authors like Foucault (1978) have argued against this position, claiming that power is an always-present characteristic of social relations. In contemporary societies, the narrations of power are always complex narrations of power strategies, counter-powers and resistance. These power struggles are never limited to one specific societal field (e.g., 'the' economy), but are present on all societal fields and levels. Despite (or because) this nuance, the debates on participation can be seen as a struggle for political power (in the broadest sense possible), or better, as a power struggle on who can take on which roles in society. In the minimalist models, power is centralised as much as possible, whilst in the maximalist models the decentralisation of power is preferred. Revisiting the first strategy (based on authenticity) allows us to see the participation debate as a latent conflict (which is sometimes rendered manifest) on who can become involved in societal decision-making processes, in the definition and resolution of societal problems, in the choices regarding which procedures should be followed, and in the societal debates about these definitions, procedures and resolutions. Who is empowered and granted the opportunity (and 'the' power) to speak thus becomes an integrated part of the debates about participation and the underlying political-ideological struggle.

2/ From the first strategy we can also derive the need to delineate the concept of participation, whilst still maintaining its contingency and structural openness. The above-mentioned debate about participation requires some form of discursive fixity, which obliges us to return to the first approach and the core concepts that are used in this approach. These core concepts are articulated in contingent ways, but also their mere existence is of importance

here. This argument might seem superfluous at first sight, would it not be for the involvement of two other notions – namely access and interaction – in the participation debate. As the relationship between both notions and power is much less stronger and explicit, their inclusion also becomes part of the struggle for the minimalist or maximalist articulation of participation. Although the differences between access, interaction and participation have been dealt with more extensively in other texts (see Carpentier, 2007), it remains crucial to distinguish between these concepts. It suffices here to refer to one example, where the difference between two of these concepts was established, namely the Unesco-debates on access and participation (from a communicative perspective, within the framework of the development of a New Information and Communication World Order – NWICO, also see Hannu Nieminen's chapter in this volume). In the Unesco-debates, access was defined as '*the use of media for public service. It may be defined in terms of the opportunities available to the public to choose varied and relevant programs and to have a means of feedback to transmit its reactions and demands to production organisations. Participation implies a higher level of public involvement in communication systems. It includes the involvement of the public in the production process and also in the management and planning of communication systems. Participation may be no more than representation and consultation of the public in decision-making.*' (Quoted in Servaes, 1999: 85)

Especially when the internet gained its momentum, concepts like access and interaction saw their importance increase. As both concepts are 'only' necessary conditions for participation, the increased importance of access and interaction caused an implicit downgrading of the more radical and maximalist component of the meaning of participation. Exactly the implicit nature of this downgrading complicates the analysis of the political-ideological struggle behind participation, and simultaneously legitimates the delineation of the notions of access, interaction and participation.

3/ Finally, a third component that needs to be highlighted is the unavoidability of the positioning of any author that intervenes in these debates. Ideology does not stop at the edges of analyses, but it is an integrated part of it. This does not ignore the fact that the debate on the 'correct' definition of participation is too simple: for this exact reason we need the second strategy. But a mere description of the dynamics of power in participatory processes is also too simple. This is yet another area where the first strategy proves to

be helpful. This means more specifically that I subscribe to the call of a number of authors (Giddens (2002) to name but one) to continue deepening democracy, and to include all societal fields (including the media) in this democratisation process. This does not imply that all expert systems should be annihilated mercilessly – this might be a bit of a difficult position for an academic to take – but this does mean that the power equilibriums and the participatory potential in every domain of the social should be analysed carefully, and ways should be discovered to maximise both of them. This plea for an increase of societal power balances has a clearly utopian dimension. Situations of full-participation – as described by Pateman – are utopian non-places (or better: 'never-to-be-places') which will always remain unattainable and empty, but which simultaneously remain to play a key role as ultimate anchoring points and horizons for our analyses. Despite the impossibility to fully realise these situations in the social praxis, their fantasmatic realisations serve as breeding grounds for democratic renewal. As the French writer of Irish descent, Samuel Beckett, once put it eloquently[1]: '*Ever tried. Ever failed. Never mind. Try again. Fail better.*'

## 3. WHAT ABOUT THE 21ST CENTURY (MASS) MEDIA?

Given the ubiquity of contemporary (mass) media and their societal roles, media organisations also become relevant in the discussion about participation. Of course, this diversity is again structured by the above-mentioned minimalist-maximalist debate on democracy and participation. From a minimalist perspective more emphasis is placed on the ritual and symbolic forms of participation, where the media are seen to be contributing to communality. Citizens frequently participate in (semi-)collective mediated rituals and surround themselves with (carriers of) meaning which construct their imagined communities. These meanings are not just communicated through the more obvious examples (like news(papers) and documentaries) but also through literature, soaps, reality tv, cartoons, etc. In most cases, the participatory nature of these receptions (however active they may be) is relatively limited, and one may wonder whether the term (mediated or symbolic) interaction, or even mediated quasi-interaction (Thompson, 1995) is not more appropriate. From a more maximalist perspective, the attention is focused on the more intense forms of media participation, where non-professionals are

effectively involved in the mediated production of meaning (content-related participation) or even in the management and policy-development of content producing organisations (structural participation).

In the history of mediated communication we can find many variations. If we travel back into the early years of communication history, it is not even that farfetched to consider the many pamphlets as forms of media participation. But also the start-up phase of radio knew many examples of non-professional broadcasters. Not surprisingly, it was Bertolt Brecht's radio theory (see Marc Silberman's (2001) collection of Brecht's essays) that provided us with the foundations of the dream of the transformation of radio as a tool of distribution into a tool of communication). But especially from the nineties (of the 20th century) – and in some cases earlier, like for instance in the case of Hakim Bey's *TAZ* (1985) – the focus of participatory theoreticians shifted towards the so-called new media. The development of the internet, and especially the web would not only render all information available to all, but would also create a whole new world of communication, with in its slipstream the promise of a structural increase of the level of (media) participation. In the meanwhile, this dream seems to have come true, at least at first sight: while at first people still had to do the effort of constructing their own webpages, the web 2.0 technologies now provide popular[2] and accessible ways to publish texts, images, and audio and video material.

But the discourse of novelty that accompanies these evolutions, brings along a number of substantial problems. Our attention has become focused on the participatory potential of new media, which brings us to ignore the capacities of 'old' – Acland (2007) calls them residual – media. Suddenly, the newspaper, the radio and the television appear to be media from the past century, not relevant enough to be incorporated in the debates on participation. This causes three crucial mistakes to be made. First, the cultural importance of the old media is tremendously underestimated. These old media still play an important role in the everyday lives of many people. Blinded by the futurist megalomania, and by the hope for a better future, the taken-for-granted presence of the old media is often forgotten. Secondly, the institutional nature of the present-day media worlds are equally often ignored. A vast number of media products is still produced by media companies, which are old top-down systems based on capitalist logics and not always in favour of the maximalist approaches towards participation and democracy. In this dazzling techno-optimism, it is often forgotten that the routines, identities, practices, conventions and representations that circulate in the old media system have not been lost, but still co-structure the

'new' media system. Thirdly, the discourse of novelty feeds into the technological-determinist model, assuming that specific media technologies are per definition more participatory than others. Without wanting to underestimate the specificity of technologies, or without positioning them as '*determined technologies*' (Williams, 1974: 7), the participatory potential of media technologies remains dependant on the way that they are used. In practice, this means that web 2.0 technologies can perfectly be used in top-down non-participatory ways.

The caution expressed in the previous paragraph does not bear witness of my blindness for the participatory potential of old and new media (technologies), nor for the increased diversity of these participatory practices. It would be hard not to mention blogging, vlogging, webzines, internet radio (and television), podcasting, digital storytelling and wikis here (see Gangadharan et al. (2007) for an alternative media perspective on these technologies). But even in this enumeration, it is difficult to escape the technological angle, as all labels refers to specific technologies. Because of this focus, we tend to decrease the importance of media producers and consumers. Ultimately, networks consist of humans and non-humans, of organisms, humans and machines. To put this differently, for every cyberspace there is a cyberplace inhabited by media users that work and live in these places. In their own daily lives, within specific social contexts, they make use of specific media technologies. Secondly, these participatory processes (as mentioned before) are not guaranteed by these specific technologies. Each technology can be used in a wide variety of ways, and its participatory nature is often (still) dependant of the power (im)balance between a professional media elite and the non-professionals that become involved, and not by the technology as such. Thirdly, the use of these technologies, and their participatory potential cannot be detached from their organisational component. Participation is organised, and is in many cases produced by the operations of formal (or sometimes informal) organisations. Even in the blogosphere, the existence of the individual writer-publisher (the Author as Barthes (1984) would call him or her) is a romantic illusion, because the blog-infrastructure is provided by a variety of organisations and companies. This organisational context is to a high degree – as Henry Jenkins (2006) argues in *Convergence Culture* – a commercial and commodified context, which results in a combination of top-down business processes with bottom-up consumption and production processes. The existence of YouTube, with Google as its owner – is a case in point here.

## 4. Mapping (semi-)participatory media organisations

In order to deal with the participatory diversity, a first typology to structure the field of participatory organisations is developed. Building on the importance of the organisational logics in facilitating participation, the organisation of participation can be synthesised in four ideal-typical models. These four models are constructed on the basis of two dimensions: the (formal or informal) membership of the participants of the organisation (versus the absence of a membership structure), and the facilitation of access, interaction and participation (versus the emphasis on access and interaction only). Arguably, only the first two models deal with organisations that facilitate participation at the micro-level, in the other two cases the label semi-participation is preferred, which semantically excludes them from the sphere of (micro-)participation in the strict sense.

The first model deals with organisations that facilitate the participation of its members. These participatory processes concern people that organise their own participation. Classic examples are alternative radio stations (often linked to Amarc[3]) and the so-called IMCs, where Indymedia[4] is the most famous example. Although in both cases different types of membership (with varying degrees of involvement) exist, this model presupposes an explicit link between the participants and the organisation. In the second model the members of the organisations take on a more facilitating role, which implies that the objectives of these organisations is to have others (meaning non-members) participate. Examples can (at least partially) be found in the sector of community media, as these media organisations are often oriented towards the facilitation of the participation of members of a specific community, where these members remain relatively detached from the actual organisation. Another example is the British Video Nation project (see Carpentier (2003), and http://www.bbc.co.uk/videonation/), where the BBC – already in the early nineties – organised a participatory television (and later web) project. Thirdly, also the sector of digital storytelling produces a number of examples, when organisations like the Center for Digital Storytelling[5] support 'their' participants in the creation of digital narrations (see Lambert (2002)).

In the second group of models the aim of the organisation is not to allow for or support participatory processes; these organisations focus on access and/or interaction. In a relatively rare number of cases this concerns organisations that have a membership structure (model 3). Examples can be found in the sector of community wifi, where these organi-

sation aim to provide access to the internet for their members. Organisations that facilitate access and interaction (model 4) can frequently be found, in many different forms. Examples are organisations that provide blog or vlog facilities, like Ourmedia and YouTube[6], and websites aimed at social networking like Facebook en MySpace[7]. Also instances of what is now often called citizen journalism, where non-professionals provide raw materials to newsrooms, can be included in this fourth model.

**Figure 1:** Models of (semi-)participatory organisations



| | **Membership organisation** | **Non-membership organisation** |
|---|---|---|
| **Organisation aimed at facilitating access, interaction and participation at the micro level** (and produce participatory outcomes at the macro level) | Model 1<br>Example: Alternative Radio or Independent media centre (IMC) | Model 2<br>Example: Community Radio or Digital Storytelling |
| **Organisation aimed at facilitating access and interaction at the micro level** (and produce participatory outcomes at the macro level) | Model 3<br>Example: Community Wifi | Model 4<br>Example: Blogging / Vlogging and Social Networking |

The four models mentioned above assume only limited internal organisational interaction. This will often match with the actual situation of these organisations, where participants are often individualised (as is the case of blogging, which is not coincidentally referred to as a narcissistic practice – see Carr (2006)). In other cases participants have a direct and exclusive relationship to the nuclear group that is (in practice) managing the organisation. Nevertheless, it might be possible that

participants actually do collaborate (in other words: interact with each other). For this reason, Figure 2 offers an alternative version of these four models, visualising practices of cooperation and co-creation.

**Figure 2:** Models of (semi-)participatory organisations with networked participants

| Model 1b | Model 2b | Model 3b | Model 4b |
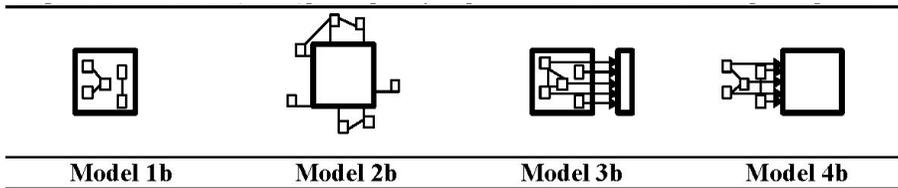
## 5. WHAT ARE PARTICIPATORY ORGANISATIONS? COMBINING FOUR THEORETICAL APPROACHES

The objective of the previous part was to generate a distinction between participatory and semi-participatory organisations. However relevant these semi-participatory organisations are, their lack of focus on micro-participation – and on the reduction of power imbalances at the organisational level – renders them different from participatory organisations (senso stricto). This argument does not ignore the potential participatory outcome of the activities of semi-participatory organisations at the macro-level, facilitating the participation of citizens in public spaces. But my argument does emphasise the difference between organisations that facilitate participation at both the micro- and macro-level, and organisations that only indirectly allow for macro-participation. This at first sight simple difference is complicated by the fluidity of the frontiers between participation, interaction and access, and by the discourses from organisations that claim to be participatory but revert to highly minimalist forms of participation and are characterised by strong internal power imbalances. These conflations – where everything and everyone become participatory – threaten both the analytical and political capacity of the signifier participation, and can thus be seen as a form of semantic reductionism (or even as the discursive erasure of the more radical forms of participation).

This first mapping exercise does not suffice to generate an understanding of the (potential) role of participatory media. For that reason we need to look at the diversity of approaches that structure their identities and activities. But as the multiplicity of participatory media

organisations[8] has caused most mono-theoretical approaches to focus on certain characteristics, while ignoring other aspects, it is necessary to use a complementary set of different approaches towards the definition of participatory media. In a previously published article (Carpentier et al. (2003)), four different approaches were distinguished: community media, alternative media, civil society media and rhizomatic media. The combination of these approaches provides us with the second typology to theorise participatory media.

Traditional participatory media theory is built on media-centred models as it tries to describe the functioning of community media (approach 1) and alternative media (approach 2). The first approach uses a more essentialist theoretical framework, stressing the importance of the community the media organisation is serving, while the alternative media models focus on the relationship between alternative and mainstream media, putting more emphasis on the discursive relation of interdependency between two antagonistic sets of identities. These traditional models for theorising the identity of participatory media are complemented here with two more society-centred approaches[9]. The third approach defines participatory media as part of civil society. In order to incorporate the more relationist aspects of civil society theory - articulated by for instance Walzer (1998) – they are combined with Downing's (2001) and Rodriguez' (2001) critiques on alternative media, and radicalised and unified in the fourth approach, which builds on the Deleuzian metaphor of participatory media as rhizome. This approach allows (even more) incorporating aspects of contingency, fluidity and elusiveness in the analysis of participatory media.

**Figure 3:** Positioning the four theoretical approaches

|  | Media-centred | Society-centred |
|---|---|---|
| **Autonomous identity of CM (Essentialist)** | Approach I: Serving the community |  |
|  |  | Approach III: Part of civil society |
| **Identity of CM in relation to other identities (Relationalist)** | Approach II: An alternative to mainstream | |
|  |  | Approach IV: Rhizome |

Source: Carpentier et al., 2003: 53

These four approaches are of course theoretical (and ideological) discourses, which might materialise in practice (or not). But they do contain all core concepts that structure (in always unique ways) the participatory media's identities. In the first approach the participatory media's role towards the community is emphasised. Community media serve a specific – often geographically defined[10] – community, and thus validate and strengthen that community. Secondly, access by the community and participation of the community (and its constituent subgroups) are to be considered key-defining factors. 'Ordinary people'[11] are given the opportunity to have their voices heard. Topics that are considered relevant for the community can be discussed by members of that community, thus empowering those people by signifying that their statements are considered important enough to be published or broadcast.

The second approach to defining participatory media is based on the concept of alternative media, where it is emphasised that being a '*third voice*' (Servaes, 1999: 260) or the '*third type*' (Girard, 1992: 2) is still a viable option for media organisations. This concept is built on a distinction between mainstream (public and commercial) media on the one hand and alternative media on the other, where alternative media are defined in a negative relationship towards mainstream media. This approach allows stressing that participatory media have alternative ways of organising (often using a more horizontal structure), carry alternative discourses and representations, and make use of alternative formats and genres. Participation also plays a crucial role here, as through the mechanism of self-representation this multiplicity of alternative voices is accomplished.

In the third (society-centred) approach participatory media organisations are seen as part of civil society, a societal segment considered crucial for the viability of democracy. Participatory media can firstly be seen as an 'ordinary' part of civil society, as one of the many types of organisations active in the field of civil society. The democratisation *of* media, as Wasko and Mosco (1992: 7) call this, allows citizens to be active in one of the many (micro-)spheres relevant to daily life and to exert their rights to communicate. Participatory media also contribute to what Wasko and Mosco (1992: 13) call the democratisation *through* media, as they can offer different societal groups and communities the opportunity for extensive participation in public debate and for self-representation in public spaces, thus entering the realm of enabling and facilitating macro-participation.

The rhizomatic approach to participatory media uses Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) metaphor to radicalise approach 2 and 3, by focusing on three aspects: their role as a crossroads of civil society, their elusiveness,

and their interconnections and linkages with market and state. Participatory media are often part of large civil society networks, and act as meeting points and catalysts for a variety of organisations and movements. Both their embeddedness in a fluid civil society (as part of a larger network) and their antagonistic relationship towards the state and the market (as alternatives to mainstream public and commercial media) make the identity of participatory media highly elusive and fluid. In this approach it is argued that this elusiveness and contingency, which are 'typical' for a rhizome, are their main defining elements. And like rhizomes, participatory media tend to cut across borders and build linkages between pre-existing gaps. In the case of participatory media, these connections apply not only to the pivotal role participatory media (can) play in civil society. They also apply to the linkages alternative media (and other civil organisations) can establish with (segments of) the state and the market, without losing their proper identity and becoming incorporated and/or assimilated.

**Figure 4:** Civil society and participatory media as rhizome
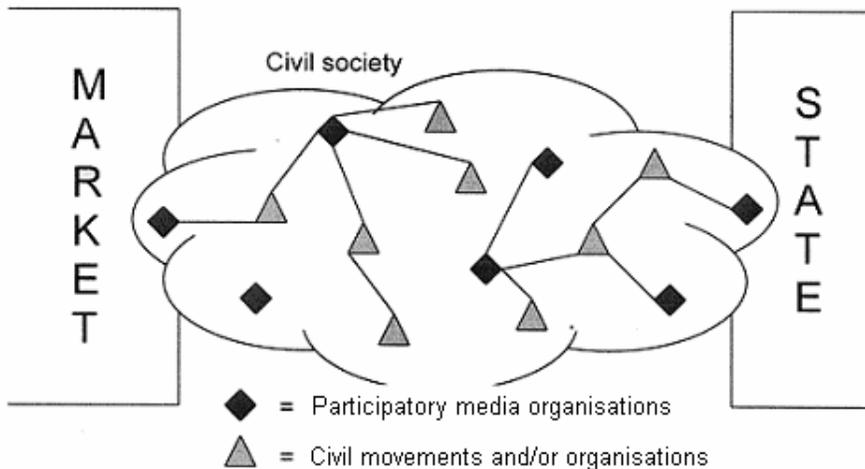


Source: Carpentier et al., 2003: 62

## 6. CONCLUSION

One of the many witticisms from the world of participatory media is that participation and efficiency are each other's opposites. This is of course 'only' a witticism, which means that we can count on some degree of truthfulness, but also need to recognise the exaggeration. There is little

point in being naïve about this issue: the delegation of power is often the easiest and most efficient solution for many problems, especially at the short term. But from a historical perspective, looking back at the 20th century, we can hardly remain blind for the enormous price that has been paid for evolving towards strong forms of power delegation. Slightly less dramatic, but still relevant for this discussion, is the argument that participation is not just a technique, but also an important societal value, that needs more cherishing than is the case at this point in time. Possibly, the lack of efficiency is a reasonable price to pay, when we in return can achieve more impact on our own lives and on the (mediated) meanings that surround us.

This chapter also shows that participation is a complex notion that has not stabilised yet. Given its intimate connection to the struggle between minimalist and maximalist democratic models, it is unlikely to ever stabilise. As participation is an intrinsic part of a political-ideological struggle, these participatory media, their discourses and practices unavoidably become part of it. In defending more equal power relationships within the media worlds, their position is far from accepted. The workings of power in contemporary societies often remains invisible (because of reasons of complexity, not of conspiracy), and most of the time we can only see the vague traces of existing power imbalances and abuses. This provides support for the illusion of the obsoleteness of a continued equalising of power relations, and has cornered maximalist (aka radical) participatory media, articulating them as reminders of a past long gone. The success of web 2.0 technologies (and the discourses about these technologies) are one of the many opportunities to enhance the level of (media) democracy, but at the same time the threat of the incorporation of market and state is more than real. For exactly this reason, the organisations that use (and defend) the more maximalist approaches of participation and democracy, remain important assets.

Despite their many constraints and their many failures (of which some are permanent, others temporal) participatory media organisations help to propagate discourses on more just and democratic societies. The dreams behind these discourses are often utopian, but at the same time they do contribute to defining the horizon, and show the possibilities and advantages of a continued deepening of democracy.

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## NOTES

1  In order to do history not too much injustice: Samuel Beckett wrote these often quoted words in relationship to the impossibility of art, and not in relationship to democracy.

2  The Technorati website (http://technorati.com/about/) was tracking 103,7 million websites on 10 September 2007.

3  See http://www.amarc.org/

4  http://www.indymedia.org/

5  See http://www.storycenter.org/

6  See http://www.ourmedia.org/ and http://www.youtube.com/

7  See http://www.facebook.com/ and http://www.myspace.com/

8  Selecting an overarching label for participatory / community / alternative / civil society / rhizomatic media organisations poses an insolvable semantic problem. But as in this approach of combining the four different models, they all become structurally incorporated, the question of the

appropriate label becomes relatively irrelevant. In this chapter, given the focus on participation, participatory media is chosen as the overarching label.

9   The object of this article – participatory media – of course complicates an unequivocal society-centred approach. In stead this type of approach should be interpreted as the societal contextualisation of (participatory) media.

10  In for instance Amarc-Europe's (1994) definition of community radio, the geographical aspect is explicitly highlighted: '*a "non-profit" station, currently broadcasting, which offers a service to the community in which it is located, or to which it broadcasts, while promoting the participation of this community in the radio*'. Nevertheless, also other types of relationships between medium and community are implied when Amarc-Europe uses the phrase '*to which it broadcasts*'.

11  In other words: people who are not part of a societal elite (including politicians, academics, captains of industry, and media professionals) and those not considered being celebrities.

# Community media: important but imperfect. A case study of a community television station in a Brazilian favela

Andréa Medrado

> I came back to Radio Enriquillo singing. I had discovered what is most educative about a station: *the value of words.* Before any advice or literacy programme, what is most liberating are words. (López Vigil, 2000 – translation by the author)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In his *Urgent Manual for Passionate Radio Producers* (my translation), López Vigil (2000) describes how rewarding it was for him to hear an elderly woman from a small rural village who had always been told that she was good for working but not for talking, speak about her life on the radio.

Many other scholars see community media as a tool for oppressed, marginalised or ordinary people to express their opinions and concerns, be it miners' radio in Bolivia (O'Connor, 2004), indigenous media in Australia (Meadows, 2007), or multi-cultural and women's radios in Europe (Girard, 1992; Mitchell, 2000).

Community media scholars tend to also be community media activists and as a result they are generally speaking optimistically about the prospect of citizens gaining access to the media. As Downing et al. (2001: v) remind us, this comes as no surprise as there is, indeed, an urgent need for activism in the face of '*blockages of public expression*', such as the '*dynamic of capitalist economy*', '*institutionalized racist and patriarchal codes*' and other '*hegemonic codes*'. Along the same lines, Howley (2005: 16) argues that community media emerges as an '*effective strategy*' in the

'*global struggle to democratize communication and ensure local autonomy in the wake of rampant media privatisation and consolidation.*'

As a consequence of seeing community media as a bright light at the end of a dark tunnel, community media researchers often add their voices to the chorus of community media supporters. However, there is a need for researchers to wear two hats: to be advocates of community media and, at the same time, be critical of them. This chapter aims at addressing three of community media's main critical issues:

a/ Community media is often opposed to 'public service' and 'commercial' media. However, the boundaries that supposedly separate community media from other types of media are not as clearly drawn as the literature at times suggests. The question here thus becomes: how to define community media?

b/ One of the main aspects of community media is the assumption that audiences become producers. However, since several challenges arise when media open-up to community participation, to what extent is this claim true?

c/ Finally, how can community media claim to play a role in empowering audiences when so little is known about the reception side?

## 2. COMMUNITY MEDIA – IN SEARCH OF A DEFINITION

The struggle for a definition of community media starts with the challenging task of defining the term 'community'. As Howley (2005: 5) points out, it is easy to disappear in this particular '*rabbit hole*' when researching the topic. Presenting a comprehensive definition of 'community' is not the point of this chapter. Rather, it is helpful to briefly touch on some of the most helpful definitions. According to Jankowski (2002: 5), '*community is conventionally identified with a relatively limited geographical region – a neighbourhood, village, town, in some cases a city*'. However, geography is not necessarily a determinant for the community. It might also be a 'community of interest', where members have cultural, social or political interests in common (Lewis, 1993: 13).

In addition, communities are not only expressions of commonalities, but also expressions of difference. As argued by the anthropologist Anthony Cohen, this means communities are situated in symbolically constructed boundaries or borders that both '*contain*' and '*differentiate*'. Individuals are able to identify themselves as members of a particular community through a series of symbolic practices such as language, dress, customs and rituals (Cohen, 1985: 20, cited in Howley, 2005: 5).

Despite '*raising more questions and dilemmas than it answers*' (Downing et al., 2001: 39, cited in Lewis, 2006: 27), the term community was widely embraced by organisations, such as UNESCO and AMARC. However, it is indeed very difficult to agree on a label that appropriately encompasses such a wide range of practices. Lewis (2006: 29) suggests that these media initiatives gained different labels according to the different circumstances in which they developed in different parts of the world. According to him (2006: 29), 'alternative' '*seems to be the most favoured label in the current academic discussion*' (e.g. Atton, 2002, 2004; Couldry and Curran, 2003).

Other authors, such as John Downing (1984) favour different labels, such as 'radical alternative media', which carries a stronger association with social change (Atton, 2002: 9). More recently, Downing et al. (2001) have revised his earlier model, arguing that 'alternative' or 'radical' media do not necessarily stand in strict opposition to mainstream media. This binary perspective ignores the '*uses that oppositional movements and groups may sometimes be able to make of mainstream media*'. In addition, he argues that the notion of 'alternative media' is oxymoronic because '*everything, at some point, is alternative to something else*' (Downing et al., 2001: ix).

Along a similar line of thought, Rodriguez (2001: 33) proposes a shift from 'alternative' media to 'citizens' media' '*because alternative media rests on the assumption that these media are alternative to something, this definition will easily entrap us into binary thinking: mainstream media and their alternative, that is alternative media*'. She adds that this label limits the potential of these media to '*resisting the alienating power of the mainstream*', blinding us from the other instances of change and transformation.

Carpentier et al. (2003) expand on these critiques of alternative media taking into account civil society theory (see also Nico Carpentier's chapter in this volume). They believe that the linkages between 'alternative' or 'community media', 'commercial' and 'public service' media (the equivalents of the market and the state in civil society debates) are far more complex than the literature suggests. Building on Deleuze and Guattari (1987), they use a metaphor of the rhizome, which is '*based on the juxtaposition of rhizomatic and arbolic thinking*' (Carpentier et al., 2003: 61). While the arbolic is '*linear*', '*hierarchical*' and '*tree-like*', the rhizome is '*non-linear, anarchic and nomadic*', '*connecting any point to any other point*' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 19, cited in Carpentier et al., 2003: 61).

In other words, as rhizomes, community media tend to cut across borders between 'commercial' and 'public service' media. It is argued that one of the main characteristics of community media is to be 'not-for-

profit'. However, as community broadcasters and producers often struggle for financial support, it would be unrealistic to expect them not to search for sources of funding from the state or by engaging in (strategic) commercial practices.

Having outlined some of the main definitions (and problems with these definitions), the label 'community media' is the most appropriate for the purposes of this chapter. The term 'community' places a stronger emphasis on the group of people whom the station serves rather than on how the programming is different from the mainstream media. Also, 'community media' is the term practitioners chose to define what they do.

While this chapter chooses the label 'community media', it acknowledges the 'rhizomatic' reality, where community media have to build connections with commercial and public service media, with the market and with the state in order to survive. As Carpentier et al. (2003) argue, the reality of community media can be quite messy.

## 3. AUDIENCES AND PRODUCERS

AMARC, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, states that community based media '*provide direct* access *for citizens and associations to participate in the practice of mass communication*' (AMARC, 1998: 2). The idea is similar to that of public access television in that '*programming is made by local as distinct from professional broadcasters*' (Lewis, 1976: 61, cited in Jankowski, 2002: 6). Ideally, community members are responsible for suggesting ideas, producing programmes and are allowed to become involved in all facets of the station's activities everyday activities (Jankowski, 2002: 6).

According to Lewis (2006: 29) and Downing et al. (2001: 46), the work of Paulo Freire strongly inspired this active audience/active producer relationship. In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2002) proposed a new dialogical form of education, in which '*educators and learners all become learners assuming the same attitude as cognitive subjects discovering knowledge through one another and through the objects they try to know. It is not a situation where one knows and the others do not*' (Freire 1976: 115, cited in Lewis, 2006: 19 and Mayo, 1999: 139). Therefore, an analogy between Freire's pedagogy and community media is created. Similarly to 'learners' who become 'educators', 'audiences' become 'producers' and the lines that separate the two are blurred.

When moving from the rhetoric to the praxis of community media, some more issues arise. What happens when more people become involved with producing information for themselves? As Hochheimer asks, *'who serves whom?'* (1993: 475), *'who speaks for which community interests?'*, *'who decides what are legitimate voices to be heard?'* (1993: 476), *'who decides who decides?'*, *'who authorizes, empowers and checks on those authorized to decide?'* (1993: 478).

The active audience/active producer relationship is not devoid of challenges, and unfortunately not all community stations can be as democratic and open to participation as scholars and practitioners would hope.

## 4. RECEPTION STUDIES – A RESEARCH GAP

Another important critique regarding the literature is what Downing (2003) calls the alternative/community media paradox. The author is surprised that *'so little attention has been dedicated to the user dimension, given that alternative media activists represent in a sense the most active segment of the so-called "active" audience. One would imagine that they above all would be passionately concerned with their own media products being received and used'*. According to him, this represents *'a huge gap in our research knowledge, one with direct implications for the studies of labour and other social movements, community formation and minority-majority ethnic relations, transitional political regimes, the arts and the Internet, to name only some of the most obvious'* (Downing, 2003: 625–626).

However, there are a few exceptions, such as Meadow's (2007) national study of community media audiences in Australia. Based in a two-year qualitative research, the report reveals that audiences strongly support community television and radio and backs up community media's claims of contributing to active citizenship and empowerment.

## 5. CASE STUDY: TV ROC

In order to better illustrate these tensions and constraints community media often face, the case study of TV ROC will be presented. This is a community television station located in the Favela (a slum or a shanty town) da Rocinha, Brazil. By bringing in the example of TV ROC, no claims to generalisations are being made. The intention here is simply to make some of these critical issues more visible through a concrete

community media experience in the very unique context of a Brazilian favela.

The research consisted of in-depth interviews with TV producers, residents of Rocinha who had produced programmes and residents of Rocinha who watched TV ROC but had never produced programmes, as well as participant observation in the station (Medrado, 2004).

## 5.1. Favela da Rocinha

Rocinha claims to be Latin America's largest favela. According to Light, the local electricity company, and UPMMR[1], the oldest and most important neighbourhood association, Rocinha's population is aproximately 120,000 people. Interestingly, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) 2000 census published the much more conservative number of 55,000 inhabitants[2].

Rocinha is located between two high-class neighbourhoods (Gávea and São Conrado), which facilitates access to better jobs in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro. The living conditions, however, stand in contrast to that of Rocinha's upper class neighbours. Favela residents lack housing, schools, health-care, and public services such as water, electricity and garbage collection, as well as work opportunities. This is not to say that all residents of Rocinha have the same (poor) standards of living. In fact, there are clear social divisions within the favela.

Residents use the terms 'bairro' or 'asphalt' to describe the upper class neighbourhoods where, as opposed to the favela's narrow and muddy alleys, the streets are paved with 'asphalt'. Therefore, those who live in the bottom of the hills, live in what people refer to as the 'asphalt borders'. In the asphalt borders, the houses are usually connected to the sewage, electricity and water public systems and live close to very vibrant commercial areas with banks, shops, internet cafés and even fast food restaurants. As one goes up the hills, the conditions worsen with people often having to come up with alternative ways for having the public services delivered to them.

The residents of favelas, which are called favelados in a pejorative way, are located at the very bottom of the social pyramid and are often considered marginals, outsiders, non-citizens who do not belong to the city. The favelas often receive an extensive amount of negative media attention. There is ample reporting of crime and drug trafficking in the area, causing the 'asphalt' neighbours to feel threatened by the physical proximity of the favela.

Although this negative bias of media coverage is somewhat exaggerated, the fear of the drug trafficking cartels in Rio is not unfounded. Given the negligence of the government and the city's formal authorities, the favelas give way to what is being called the 'parallel power' – e.i. drug traffickers who become the rulers of the hills. Consequently, criminals end up incorporating an image of benevolent drug lords, '*donating cash, offering medicine and food and assuring the safety of the residents. In return, the traffickers are winning greater control over their territory, a measure of goodwill from the community and an expanding market for their wares*' (Faiola, 2002).

In reality, there is, indeed, much more to Rocinha than poverty and crime: several neighbourhood and women's associations, social programmes and community radio and TV stations as well a strong sense of community and commonality. In what follows the analysis of the Rocinha's community TV station will be presented.

## 5.2. TV ROC as a rhizome

Founded in 1997, TV ROC provides national and international cable television channels, such as Futura, Cartoon Network and Discovery Channel to the residents of Favela da Rocinha. The station was initiated by a consortium, composed of three communications' corporations and one financial institution[3]. This was considered a pioneer business initiative because at that time nobody seemed to believe that people who live in favelas could afford to have a 'luxury' such as cable television in their houses.

Dante Quinterno, the director and founder of TV ROC explains what was the initial idea behind the station:

> I've always thought that cable TV could be directed to all targets: the classes A, B but also the classes C, D and E. Our challenge was to demonstrate that there were potential consumers within the Brazilian lower (economic) classes. These consumers are, above all things, craving to be connected to the world, they want to see the diversity of languages and channels that exist in the world. The world does not end in the corners of Rocinha. Only the mind is the limit (e-mail interview, 27/02/2004 – translation by the author).

TV ROC's community channel, which is called Channel 30, was created in order to meet a legal requirement. In Brazil, there is a federal law that requires cable television providers to offer one community channel to the communities they cover.[4]

According to the director, Dante Quinterno, this is how the company operates:

> TV ROC obtains from NET Brasil the package of international and national channels to be transmitted to the households in Rocinha, while obtaining from NET Rio the permission to air these channels. To watch these channels, the residents have to pay a monthly subscription fee of 25 Reais[5]. The subscription fees are TV ROC's main source of income, they enable us to cover the costs of having the community channel here (interview, 12/05/2004 – translation by the author).

Although the subscription fees that Rocinha's residents pay are considerably lower than what a family would pay in an upper/middle class area for the same package, TV ROC still manages to be a sustainable, if not profitable, business. As opposed to other entrepreneurs who looked at residents of the favelas as poor people who were unable to consume luxury goods and services or honour their debts, TV ROC's director saw in the Favela da Rocinha a business opportunity and a promising target market niche.

Silvia[6], a 23-year-old resident of Rocinha who works at a beauty salon in the upper class neighbourhood of Botafogo recognises this business side as being very strong:

> TV ROC is a business. I believe it's like 70 percent business, right? They are here to sell the subscriptions and make some money. I believe that's how it is (interview 11/05/2004 – author's translation).

As for advertising revenue, Channel 30 often adopts what the manager, Rosangela Quarelli, calls an '*informal advertising system*':

> As a community channel, we are not-for-profit, we cannot have direct advertising revenue. However, we are still allowed to give advertising slots in our programming in exchange of some favours or donations. This is sort of an informal advertising. With Preto Bom beans, for example, our deal was to allow them to advertise on Channel 30 for three months. They would then donate 40 kilos of beans every month and TV ROC would distribute the beans to the community (interview 18/05/2004 – author's translation).

All this makes TV ROC a hybrid between a cable (commercial) television provider, a station with public service legal obligations and a community television station, which creates a scenario that is quite different from the one painted by the community media literature. Without these 'anarchic'

and 'rhizomatic' connections, TV ROC's community channel would probably not be able to survive or even exist.

## 5.3. TV ROC – *the producers*

The case study of TV ROC is also useful in testing out community media's claim that audiences (who are members of the community) become producers. The cable operations and the community channel of TV ROC together employ around twenty-eight people. Those who work for the cable operations are mostly residents of Rocinha, though they are mainly doing technical work, such as fixing cables.

There is a total of eight people working for Channel 30: one producer who is in charge of deciding on the agenda; one employee who combines editing and operating the camera; another employee who works for the cable operations but helps out with the camera when necessary, a volunteer cameraman in the morning shift, one intern in the morning and two interns in the afternoon. None of Channel 30's members of staff are residents of Rocinha while the interns are selected from private universities. The director explains why the community channel hires interns:

> This is a cheaper solution for the channel because the students are unpaid volunteers. But the main idea is to promote an 'exchange between the asphalt and the favela'[7], that way we can help change these middle-class students' prejudiced way of looking at the favelas. They can then become more socially responsible journalists (interview, 12/05/2004 – author's translation).

Cristiane, a twenty year-old intern, who is studying communications at a private college confirms the director's claims:

> Before I came here I confess I was very afraid because I only knew that Rocinha they show on television. Television makes a lot of sensationalism about what happens here. But when I came here, I lost my fears right away. I was assigned to do a story up there (on the hillsides of Rocinha) and I thought it was really cool. The people here are very welcoming. They treat you much better than someone in the South Zone[8]. To tell you the truth, one should be more scared to be in other places than here (interview 11/05/2004 – author's translation).

During the fieldwork at TV ROC, six different programmes were being aired by Channel 30. Of these programmes, one was produced by Channel 30 staff and interns; another one by the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (evangelical church); another by the Catholic Church; another by

the City Hall of Rio de Janeiro; another by a resident of another favela in Rio and only one programme was produced by a resident of Rocinha.

Despite the rather limited participation of the community in the TV-station in the sample, Rosangela, the manager, argues that the channel is open for any community member:

> In the beginning they come here and say: I'd like to have my own show, I could do it. In the beginning we do all the editing because they are starting. Then, after a month, for example, they start to look for sponsorships. If they get a sponsorship, TV ROC no longer does the editing. In Rocinha, there are many people with editing bays. We give them work. They can get a hold of these tapes and do the editing. They start to walk with their own legs. They bring the ready tapes and we just put them on the air (interview, 18/05/2004 – author's translation).

Renato, a resident of Rocinha and former producer, is not as optimistic as the manager:

> TV ROC could no longer support me. They only have one cameraman who often has to stay in the editing bay. They don't have a lot of equipment either. Now I need to find other resources, it's not easy. I feel like my hands are tied. If I want to make a programme, I have to spend a lot of money and I don't have time to go after sponsors (interview, 14/05/2004 – author's translation).

While staff members argued that the station was open for any resident who wanted to make suggestions (mainly by calling the station), very few were directly participating in producing programmes. This reality contradicts the claim that audiences become producers. Also, while there seemed to be a close relationship between the community channel and community leaders, the station was not equally welcoming of inputs coming from less influential 'non-institutional' residents or residents living in the more impoverished sub-areas of the favela. At the same time, in a community with almost 200,000 inhabitants, it would be unrealistic, if not utopian, to expect everyone to have equal access to the channel.

## 5.4. TV ROC– *the audience*

Although this research did not focus on the reception side, it is worthwhile highlighting some of the producers' assumptions about their audiences and how these assumptions did not match the perceptions of the residents of Rocinha who watched Channel 30, but had no direct involvement with the station.

There was an overall idea among the staff that what residents appreci-ated the most about Channel 30 was seeing a less negative portrayal of Rocinha than that of mainstream media:

> People in Rocinha like TV ROC because they know it's not TV Globo[9]. Globo only covers something about Rocinha whenever there's a big shooting here or whenever some drug dealer dies. TV ROC is com-pletely different (Regina Gomes, intern at Channel 30, interview, 9/05/2004 – author's translation).

When talking about Channel 30, audiences would confirm that they appreciated seeing the more positive everyday local events of Rocinha. However, they would never refer to the channel as an alternative to the mainstream negative reporting, as if they would switch from Globo to Channel 30 whenever they felt like getting some happy news about the favela. The focus was more on the channel's 'usefulness' for their every-day lives and on enjoying seeing their neighbours on the screen.

> I think the channel I like to watch is Channel 30 because what they show is us. They show news that has to do with us (Carlos Oliveira, owner of a car wash and resident of Rocinha, interview, 12/05/2004 – author's translation).

> I watch the community channel because there are many things that interest me, day-by-day things, such as meetings, parties, events. These are very important things we have to be aware of. To have TV ROC is to have a key to the community. If a resident has TV ROC at home, he or she knows about everything that's going on (Vera Lins, housewife and resident of Rocinha, interview, 12/05/2004 – author's translation).

## 6. CONCLUSION

The case study of TV ROC exposes serious constraints on residents' participation and the station has to make several compromises with the commercial and public sectors in order to survive. These challenges are also increased by the fact that television is a much more expensive me-dium then for example radio, especially in the context of a Brazilian favela, where there is little attention from the government and residents have to make ends meet.

Presenting a mixture of elements from commercial, public service and community television, the station exists in an 'anarchic' and 'rhizomatic' reality and does not fit the models which have clear-cut, black and white

divisions between the three sectors. This shows in its airing of state-produced programs, the pro-community media regulation that is at the basis of their existence, as well as in the fact that it is being run by a commercial operator, and pushes its producers to find sponsorships.

TV ROC makes claims of social uses by residents, such as 'democratising the communications and providing community members with a forum where they could discuss issues that affect their lives such as violence, poverty and discrimination'. The empirical results on the contrary suggest that this is not entirely the case. The majority of producers are not necessarily members of the community. This case study clearly shows a much more complicated relationship between community media and its audiences/publics. However, since the research focused more on the production than on reception side, a potential direction for future research would be to follow the paths of an ethnographic audience study of how audiences incorporate community media in their everyday lives.

This is not to say that TV ROC has no merits. On the contrary, the project is fascinating. In fact, Channel 30 is believed to be one of the country's few (legal) community television channels operating in a favela. There are several positive aspects about the channel, such as providing residents with a useful source of information about daily events in the favela and with a mirror to see themselves. The discourses of the audiences not involved in the station indicate that the station does cater to the needs of the favela community despite the low participation of the actual community itself.

While it is important to recognise that community media initiatives such as TV ROC are far from being perfect, there is at the same time a strong need to continue advocating for them. After all, as López Vigil reminds us in his *Urgent Manual*, community media remain something to be passionate about.

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## NOTES

1   União Pró-Melhoramento dos Moradores da Rocinha, which means Union for the Betterment of Rocinha's Residents (author's translation).

2   Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. www.ibge.gov.br.

3   UIH, SMR (Dante Quinterno's company), Globo Network and Icatu Bank. Today, the cable operation in Rocinha is under the control of NET, a Brazilian cable television company.

4   Law 8.977/95, Decree 2206/97. '*Cable television providers have to offer in their programming package six free channels: one for the city/state council, one for the house of representatives, one for the Federal Senate, one university channel, one educational channel and one community channel that has to be open for non-governmental, non-profit organizations*'[1] (Peruzzo, 1998: 157).

5   Approximately 8 Euros.

6   All names of interviewees are fictitious, except the director's and the manager's.

7   The expression is used by the director as well as by many print publications in Brazil to describe the interactions between the higher social classes and the people who live in the favelas.

8   The richest areas in Rio are located in Zona Sul (South Zone).

9   The main television network in Brazil and a media giant, exporting telenovelas to several countries.

# Blogs, online forums, public spaces and the extreme right in North Belgium

Bart Cammaerts

> You think that a wall as solid as the earth sepa-
> rates civilisation from barbarism. I tell you the
> division is a thread, a sheet of glass. A touch
> here, a push there, and you bring back the reign
> of Saturn (Buchan, 1916).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As critical researchers we often tend to look at the progressive emancipa-
tory resistance movements first and foremost, and in doing so we ignore
the extensive use of the internet (as well as other media) by non-progres-
sive reactionary movements, be it the radical and dogmatic Catholic
movement, the fundamentalist Muslim movement or the extreme right –
post-fascist – movement. As Kahn and Kellner (2004: 94) quite rightly
point out: *'the internet is a contested terrain, used by Left, Right, and Center of
both dominant cultures and subcultures in order to promote their own agendas
and interests'*. A notable exception to this pre-dominant focus on progres-
sive politics is Atton (2004) who addresses the use of alternative (new)
media by the extreme-right movement in the UK. Downing et al. (2001:
89) also make the distinction between democratic and repressive radical
media.

   This chapter explores a case that illustrates the way in which the
'global' internet serves to some as a way to bypass 'national' legislation
voted to prevent the incitement of racial hatred and discrimination
against minorities. More specifically, a number of hate discourses in a
blog and an online forum will be analysed in a period when a number of
serious incidents shook the Belgian public opinion and caused very
extreme discourses to be ventilated. This will be related to recent debates
regarding the internet and public spaces, rationality versus passions, as
well as the distinction between agonism and antagonism (Mouffe, 1999).

In this chapter the focus will be on so-called anti-public spaces, *'placing themselves at the political extremes […] challeng[ing] or question[ing] basic democratic values'* (Cammaerts, 2007: 73).

Inevitably this also brings into question cultural differences in relation to how absolute freedom of speech is, and how or to what extent a balance is struck between different rights, including respect for and recognition of difference and the right not to be discriminated against.

## 2. AN ONLINE PUBLIC SPHERE OR PUBLIC SPACES ONLINE

The rise of the internet as an interactive space, potentially global in reach, has led to an increasing number of scholars asserting the relevance or indeed irrelevance of the internet for the promotion of a democratic public sphere and for the facilitation of deliberation (Wilhelm, 2000; Gimmler, 2001; Dahlberg, 2001; Young, 2001; Poster, 2001; Downey and Fenton, 2003; Dean, 2003; Dahlgren, 2005; Cammaerts, 2005). This has clearly re-invigorated debates regarding the public sphere and linked to that the potentials of the internet to foster a public sphere or public spaces beyond state and market that facilitate deliberation.

Villa (1992: 712) describes the public sphere as *'a discursive arena that is home to citizen debate, deliberation, agreement and action'*. He thus explicitly links up the public sphere concept with the deliberative model of democracy. From this deliberative opinion-making perspective, reaching a consensus becomes a process involving different actors, of communication and dialogue, not a procedure to count personal preferences. It is also informed by the rational argumentative debate, the respect for difference and the ability to change views based on rational counter-arguments. The internet is by some perceived as an ideal platform to realise deliberation. Coleman and Gøtze (2001: 17) for instance assert that the internet *'makes manageable largescale, many-to-many discussion and deliberation'*.

Contrary to this, much of empirical research into the use of the internet to facilitate deliberation or public debate tends to counter these rather optimistic claims that the internet stimulates the emergence of an online public sphere. Regarding the potentials of the internet in view of democracy and public debate, Norris (2001: 12) speaks of a democratic divide between *'those who do and do not use the multiple political resources available on the internet for civic engagement'*. This creates imbalances in terms of representation, whereby those that participate in the offline, also do so online. This leads Dahlberg (2001: 10) to conclude that participa-

tion in online public debates *'is, in fact, both quantitatively and qualitatively dominated by those already powerful offline (politically active, educated, white, males).'* More recently, King (2006: 26) confirmed that *'those people participating in political issues on the Internet were highly educated and already highly politically engaged persons'*.

In addition, many scholars challenge or at least question the potential of the internet to facilitate and enable (rational) deliberation. A recurrent observation is that much debate on the internet tends to take place between like-minded (male) participants situated in homogenic ideological frameworks and engaging in, what Davies (1999: 162) calls, *'opinion reinforcement'*. Wilhelm (2000: 89) and others, describe this phenomenon as *'homophily'*. On the contrary, ideologically heterogeneous unmoderated spaces for debate, while being more open, are often confronted with flame-wars between (anonymous) participants (Eum, 2005; Cammaerts, 2005: 70).

While many proponents of digital culture and technological advancement seem to argue that the internet has all the requirements to re-establish a Habermassian public sphere, others, such as many authors cited above argue the contrary or are more cautious in their assessment. However, maybe the real question here is therefore not whether the internet constitutes a public sphere, but relates to the inaptness of the normative Habermassian public sphere notion at a theoretical level to account for current political and social processes in highly mediatised and popular culture driven societies.

Connolly's (1991) and Mouffe's (1999) work, advocating a radically pluralist democracy is highly pertinent in this regard. They argue, basing themselves on the work of Hannah Arendt, that an agonistic conception of politics, where political differences, tensions and conflicts (of interest) – still present in every society – are made explicit, exposed and mobilised, is to be preferred. Mouffe (1999) distinguishes two kinds of political relations: those between enemies — characterised by antagonism and an intent to destroy or eliminate the 'other' and those between adversaries — characterised by 'agonism'. This latter perspective refers to a struggle of conflicting ideas, but at the same time a common framework of democratic principles. The aim of democracy, according to Mouffe (1999: 755), should be *'to transform an "antagonism" into an "agonism"'*.

This shows an acknowledgement of a conflictual approach to the political and a fundamental critique of the deliberative model that tends to eliminate or eradicate power and conflict in a bid to achieve a rational consensus. Clearly the internet can be seen as providing opportunities for constructing public spaces online, but just as the offline public sphere

is deemed problematic on many accounts, so is an online public sphere. By speaking of an online public sphere, in a sense a normative distinction is introduced between what is being considered good and real democratic discourses – being rational, focussed on the common good etc. versus what is deemed non-political, titter-tatter in the margins, or passionate individual expressions without much value, defined as impact (Dean, 2001: 346–347). From this perspective, the diversity of content out there needs to be recognised for its political potentials and valued accordingly, without restricting or limiting the political in advance. One of the questions raised here, however, is to which extent this form of 'radical pluralism' is tenable when taken to its extremes.

Radical pluralism, which fits rather well with the online environment, works best when conceived within an agonistic relationship between adversaries and competing, even conflicting, discourses, but acting in democratic ways (Mouffe, 1999: 775). It becomes more problematic in relation to radically antagonistic agenda's defining 'the other' as an enemy to be destroyed and/or eradicated. Can and should democracies defend themselves against such harmful or as some authors call it 'wounding' content (Matsuda, 1993), and if so where to draw the line between what is acceptable and what not?

## 3. FREEDOM OF SPEECH CONTESTED

The US First Amendment of the Constitution enshrines, among others, the freedom of speech and press. It states that '*Congress shall make no law … abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press'*. Some claim that the First Amendment discourse has to be seen as an ideology in itself, a doctrine. This hegemonisation of freedom of speech over other rights resulted in the impossibility to question that freedom. This leads Schauer (1995: 13) to say that there is '*little free thought about free thought, little free inquiry about free inquiry and little free speech about free speech'*.

The First Amendment ideology disassociates speech from conduct, from being an act in itself. Speech is protected whatever the content of that speech is and only becomes problematic from a legal perspective when it is acted upon. In doing so, '*the action that the speech performs'* (Butler, 1997: 72) is not taken into consideration. A fairly rigid dichotomy is constructed between the marketplace of ideas and social action. Fish (1994: 107) argues that:

> freedom of expression could only be a primary value if what you are valuing is the right to make noise; but if you are engaged in some

> purposive activity in the course of which speech happens to be pro-
> duced, sooner or later you will come to a point when you decide that
> some forms of speech do not further but endanger that purpose.

Although freedom of speech is undeniably a highly valued cornerstone of US democracy, this right does not take priority over all other rights and liberties at all times. Anti-defamation legislation, laws against obscenity, consumer protection or even copyright law illustrate this clearly. Concerning the relationship between freedom of speech and hate speech the issues are much more complicated. In essence, as Matsuda (1993: 31–32) explains, the First Amendment doctrine can be summarised as: *'people are free to think and say what they want, even the unthinkable. They can advocate the end of democracy',* and furthermore *'expressions of the ideas of racial inferiority or racial hatred are protected'.*

Opposed to this individualised conception of free speech, detached from action and to the reduction of the commons to a marketplace of ideas, protected by the US First Amendment, is the more European notion of the public sphere, embedded in values such as equality, reason, deliberation, protection, social contract and discourse. In many West-European countries a collective harm-principle prevails over the freedom of speech principle.

The initial harm-principle was introduced by John Stuart Mill, himself a strong advocate of free speech from a liberal perspective. He went even as far as defending the right of what he called 'immoral doctrines'. Despite this, Mill (1978: 9) formulated a principle under which condition free speech could be limited, clearly challenging the myth of 'uncondi-tional' free speech[1]: *'the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exer-cised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others'.* However, given his liberal background, 'doing harm to others' has to be seen here in an individualistic sense and does not extend to collective harm. Much hate speech would be allowed as it often does not provoke direct harm to an individual. Nevertheless, the harm principle, together with Feinberg's (1985) offence principle, remain important principles on which many advocates of certain limits to free speech base themselves. Another source of inspiration is Popper's 'para-dox of tolerance'. According to Popper an open and tolerant society can-not survive if tolerance is unlimited (1971: 265).

In many European countries, but also countries such as Canada, Bra-zil, Australia and New Zealand more stringent legislation to counter hate speech and the incitement of racial and ethnic hatred has been enacted. Some countries also voted legislation outlawing holocaust denial or

revisionist discourses. In Germany parties with a fascist ideology can be outlawed.

It has to be stressed though that the effect the global internet and blogs have on these national or regional cultural differences regarding what constitutes freedom of speech is both problematic and empowering at the same time. While the internet allows dissident voices and discourses that are radical to be present and active (unless they are filtered out by internet providers or the state), it similarly enables racist, fundamentalist and anti-public spaces to exist.

## 4. CASE-STUDY: THE USE OF BLOGS AND FORUMS BY THE NORTH BELGIAN POST-FASCIST MOVEMENT

### 4.1. Context

The North Belgian post-fascist movement is characterised by a careful balance between on the one hand a strong focus on law and order and a populist anti-immigrant – especially Islamophobic – agenda and on the other a call for the break-up of Belgium and Flemish independence (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007). Its main proponent is the party Vlaams Belang, formerly known as Vlaams Blok. In 2004 Vlaams Blok revamped itself to Vlaams Belang after a conviction by the Belgian Supreme Court on the basis of racism and discrimination. The verdict read *'Vlaams Blok is a party that obviously and systematically incites discrimination ... You treat foreigners as criminals, evil doers, abusers of the system, fanatics that refuse to integrate and a threat to the own race.'* (Hof van Beroep, 2004 – my translation).

With more then 20% of the popular vote on a regional level and more then 30% in the biggest North Belgian city of Antwerp, Vlaams Belang has for some time been the second biggest party in the North of Belgium. The historical roots of Vlaams Belang go back to the collaboration of large parts of the Flemish nationalist movement with the German Nazi-regime during WW II (Witte et al., 1997). While less apparent now, this is nevertheless still relevant as this dark past and its current articulations regularly causes embarrassment to the party, which incidentally has never unequivocally broken with that dubious past and those that glorify it in the present. In the most recent legislative elections in June 2007, its share of the vote in Flanders reduced for the first time to 19%. What is missing from this brief and necessarily reductive outline, however, is a

succession of extraordinary and shocking events in the months preceding that election.

First, a local youngster was murdered in broad daylight in the hall of the Brussels Central Station (12/04/2006) after he had refused to hand over his mp3 player. This murder immediately precipitated bold and presumptuous accusations towards Muslim youth, while it later emerged that two Polish young men were responsible for this. A month later (12/05/2006), Belgium was left in shock after a brutal racist murder in the streets of Antwerp. A young man with an extreme right background killed a Caucasian baby and her black minder and wounded a Turkish woman.

These two events, while very distinct in one way, came to be seen in relation to each other, not merely due to the fact that they happened close to one another, but also because of the public debate and outcry, as well as racist discourses they provoked. It is, however, not my intention here to suggest or imply any direct causal link between these events and the disappointing election results for Vlaams Belang some months later, which is all together a much more complex issue (see Elchardus and Pelleriaux, 1998; Swyngedouw, 2001).

## 4.2. Racist discourses in online public spaces

The language being produced by some bloggers or on online forums regarding the above outlined events is quite shocking. The examples below are of course self-selected and thus serve as an illustration of discursive transgressions and nothing more. The argument is easily made that these are marginalised voices and ideas that are present in each society and now find an outlet on the internet. Nevertheless, given the specific North Belgian context where such ideas are at least implicitly supported and promoted by the second biggest political party, this poses a direct threat to democracy itself.

An additional element is that Belgian anti-racism (1981) and anti-discrimination (2003) legislation is fairly stringent. The former forbids discrimination on the grounds of race, skin colour or national or ethnical descent. It also penalises incitement of racial hatred and hate speech. The latter is induced by an EU directive on anti-discrimination and extends this principle beyond race to include discrimination on the basis of (religious) beliefs, age, sexual identity, and handicaps. It also specifically links anti-discrimination with equal treatment in the professional and labour environment. In 1993, the Belgian Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism (CGKR) was also established. The Centre

functions as a kind of watchdog opposing all forms of racism and discrimination (see http://www.diversiteit.be/). The CGKR also set-up Cyberhate.be, a site where incidences of racism and hate speech online can be reported.

### 4.2.1. The murder of Joe Van Holsbeek (12/04/2006)

Joe Van Holsbeek (17 year) was murdered by Polish kids in broad daylight in the hall of the very busy Brussels Central Station. He was stabbed several times after he refused to hand over his mp3 player. Witness reports, the police, as well as the mainstream media, were quick to suggest that the perpetrators were youngsters of North-African descent and public opinion followed suit, condemning the murder, but by extension also the large Moroccan community in Belgium.

One quite influential right-wing commentator and ideologue, Paul Belien, called upon 'whites' to arm themselves. On a collective blog (www.brusselsjournal.com), Belien (2006 – my translation and emphasis added), an ex-journalist with strong links to Vlaams Belang, asked to '*give us weapons*', because he claims:

> The predators have knives … From a very young age **they** have learned to kill warm-blooded animals during the yearly Sacrifice Feast. **We** become sick when seeing blood, but not **them**. **They** are trained, **they** are armed … The bastards who got everything in our society – free education, childcare benefits, social security – are today killing **our** children for an mp3 player.

This posting shows how at a discursive level a clear distinction is being made between the identity of the self and 'the other', whereby 'we/our' is being constructed as good and morally just while 'they/them' are being projected as evil, dangerous and even sub-human.
After a complaint was filed against him through the CGKR for inciting racial hatred and an interview by the police, Belien removed the above quoted blogpost. It now reads: '*This text was removed on demand of the CGKR … Although I deny the charges, I will comply to this request*' (Belien, 2006 – my translation).

Another concern being raised by many, including the Belgian Archbishop and the prime minister was the indifference of people witnessing the murder, the fact that nobody intervened during the fight that preceded the fatal stabs and that those responsible were able to flee without anyone stopping them. On the Stormfront forum this led to accusations of cowardice behaviour by 'the own race'.

> Besides the cowardly politicians, we should also point to all those white cowards who are present in their ten thousands in Brussels Central Station every day, of whom nobody 'saw anything' or had the guts to intervene (Wehrwolf_VL, post on Stormfront, 17/04/2006 – my translation[2]).

Two weeks after the murder the police investigation revealed that the perpetrators were not North African, but Polish. The federal police even issued a formal apology towards the North-African community in Belgium.

> We regret that the North-African community was immediately accused shortly after the murder, certainly as it now appears that the perpetrators are not from that community (Audenaert, 2006 – my translation).

For some days after this announcement, a discussion was waged on the Stormfront forum doubting the authenticity of these claims. When it appeared that the Polish youngsters were gypsies, the rant on the forum continued.

## 4.2.2. *The murder of Oulematou Niangadou and Luna Drowart (12/05/2006)*

One month after the murder of Joe Van Holsbeke, a 19-year old Belgian, with an extreme right family background shot down three people in the streets of Antwerp. Hans Van Temsche wounded a Turkish woman and subsequently killed a woman of African descent and the white baby she was minding, after which he was shot himself and arrested by the police. This very act sent shock waves through the Belgian society, not used to street shootings at all. The Prime Minister was quick to link these murders to the extreme right ideology that drives and is being promoted by Vlaams Belang. In a press release Guy Verhofstadt (quoted in De Morgen, 2006) stated: *'These dreadful, cowardly murders are a form of extreme racism. It has to be clear for everybody now to what the extreme right leads'* (my translation). Not unsurprisingly these murders also caused, maybe for the very first time, real panic among the extreme-right movement.

The first postings after this event on the Stormfront forum shared this pre-occupation of being associated with these racist murders. Specifically the mainstream media, which is considered to be biased (to the left) by the extreme right, was being targeted for strategically linking these cruel murders to the extreme right ideology.

> If this is true, it is very bad. Undoubtedly the leftish press is ready to call Vlaams Belang co-responsible because of its 'stigmatisation' (Stoerman, Posting on Stormfront, 11/05/2006 – my translation[3]).

The discourses being produced on the Stormfront forum, as in other extreme right forums, were very controversial, wounding, and insulting. I am reluctant to reproduce some of the postings in this chapter, as they are deeply hurting and offensive. However, in order to make the case of transgressing discourses, I deem it necessary to include at least some of them here:

> Pfff, it doesn't keep me from sleeping, the only thing I don't understand is why he also shot a white child (Watch Out, Posting on Stormfront, 11/05/2006).

> He could have at least taken out a few Jews as well. Antwerp is full of / stinks of Jews (Hidrich, Posting on Stormfront, 13/05/2006).

> On moments such as these, I hope that that prime minister of ours is shot by someone with an extreme right ideology (NSDA-Pe, Posting on Stormfront, 12/05/2006).

These discourses of hate and of incitement of violence are not only provocative, but transgress several boundaries way beyond what is acceptable in a democracy, at least within a European and Belgian context. It is thus no surprise that these discourses were reproduced in the mainstream media, both in newspapers and on TV. However, despite the public outcry this provoked, there is/was little or nothing the authorities could do about it. Boonen, from Cyberhate, was quoted as saying:

> The internet reality is very complex. Stormfront is a good example of that. … that site, also the Dutch version, is totally operated from the US. Stormfront Flanders is in other words protected by the freedom of speech as described in the first amendment[4] (Boonen quoted in Gazet Van Antwerpen, 2006).

This exposure in the mainstream media, the subsequent public outcry and the formal complaints to Cyberhate impacted on the debate in the forum. Some became scared and sought re-assurances from others in the forum that their identity would not be revealed.

> Do you think [blocking Stromfront] is possible? I hope not. SF is as a second home to me. Would they arrest members of this forum? (Farkasfarsang, Posting on Stormfront, 16/05/2006).

Others bashed the media for its left-wing bias and lack of 'objectivity'. One forum participant directly addressed the lurkers that came to visit

the forum after the media reports. And finally, some also resisted and disassociated themselves from such comments. The quote below is an example of the latter:

> I'm sorry, but if the negative comments of some put us in a bad perspective, they are responsible for this. If someone on this forum writes 'I had to admit that I slept well thinking about that dead niggerwoman and that crying Turkish woman' then he doesn't have to complain that it appears in the newspaper. How do you want us to be taken seriously if you write something like that? (NoSugar, Posting on Stormfront, 16/05/2006).

It is very apparent that many of the forum participants, as well as bloggers, claim it to be their given right in a democracy to say what they say. At several instances the essentialist and wounding discourses they produce are considered to be 'real' freedom of speech. This is juxtaposed to a fake semi-freedom of speech, one participant even referred to the thought-police (thinkpol) of Orwell.

The fascist identity and ideology of the forum is, among others, exposed by this double standard. On the one hand freedom of speech in invoked to promote hate speech, but on the other hand those voices in the public space that disagree or counter their discourses, such as journalists in the mainstream media and politicians, need to be censored and/or eliminated.

## 5. CONCLUSION

As has been shown in studies into progressive movements, the internet allows dispersed activists to link-up and interact, superseding boundaries such as space and time, creating subaltern spaces of communication (della Porta and Tarrow, 2004; Cammaerts, 2005). Likewise, for fascist, fundamentalist, and other 'repressive' movements the same applies. Radical, marginalised and atomised groups of people, often politically isolated, are able to link up through the internet in small communities of like-minded, such as could be witnessed in the Stormfront forum. Especially the comments of Farkasfarsang, calling the forum his second home, were pertinent in this regard.

The cases discussed here not only raise seriously questions regarding the notion of citizenship and its relationship to territoriality, but also bring to the fore the issue of anonymity on the internet. As could be observed, the blog-posting was removed as this was written by an

extreme right 'public' (and identifiable) figure. The online forum, however, operates with nicknames and conceals the IP-addresses and identities of its members, who are beyond reach and untouchable.

Given the deeply offensive and repulsive nature of many of the comments being made online and the context in which they were produced, it is difficult to remain neutral here; rational detachment is not an option. Such vitriolic discourses should make any democratic person angry, demanding that action should be taken. However, whilst legal procedures and regulation might be able to remove some of these discourses from the public space, the ideas and ideology behind these discourses do not disappear from the political.

It might be useful in this regard to briefly refer to Butler's (1997) work on *'excitable speech'* in which she uses Foucault's *History of Sexuality* to argue that forbidding hate speech all together (through (state) censorship) above all aids in proliferating these discourses further throughout society. Butler is not per se against limitations to the freedom of speech, but points to the need to be aware of the difficulties of combating hate speech through legal measures and the practical consequences of this. She refers to questions difficult to answer outright, such as: who defines what is hurtful, offensive, wounding or injurious speech and what is the context in which such language is being used?

This is, however, by no means a plea for complacency and ignorance, but to carefully think through the implications of intervention to exclude voices from public spaces of communication and interaction all together. Efforts to combat the incitement of hatred through democratic and legal ways should be encouraged. Such wounding discourses of hate do not belong in a democracy, not even in a radical democracy. As Mouffe (2005: 120) argues, there are limits to pluralism within a democracy: *'A democracy cannot treat those who put its basic institutions into question as legitimate adversaries.'* But at the same time it has to be acknowledged that exclusion of voices and demands is always a political decision and should not be based on moral judgements. Mouffe (2005: 121) therefore argues for a conflictual consensus: a *'consensus on the ethico-political values of liberty and equality for all, dissent about their interpretation'*.

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## NOTES

[1]  For more on the myth of press freedom in relation to Mills, see Nordenstreng (2007).

[2]  http://www.stormfront.org/forum/showthread.php/belgische-tiener-vermoord-om-mp3-285800p3.html

[3]  This as well as other quotes in this part can be found on: http://www.stormfront.org/ forum/showthread.php?t=293314

[4]  Sofie D'Huster (e-mail interview, 21/05/2007) from CGKR confirms this. She adds that putting pressure on the provider that hosts the site, which tends to work sometimes, is also not productive in this case as Stormfront *owns their server and the telecommunication connection (the cable) with the internet-world* (my translation).

# A tripartite analysis of a civic website. Understanding Reklamsabotage.org

Tobias Olsson

## 1. INTRODUCTION

By now more than ten years have passed since the internet made its big entrance into society, at least in the western world. The same time frame is also valid for the new ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) big breakthrough within social scientific and humanistic research; in the mid 1990's a rather encompassing literature on the subject started to emerge.

This early literature was rich and varied, and included several different strands of research, coming from a large number of different research traditions. A fairly common thread in the early literature was, however, a preference for theoretical and rather speculative analyses of the possible consequences of the new ICT. These analyses were mainly made through reading off the consequences from its form. Some of the most frequent themes in these analyses were the internet's significance for the construction of identity (Shields, 1996; Holmes, 1997; Porter, 1997; see Slater, 2002 for an overview), and for the establishment of new, different kinds of communities (Jones, 1994; Jones, 1997; Jones, 1998; Smith and Kollock, 1999).

Another area that quickly inspired a great number of analyses was the new ICTs possible political or civic implications. The questions then become: How can the internet reshape the political processes (cf. Hague and Loader, 1999; Coleman et al., 1999; Hoff et al. 2000)? What significance does it have for the late modern public sphere (Poster, 1995, 1997)? And in what ways can it remould political communication (cf. Raab et al., 1996; Davis, 1999) and civic participation?

The early analyses of internet's potential in the political and civic areas – the '1.0' of these studies – had a number of characteristics in common with other, early studies into the internet. One such characteristic was the preference for putting a lot of efforts into analysing how the internet's form – its interactivity, its multimodal character, its integration of vertical and horizontal modes of communication, and its way of reorganising time and space (cf. Bentivegna, 2002) – might help in changing, or reshaping civic practices. A rather typical example is Manuel Castells' (1996) analysis of the so-called 'information age' in which the networking character of digital media (nodes, flows, hubs etc.) is predicted to become the logic that dominates all spheres of society, and among them also the political and civic spheres. Another example is of course the many analyses that took the internet's interactive features as point of departure for wide-ranging speculations about its ability to foster civic participation.

This rather abstract theorising is not the complete history of the field. It is still rather lively. It is, however, reasonable to claim that most studies have started to take on a different, less speculative character, in which empirical arguments, from various sources, have been given further importance – the '2.0' of internet research. We will shortly review some of these studies from this later generation of analyses into the internet's political and civic dimensions, exemplifying the important areas.

## 2. ANALYSING POLITICAL AND CIVIC IMPLICATIONS: CONTENT, USERS AND PRODUCERS

A frequent theme in the studies of the internet's political implications has been various studies focusing mainly on internet *content*. These studies have covered areas such as the political parties' presence on the net (Nixon and Johansson, 1999; Löfgren, 2000; Norris, 2002; Gibson et al., 2003; Zittel, 2004), and the possibilities for and practises around citizens' political interaction on the internet (cf. Tsagarousianou et al., 1998; Wilhelm, 2000; Bamberg, 2006). So far there has been a rather obvious bias towards studies focusing on formal politics, but lately – however – additional interest has been paid to different kinds of alternative politics. One such example is a very recent analysis of a fan forum as a public sphere (Svensson, 2007), and other examples are the analyses focusing on various alternative political organisations (cf. Kavada, 2005; Cammaerts and van Audenhove, 2003), which map how these movements appear on the internet and make use of the new ICTs in their political practises.

The studies of *users* have been rapidly evolving during the last couple of years in the analyses of the internet's implications. A number of such analyses (including this chapter) are based on a research project that focuses on how the internet is shaped into a resource for political deliberation and coordination among members of various political organisations (Olsson, 2006a; Olsson, 2006b; Olsson, 2007; Dahlgren and Olsson, 2007). But the political implications of internet use can for instance also be traced in a number of statistical studies of internet use (cf. Internetbarometer, 2002–2004; Bergström, 2005; Livingstone and Bober, 2005). These studies show how internet use has evolved over time among different groups of citizens, and they make it rather obvious that only a comparatively small part of the general use of the internet can be described as exclusively civic, or as politically relevant use of the new ICTs. Another kind of studies related to the political implications of internet use is found in the international efforts to highlight digital divides (cf. Norris, 2002; Warschauer, 2003; van Dijk, 2005).

In general, little effort has been put into analysing the *producers* of internet content. It probably has to do with the internet's specific characteristics that make all users possible producers. Anyhow, the general perception of researchers seems to have been: 'Why bother analysing producers per se when all users are potential producers themselves?' This certainly counts for the studies into the internet's civic and political dimensions. Compared to how traditional mass media have been studied over the years, this negligence is somewhat surprising. When it comes to mass media research, the producer perspectives are ubiquitous (cf. Gans, 1979; McManus, 1994; Carpentier, 2005). Even if there are a couple of exceptions in the area of internet research too, a few studies that in fact have paid heed to the production of politically relevant internet content (Meikle, 2002; Garcelon, 2006; chapters in McCaughey and Ayers, 2003; de Jong et al., 2004; Latham and Sassen, 2005), most studies within this area are usually – and somewhat ironically – occupied with analysing the ways in which actors within the sphere of traditional media appropriate and make use of new, digital technologies (Boczkowski, 2002; Hedman, 2002; Karlsson, 2006).

## 3. FROM 2.0 TO 3.0

In general, this second wave of research into the internet's political implications – its '2.0' – has obviously done a lot to qualify our arguments about the internet's political and civic potential. There is no doubt

about that. To a varying extent the politically related internet content per se, as well as the users and – at least to some extent – its producers have been subject to critical analyses from different researchers, and from various points of intellectual departure.

Such a division of labour is not necessarily a good thing, however. The analytical separation of the different parts of the political, and/or civic internet, might contribute to the constitution of separate fields of research where, for instance, researchers paying attention to civic content on the internet might end up ignoring the fact that this content actually is made use of in different ways by different users, or that researchers that pay attention to producers of civic web content end up ignoring the actual textual materiality of the producers' work. Instead, I suggest it would be valuable to include all three aspects into the same analyses of the political and civic dimensions of the internet more often than is the case today. More concretely, what I suggest is a tripartite approach that accounts for all three aspects at one and the same time. This might, arguably, be one step towards the '3.0' of research into the internet's political and civic implications. The remaining parts of this chapter will illustrate such an approach by help of an analysis of a website, www.reklamsabotage.org.

## 4. REKLAMSABOTAGE.ORG FROM THE PRODUCER'S POINT OF VIEW

Reklamsabotage is: '*[A] loose network that has been around since 2001, and we remake or remove advertising from public spaces*', says Tomas, who is the driving force behind the network as well as its website. The website is certainly important to the network's operations – it is in fact the 'hub' of the network. It is designed to inspire its visitors to remake or tear down ads, and in order to do so the website offers pictures and descriptions of various campaigns for the visitors to imitate or further develop. The website's bottom line logic is simple and appears clearly in the producer interview: rework ads, document the results (through descriptions and pictures), send the documentation to reklamsabotage.org, and we will put it on the website to inspire further actions.

In the producer interview, three keywords for the website resound: *accessibility*, *inspiration* and *documentation* of reworked ads. Accessibility mainly refers to the fact that the actions suggested by the website are supposed to be of such kind that anyone can take them on. The inspiration part comes with the idea about the website's design. It is not

designed to hold a lot of texts. Instead, its pictures of reworked ads are supposed to inspire further actions among the users. This is also connected to the ideas about documentation – through documentation of actions comes inspiration for further actions among the users.

It is also quite obvious that the producer's ideas about the website have to do with creating action, not talking, or discussing. This is also emphasised by his choice not to connect any kind of forum for discussions to the website. Reklamsabotage.org deals with concrete action, it aims at *'[T]ransforming people from spectators to actors'*, and *'Sometimes we make it. When people remake their first ad they grow a bit and also understand that they can participate in the remaking of public space.'*

## 4.1. Producer practises

The website's producer, Tomas, is 26 years old and he is responsible for the production of the website. The network has several nodes, but Tomas is the only person who actually works with the website. Members of the network send their pictures to him and he publishes them on the website. The website does have a content management system which makes it possible for members to publish themselves, but they hardly ever do. Instead, Tomas manages the website himself on a day-to-day basis, and is also responsible for its overall design.

The network Reklamsabotage lacks economic resources. This used to be a problem when the website was hosted by a commercial web hotel. Since two years, however, the website is hosted for free by an American web hotel, run by an activist. The lack of economic resources does, however, bring other problems for the network's internet practises, for instance when it comes to marketing. The network does not have any resources for informing about the website and trying to reach out to additional internet users. It is still mainly a resource for the network's already involved members. The only marketing that the network can afford is putting its name on the stickers that the internet users are invited to use in their reworking of ads.

## 5. THE CONTENT: A RESOURCE FOR ACTIVISM – LITTLE TALK, LOTS OF ACTION

It is quite easy to recognise the producer's ideas in the website content, especially his ambitions to make the users actors rather than spectators. For instance, it does not contain a lot of text, but holds plenty of concrete

suggestions for concrete actions to take on. Furthermore, it does not invite for a lot of textual interaction. The website's underlying object is quite evident: 'Get out, and do stuff!'

Considering the scarce resources at Reklamsabotage.org's disposal (see above) it is somewhat surprising if one consults the website and notices that it is a professionally crafted product. It is well-designed, structured, and easy to navigate. In a comparison between Reklamsabotage.org and almost any other website connected to an organisation within Swedish civil society – like a football club or a church organisation, which usually involves a number of website producers – it is hard to guess that only one person is involved in the production of the website.
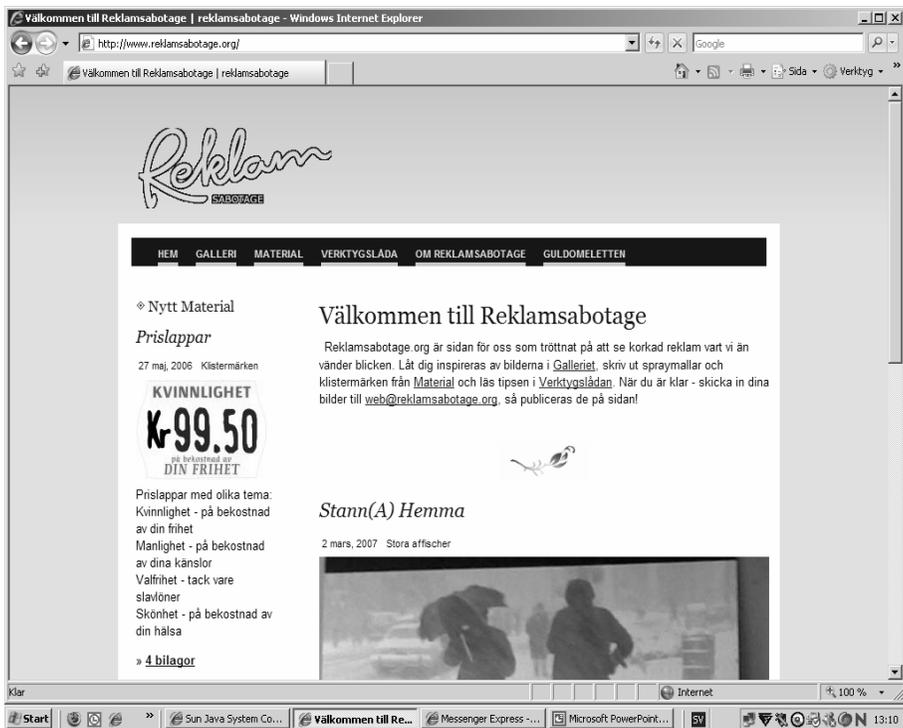


But what does the website offer its users in terms of resources for civic activities? A thick description of the website's content makes up a good point of departure for better understanding it as a civic resource.

At the top left corner of the first page, we find the network's logotype. In the logotype Reklamsabotage.org imitates the logotype of *Veckorevyn*, a rather reactionary, Swedish magazine for young girls. Reklamsabotage

uses the same font and overall design as the magazine and is thus rather obviously using a *bricolage* (Hebdige, 1979) strategy in its self-presentation; the website experiments and plays with an obvious symbol for Swedish consumer culture. This strategy for self-presentation also indicates what kinds of practises the network aims to inspire, reclaiming public space from commercial interests, and generating a general critique of private business and the culture of consumption.

Apart from the logotype, the starting page contains photos of current campaigns of reworked ads and also the menu for navigating the website. Under the labels in the navigation menu we find the actual resources that the website offers to its users. It is worthwhile taking a closer look at these resources.

## 5.1. Material

The heading 'Material' is divided into three subgroups: 'Stickers', 'Templates', and 'Manuals'. The link 'Stickers' brings the user to a section where he or she can watch, download or print readymade stickers with various messages. The messages have that in common that they are making fun of commercial culture. They are supposed to be used in activities aiming at destroying – and/or renegotiating – the messages in ads. The heading 'Templates' contains photos of paintings made with spray cans, and templates for the user to use in order to reproduce such paintings. Finally, the link 'Manuals' leads to a space for instructions, a 'how to do it'-guide for users to read, download and/or print for their own ad-destructing activities.

## 5.2. Gallery

The Gallery section contains five different subheadings, such as 'Small advertising signs', 'Other pictures', and 'Billboards'. Under these labels users can pictures from various adbusting campaigns from which they can draw inspiration for their own adbusting practises.

## 5.3. Toolbox

Under the heading 'Toolbox' the users find information and tips about how to carry through actual adbusting activities. The users get information about, for instance, how to make their own spray templates, and about what spray colours to use for adbusting. All of this toolbox-information is presented in a very pedagogic manner: 'This is how you do it'

and the overall, implicit message is: 'It's easy, go about and do it your-selves.'

## 5.4. *The Golden Omelette*

The 'Golden Omelette' contains information about the network's competition with the same name. The idea with the competition is to, first, identify and then to give awards to the best adbusting campaigns of the year. The competition is supposed to: *'[E]ncourage reclaiming of public space'*, to *'give courage to the entire movement'*, and to *'[M]ake the business sector feel that its control of public spaces is threatened.'*

The name of the competition, the Golden Omelette, is another example of *bricolage,* how the network incorporates symbols from the commercial culture, renegotiates them and gives the new meaning in new context: the Golden Omelette paraphrases the Swedish advertising industry's own annual competition – the Golden Egg.

Apart from these links in the navigation menu, Reklamsabotage.org also contains a number of links to external websites. These links are divided into five different categories: 'Other adbusters', 'Street art', 'Feminism', 'Satire Sites', and 'Miscellaneous'. Through these links the network hooks itself up to other networks of activists with the same, or a similar, political interest.

Summing up the short description and analysis of the website content, it is easy to see that the producer's intentions – accessibility, inspiration and documentation of reworked ads –materialise very well on the website. It makes a lot of various adbusting actions feel accessible, especially through the website's instructive voice and the many illustrations of various actions for the users to become inspired. It certainly does its best to be inspiring, especially through the many illustrations and examples presented in the Gallery part of the website. Finally, the website quite obviously functions as a resource for the documentation of various campaigns. The website's bottom line logic – less talking, more action – is everywhere to be found on the website – written texts are a scarce resource. Instead, illustrations from and instructions for various campaigns have a prominent position on the website. But what does this mean to an actual users of the website?

## 6. SARA – AN ACTIVIST MAKING USE OF REKLAMSABOTAGE.ORG

Sara is 16 years old and lives in southern Sweden. She has been involved in various political organisations since she was 12 years old. She started her political engagement in one of the political parties' youth organisations, but she did not feel 'at home' there: *'Too much talk and too little action'*, she states. As a consequence she left the political party a couple of years ago and she has now joined Green Globalisation, an environmental alter-globalisation movement. Although the organisation has international connections, it is organised on a national level and most of its activities are initialised and carried through within small, local groups. Nowadays, Sara holds a leading position within one of these local groups. Apart from her engagement within Green Globalisation she also calls herself an 'anti-fascist' and a 'feminist'.

In the interview she also explains how she lately has started to make use of the internet in 'everyday activism', as she refers to it herself – she uses Reklamsabotage.org as a resource for activism concerning feminist issues. These activities are partially related to her affiliation with Green Globalisation, but are mostly related to her general engagement in feministic issues:

> Sara: [We are into] adbusting, that is something new, where we… You know… unethical commercials… We collect information about the company in question in order to make sure that we're right to criticise them. Then we have – if it for instance concerns sexist commercials – balloons that say: 'You cannot buy me', and then we put on the ads. Or: 'The ad has been taken away due to its unethical message.'
> […]
> Interviewer: What is the name of the web site?
> Sara: Reklamsabotage.org… But you have to be careful, you need to check on all your facts before you take action. If you get it wrong it will be destructive for the whole organisation.
> Interviewer: How does it work?
> Sara: They have got… They have for instance… You can order and then print these balloons and they also have instructions about how to go about. But we are careful not to destroy anything. We are only trying to make people open their eyes.

The latest addition to Sara's repertoire of everyday activism is the destruction of ads. Basically, what she and her activist friends are up to is the destruction of unethical, commercial messages, mainly by slightly

changing their content by adding messages to them. In this practice the internet is an indispensable resource. On websites such as Reklamsabotage.org she and her friends find the necessary material for this destruction: stickers with pre-printed alternative messages, models for posters, and also a gallery to inspire the creation of alternative messages.

For Sara's alternative political identity the internet – in general – and Reklamsabotage.org in particular serve as important resources for her political activities, which is interesting in several different ways. Firstly, this view of the internet, as a resource for activism (Dahlgren and Olsson, 2007), contrasts sharply with her view of traditional media. Rather than a resource, she understands traditional media as an obstacle to alternative political activities. Traditional media does not pay interest in 'alternative' issues, and when they finally do (every now and then) they tend to misinterpret these issues and misrepresent alternative political organisations. Secondly, it illustrates the internet's general applicability as a tool for people with an alternative political identity (Dahlgren and Olsson, 2007). The internet offers, among other things, alternative information, contacts with likeminded people, and also public spheres for their specific political interests. Put somewhat differently, it is fair to say that the internet is perceived to contribute to the continuous construction of alternative political identities. Finally, it also illustrates that for some users, with specific political predispositions, the website Reklamsabotage.org actually does serve as a resource exactly in the way that the website's producer wants it to. It '[T]ransforms people from spectators to actors', and this transformation is certainly helped by the resources offered by Reklamsabotage.org itself.

## 7. CONCLUSION

To a network such as Reklamsabotage the website is at the very core of its actions; it is even hard to imagine a network such as Reklamsabotage without the internet. The internet makes organisations such as Reklamsabotage – in its current form – possible. As such, it might be tempting to interpret the website per se, and the activist practises that it inspires, and to some extent also brings about, as simply being generated by internet's form, which was a very popular line of thought during the 1.0 era of internet research. But rather than interpreting Reklamsabotage, or any other similar network, as organisations simply generated by the internet (or some kind of internet generated logic), the 2.0 of internet research has helped us to understand the necessity in analysing various

internet practises – offline as well as online – in their socially and culturally situated contexts. Hence, Reklamsabotage should be understood as an outcome of producers, and various users, negotiating with, and making use of technological possibilities offered by a new ICT, not as an outcome of the new ICT itself.

Having said that, the discussion on how this transformation – of technical possibilities into social (and/or political) consequences – is best understood and analysed is still open. How should the 3.0-studies, in fact, be carried out? In this chapter, I have argued for, and illustrated, an approach that includes a civic website per se, the producer behind that website, and the users making use of the resources offered by the website. Such a design brings, arguably, at least three positive contributions to our efforts in researching the internet's civic and/or political implications:

1/ It acknowledges the fact that websites have producers, a line of thought that actually has been somewhat overlooked in the earlier generations of internet research. What are the producers' intentions? What do they think about their website? Despite the internet's interactive form, the ordinary users are only to a small extent acting as producers. Hence, many of the various content producers maintain the upper hand in internet communication, just as they do in any other kind of mass mediated communication. As a consequence, the broadcasting model of communication is in everyday life not rendered irrelevant by the internet, which certainly makes the producers an interesting category of people to study.

2/ To bring the content into the analysis makes it possible to both qualify producer intent and to critically explore what kind of resources the website actually offers to its users. This analysis can be supported by different analytical techniques – any technique from discourse analysis to thick description might be useful, depending on what kind of analysis that is needed, in different studies with different aims – but it should anyhow aim at getting a good grip of what kinds of civic resources the website actually has to offer.

3/ Finally, combining these analyses with analyses of the 'real world' appropriation of the resources offered by a website among the users makes up a powerful qualification of both producer intent as well as the content's impact among the users. In what ways is the website actually made use of? What practises does the website in fact inspire?

In this case study, the analysis has started from a study of the users and has then selected a number of websites and website producers for further analysis (Olsson and Danielsson, 2007). Of course, it is perfectly possible to start with any of these three analytical dimensions, with users, with producers or with website content. No matter where the starting point is, a tripartite analysis of civic websites offers a tool for qualifying our analyses of the internet's political and/or civic implications.

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# Section four:
# Participation and citizenship



Poster by Sergio Barrera Perea

# Participating in a representative democracy. Three case studies of Estonian participatory online initiatives[1]

Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt

## 1. POINT OF DEPARTURE

When at the end of the 1980's Estonia started its quest to break free from the Soviet Union, there were many different agendas that needed completion. After having gone through innumerable reforms by the mid-nineties, there was a perceived need for new and positive policy objectives. Apart from a series of other goals (as for instance joining EU and NATO as the top priorities) the active development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) was also prioritised. Estonia was first connected to the internet in 1992 through an initiative of the academic community. At the same time, the academic elite played an important role in the Estonian developments in general, and they placed 'computerisation' on the political agenda.

The following chapter will give a brief overview of the early Information Society (IS) policy agenda and will then focus on the assumed democratic potential of ICTs. An overview of the practices behind the participatory discourses is provided by analysing the participatory potential of three major initiatives. These initiatives are often seen as best practices of the Estonian Information Society.

The challenge for 21st century Estonia has been moving from what Held (1992) calls the one-party model of democracy to a more commonly accepted (and heralded) liberal democracy, and simultaneously balancing the need for a secure and stable state with the political and social freedom of the citizenry (Held, 1992).

Ideologically, notions of internet and computers are invested with many more meanings than the mere provision of access to technology.

The broad distribution and adaptation of new media technologies was seen as one of the tools to achieve so-called Westernisation (Lauristin, 1996). More specifically, the first IS policy document (Estonian Information Policy, 1998 – my translation) aims to develop an information society framework that:

    1/ Advances and reinforces democracy in the Estonian Republic

    2/ Helps to improve the state of the informational infrastructure

    3/ Helps to advance the creation of a competitive economy.

'*In conclusion, the information politics aims to foster an increase of general well-being*' (Estonian Information Policy, 1998 – my translation). Here one can already see that ICTs are defined as one of the possible tools for the move towards liberal democracy.

Ivar Tallo (a former MP and an information society advocate), who was one of the authors of the IS policy, explains that the policy was deliberately kept vague in order to use the document to legitimise a great number of initiatives, mostly connected to the modernisation of the legislation and the breaking-up of the telecommunication monopoly (Veenpere, 2004: 28). These early documents are fairly technologically deterministic, claiming that technologies have the power to set things right in society, and that technologies can be used to establish a competitive economy and to support processes of westernisation. ICTs were used as a tool to push a small nation into meeting what was considered the requirements of the modern world:

> Contemporary information technology creates more and more new opportunities for mutual communication. Access to information indispensable for life and work, and for the discussion of problems pertaining to the whole society. The extent to which these opportunities are made use of will inevitably influence human development (Viik and Järve, 1996).

In general, the Estonian IS policies suffer from the same problems as many other countries do (see for instance Carpentier, 2003; Preston 2003). The IS policy is often based on the problematic discourse that individual well-being is achievable through the use of technologies and the successful management by a liberal state. Largely due to the Soviet legacy, Estonia has developed a schizophrenic understanding of the role of the state. In many ways, the ideology of the liberal state is supported, which brings along the belief in less state intervention, less taxes and liberal economies. At the same time, people are reluctant to give up on the Soviet ideals of free services and the Scandinavian ideals of the welfare

state. Similar conflicts can also be found in the sphere of the relationship between technology and society. Providing access to ICTs in order to reduce the social divisions and to foster the state-individual relationships has been part of the public IS discourses from the early days. The dominance of the discourse on access (especially within the context of the digital divide) has already been criticised elsewhere (Carpentier, 2002; Vengerfeldt, 2003), so I would like to focus in this chapter on other aspects – namely the relationship between the individual and the state and the improvement of Estonian citizen participation.

## 2. Focusing on participation

As briefly outlined above, IS policies tend to see ICTs as tools of, and means for enhancing Estonian democracy. In the more recent years, the expected growth of civic society in Estonia has placed public participation very much on the political agenda. For instance, different coalition agreements have explicitly mentioned the need to increase civil participation in the legislative processes and to address the gap between the state and its citizens (Koalitsioonilepe, 2007). The focus in these later discussions has been shifting from individual to institutionalised participation, where citizens can participate in civic society organisations and they in turn can participate in policy development. As Held (1992) points out, by referring to Arendt – if democracy is reduced to the periodic vote, the people's activities will be largely confined to the private realm. Only '*if democracy is understood as a double-sided process this state of affairs might be redressed by creating opportunities for people to establish themselves "in their capacity of being citizens" (Arendt, 1963: 256)'* (Held, 1992: 20).

This new wave of discourses on participation has created a need for a shared understanding of the key terminology. For this reason, the Estonian sociologist Mikko Lagerspetz edited a civic society dictionary (2006), of which two words are relevant in the context of this study. These two words are *kaasamine* and *osalus*:

> Kaasamine: a/ an inward-oriented '*mobility*' of a target groups or constituency; b/ activities of the public or private sector aimed at giving citizens or citizen organisations the chance to participate in decisions that are related to them, including legislative processes – '*community involvement or stakeholder engagement*', this should enable public participation (Lagrespetz, 2006: 8).

> Osalus: '*participation*', or the individual's possibility to have a say in decisions that are related to him/her. One of the important

> channels are NGOs that attempt to create partnership relations with public institutions. The prerequisite to participation is that they can have enough information about the decisions being discussed, in a timely manner and that they are consulted. But [in order to be able to speak of participation] the actual chance of having an effect needs to be ensured (Lagrespetz, 2006: 13–14).

In fostering civic society inclusion, the OECD has proposed a three-stage model of engaging citizens in policy-making. These three stages are 1/ *information* – as basic prerequisite, which covers both requests for information and distribution of information; 2/ *consultation* – a two-way communication initiated and controlled by government; 3/ *participation* – an active engagement in the process and content of policy-making, proposing the policy options and shaping the policy dialogue (OECD, 2001: 12). Here the stage of consultation is fairly similar to the ideas of engagement mentioned by Largespetz (2006).

Engagement has become a new catchword, that recently has started to replace participation in the public vocabulary, but it remains very much a top-down initiative, where people are engaged or involved when it is deemed suitable by the groups in power. Marju Lauristin has noted the abusive replacement of the word engagement (*kaasamine*) by participation (*osalus*):

> Engagement is a one-sided (by the dominant, governing side) activity towards another (dominated, governed) side; the one who engages is a subject and the one who is being engaged is more of an object whose possibilities to influence final decisions are limited. The will to participate is based on the belief that it is a joint decision and that all participants' ideas and interests will be considered. The plebiscite can be considered as a form of participation, when the taking into account of the results is guaranteed by law. A test for governors who wish to advance democratic participation is to deal with opposition and to provide civil society with a real possibility to participate in the parliamentary decision-making process (Lauristin, 2007 – my translation).

Dahlgren (2006) also points to the blended use of the concepts of political engagement and participation, treating them as synonyms despite their different meanings. He sees engagement as a moment of mobilised and focused attention that is a prerequisite for participation, but which does not have the action component that participation has. A number of other theoretical positions on participation have also critiqued its overexploita-

tion, and have tried to protect its specific meaning by distinguishing between 'genuine' and 'pseudo' participation (for an overview, see Carpentier, 2002; 2007). Carpentier adopts the idea that participation (in contrast to a set of other concepts) has a specific and distinguishable feature, namely the focus on power and its equal distribution. He finds support in for instance White's work:

> White (1994: 17) also emphasises this central link between power and participation: 'it appears that power and control are pivotal subconcepts which contribute to both understanding the diversity of expectations and anticipated out-comes of people's participation.' (cited in Carpentier 2002: 20).

As Carpentier (2007) points out, the debates on participation in the field of new media have focussed more on the much-critiqued concepts of interactivity and access, thus diminishing the emancipatory and critical connotations of the concept of participation. The interactivity debate in the area of new media is usually confined to the human-computer interaction level, leaving aside the technology-mediated participation with other humans or institutions.

But there are exceptions – as Carpentier (2007) points out: some new media theories (especially when focussing on new media's democratic potential) – some more naïve, others more developed – have offered a safe haven for the more radical meanings of participation.

The concept of participation plays an especially crucial role in the theoretical models that believe that the internet will open-up a new public sphere, with the possibility of more direct and/or deliberative democracy. But this raises new questions. The 'quick-fix' internet solutions for the crisis of democracy have been both celebrated and criticised, and the internet is seen as both a mobilising tool to bring the young and underrepresented into politics, and as just another way to reinforce existing social divisions (Norris, 2001; Scheufele and Nisbet, 2002; Hibberd, 2003).

## 3. The three cases

The above-mentioned IS and political participation concepts have materialised in three prominent internet-related initiatives: 1/ e-voting for local and parliamentary elections, and two websites: 2/ Täna Otsustan Mina (TOM – Today I Decide) and 3/ Osale.ee. The following sections will discuss these three key initiatives that have become symbols

for internet participation in Estonia, that are (over)used in the public discussions about Estonia's internet initiatives, and that are often considered to be one of Estonia's 'trademarks'. I will analyse these projects' capacity to realise their predicted participatory potential, within the context of a representative democracy framework.

### 3.1. E-voting – taking the traditional to e!

E-voting is probably the most celebrated online initiative in Estonia. The concept of e-voting has two principal meanings, which are e- (electronic) or i- (internet based) voting. In Estonia, the latter is used. Instead of using computers (and not paper) in the voting booth, the whole election process is conducted via the internet.

Today, e-voting has been used twice in Estonia, at the local elections in 2005 and at the parliamentary elections in 2007. E-voting is one of many pre-poll-day voting options available to Estonians. People can vote from their homes by using their identity card and a smart-card reader to identify themselves and to cast their vote by selecting their favoured candidate from the lists on the website. About 9000 people used this option in 2005 and more than 30000 people (about 5,4% of the population) used it in 2007 (see ) (VVK, 2007).

The discussion whether the crisis of traditional democracy can be solved by e-voting is not new. E-voting can be cast aside as technopopulism (to use a concept from Coleman and Gutze (2001), cited in Carpentier (2007)). However, Vassil's (2007) analysis of the e-voters shows that the number of people whose participation depended on e-technologies for voting is small but present: 10% of the e-voters claimed that they would not have voted if internet voting was not an option. Thus in some ways, transferring the traditional – and as Lauristin puts it – 'truly participatory' act (2007) of voting to an online environment has helped to increase citizen involvement. The results from Vassil's study (2007) also indicate that if the e-voting procedure would be used in other forms (to for instance enable plebiscites), complementing the existing representative democratic model with more direct democratic components, people with an e-voting experience claim to be willing to participate. Despite the problems related to these more direct democratic components, they would at least provide more opportunities for a structured expression of opinions.

Figure 1 is also indicative of a series of important divisions across different areas of Estonia. This figure lays bare the two major problems of Estonian e-voting, in relation to inclusion. The smallest proportion of

people who used the e-voting option can be found in Eastern Estonia, where most of the Russian-speaking population lives. In general, the Russian population's internet use is more entertainment-oriented and less well-defined (Vengerfeldt and Runnel, 2004), which might (at least partially) explain the differences, but another explanation might be that casting a vote with (the possibility of) human assistance is easier for those who do not master the Estonian language fluently. South-Estonia, which is the most rural and the most 'remote' area, also has lower e-voter percentages than elsewhere. Amongst other reasons, access to internet technologies is more problematic here, as the level of unemployment and the lack of internet coverage are issues in this area.

**Figure 1:** Percentage of e-voters in relation to the total number of voters
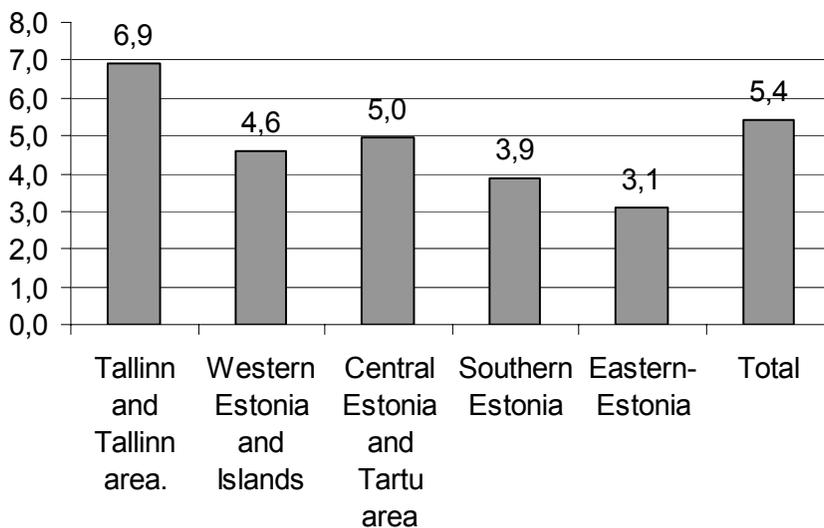


Source: www.vvk.ee

The second line of critique towards internet voting is the lack of rituality. Transferring one of the main symbolic activities of a democracy to the privacy of personal computers might eventually weaken the popular support for (representative) democracy. Of course, the necessity of such rituality is debatable, but it remains one of the aspects that needs to be considered.

## 3.2. Today I Decide – empowering internet users

On of the Estonian key initiatives (at least in PR-terms) for fostering participatory online activities is Täna Otsustan Mina – TOM (Today I Decide – https://www.eesti.ee/tom/). TOM is a state-initiated forum website where registered users can propose legislative changes. After they have passed a two-phased selection process, these proposals can then be sent to the responsible administrative unit, which can then decide on its course of action – response being the minimal requirement. In Estonia, laws can be initiated by MPs, by government or by the president, so this is the only possibility for individuals to initiate legislation (besides having direct contact with an MP).

The site was launched in 2001 and received an enormous amount of (positive) media attention. Today, TOM has 6862 users and 1114 ideas were discussed (TOM, 2007). Coleman and Kaposi (2006) give an overview of TOM's e-democratic capacities; however, similar to many other accounts, their overview is rather optimistic. The user statistics of TOM follow largely the ideas of Shirky's (2003) predictable imbalance: 9% of the users have ever presented one idea, and only 1% of them presented more than two ideas (Tallo et al., 2007). In 2007, TOM's usage is fairly marginal. When looking at the number of ideas presented per year (Figure 2), one can see that TOM's heydays were in 2001 – the year when it was launched. The growing numbers of internet users are mostly oriented towards everyday life related practices; political participation does not often feature prominently on their agendas. Moreover, citizens have shied away from state-organised public discussions, and have moved to relatively closed and small-scaled civil society initiatives, and to an increased involvement in forums, mailing lists and blogs.

One of the risks of participatory and deliberative initiatives that aim to support a representative democracy is that they exclude more controversial issues from the debates. In the case of TOM, one can see that topics like family, constitution, Estonianness, taxes, youth are all among the more popular, next to the leading topic of traffic regulations (Tallo et al., 2007). Moreover, TOM users do not seem to have pre-set agenda and people do propose legislative changes on the issues that matter to them.

The small number of users is a clear problem for TOM, even when Tallo et al. (2007) say that there are probably more lurkers on the site than there are registered users. But one can only vote on an idea if one is registered. At the level of language, there is again a clear problem with the inclusion of Russian-speakers: despite the fact that one third of the

population speaks Russian, there are no second language options on the consultation website.

**Figure 2:** The number of ideas presented at the Today I Decide portal
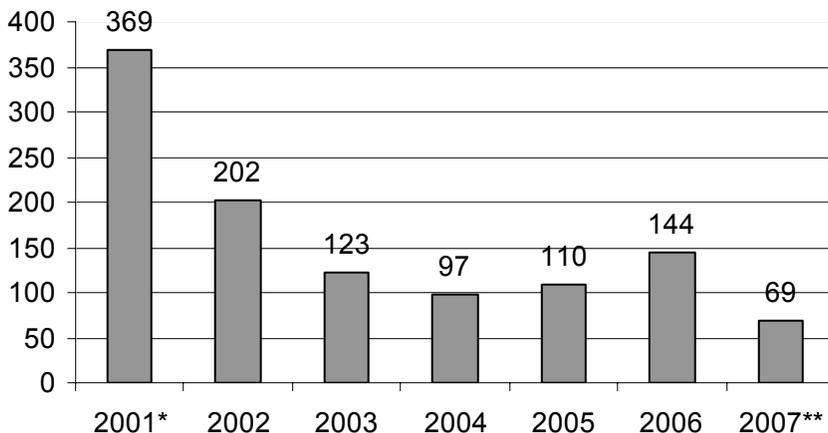


Note: (*) 2001 is from June to December and (**) 2007 is from January to September
Source: Tallo et al., 2007 and TOM, 2007

Another problematic aspect of TOM is that the website is not fostering discussion – although users can post comments on the original ideas and give their support to these ideas by voting on them, the ideas remain fairly formatted and the system features do not allow the author of the ideas to react to the comments, and engage in a discussion about the proposed changes to their ideas. The author does have the time and opportunity to modify the proposal, but the lack of two-way communication nevertheless reduces the deliberative potential of TOM and makes it another channel for sending pre-prepared messages to the government.

TOM's third major problem is related to the question of the power (im)balance. TOM appears to be a good example of what the OECD calls participatory, namely an initiative where people have the possibility to co-decide on the policy agendas and to influence other (political) agendas. But the problems become clear when one looks at the lifecycle of the ideas in TOM: people have 10 days to comment on the ideas, then the author has three days to take the comments into consideration, which is followed by a three day voting period. If a simple majority vote is

achieved, then the administration '*usually responds*' within one month (TOM Help, 2007). In many ways, this timeline indicates the power balance in TOM's structures and procedures. Not only have administrations more time to react than regular citizens have, and is the administration's side of the procedure kept less specific, but practice also shows the hesitance of the administration to react in a non-protective and stimulating way.

Tallo et al.'s (2007) analysis (see Figure 3) shows that the possible implementation of the ideas is mentioned in only 6% of the administrations' responses. Most other reactions are negative, vague or defensive. The unequal power balance between participants and administrations affects the participatory process. As Tallo et al. (2007) claim (on the basis of the interviews they did), the fact that the responses to ideas need to go through various internal negotiations in order to become a 'government position' restricts the possibilities and renders the reactions more defensive.

**Figure 3:** Government responses to ideas originating from TOM
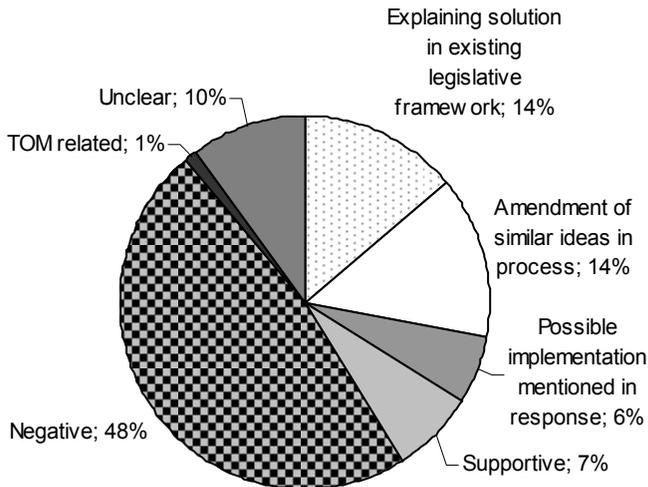


Source: Tallo et al. (2007)

In its ideal version, TOM could facilitate what the OECD (2001: 12) calls '*active participation and [an] effort to engage citizens in policy making on a partnership basis*', but the lack of dialogue and the severe power imbalances make it seem more like what Verba (1961: 220–221) calls '*pseudo-participation, in which the emphasis is not on creating the situation in which participation is possible, but on creating the feeling that participation is possible*'

(Carpentier, 2007: 2). In TOM's case, the need to establish an e-state, which could become highly rated in the international indices, and the PR operation that accompanied it (Runnel and Vengerfeldt, 2004), has put a damper on the ability to facilitate genuine participation.

These problems with TOM did not go unnoticed. Tallo et al.'s (2007) analysis (which was used as a backbone for the previous part of this chapter) was part of the preparatory work for a new participatory portal called Osale.ee. This will be discussed next.

## 3.3. Osale.ee – a new generation participation site in the making?

The Osale.ee portal was opened in July 2007, thus it might be slightly unfair to expect a fully operational website. But as the discussions and planning of the event have been on-going since 2004, the results of these two summer months can still be analysed from a participatory perspective. Today only the consultation component of the website is open for public use. According to the plans, the updated version will (in October 2007) also allow for user-generated content and the site will (partially) become a second-generation TOM.

At this point in time, Osale.ee has about 100 users. Altogether five ideas have been presented for public consultation. In two cases, the consultation process has ended; the three others are still open. There are several forms of expressing one's opinion at Osale.ee: 'comments' are non-formal positions regarding the consultation, while 'opinions' are formal statements in relation to the idea under consultation. Some of the consultations also include a 'survey', where open-ended questions are added to the consultation process and interested person can express their opinion by responding to the survey questions. At the time of writing, there were two opinions expressed and five responses to a survey, which makes this a fairly low-traffic participatory website.

In many ways, Osale.ee is designed to respond to the problems and deficiencies of the TOM website. Its technical features allow users to engage more in discussions, and to keep track of the ideas that they are interested in. Ideally, this site should help citizens to approximate the situation of '*perfect knowledge in which citizens know all about policy issues*' (Polat, 2005: 442), as the ideas presented for consultation (so far) have been accompanied by background material and references. At the same time, the fact that only the consultation component of the website has been opened, gives the entire website still a very top-down feel.

The same power imbalance is reflected in the language that the site uses to position itself. As discussed above, *osale* means 'to participate' in

Estonian, which renders the site fairly ambitious. However, in the website's actual descriptions, the more moderate term of *kaasamine* (community engagement) is used (Osalusveeb, 2007), indicating once again the accidental or deliberate misuse of the words as synonyms.

One of the major critical issues for this new portal remains the need to clarify the site's mandate. Despite the political agreement, that has explicitly placed citizen participation and closing the gap between state and citizens on the agenda, there is no clear agreement on how this consultations site will be used. The information advisor of the state chancellery has mentioned that the initial consultations are courageous tests, while (and because) the procedures and mandates are still being negotiated (Hinsberg, personal e-mail 2007).

Today, the new site is at the OECD-level of informing and consulting, but in order to become a tool that facilitates genuine participation, it not only needs the additional functionalities of TOM (to be implemented soon), but also the legislative recognition of its mandate and the proposals it generates. As seen above (when discussing TOM), this recognition might me more difficult to realise, in principle and in practice.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The point of departure for this chapter were the ideas of the early IS policies that positioned ICTs as tools for reinforcing Estonian democracy. Now, almost ten years later, three prominent online initiatives of Estonian citizen participation can be analysed. Recent debates about civil society organisations' societal role have raised the need for a common vocabulary, which lead to the development of a civic society dictionary (Lagerspetz, 2006). This dictionary is used as a reference point in order to distinguish between two keywords – participation (*osalus*) and community engagement (*kaasamine*). The latter is often seen replacing the word participation, thus once more subjecting participation to what Carpentier (2007) calls semantic reductionism, which has serious implications for the implementation of participatory initiatives in Estonia.

E-voting is a difficult project to evaluate in the context of participatory activities, as on the one hand, it is simply one aspect of representative politics which is taken into the online sphere, but on the other hand, it can also be seen as a tool which holds the future of introducing aspects of direct democracy to complement and enrich the existing representative democratic model and make it more inclusive.

Today, the issue of inclusion also remains one of the key critiques launched against TOM and Osale.ee. Looking at these web portals, token-participation still seems to outweigh real participation. The power imbalances are visible both in procedural aspects and the aspects related to content. At the same time, Osale.ee is a very new site and as it is developed to replace and improve TOM at the level of both citizen-to-citizen and citizen-to-state dialogue. But without the installation of a legislative framework, it will remain a 'playground for participation' and discredit the meaning of citizen involvement even more.

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NOTE

# New media, transformations of participation, and the problem of publicness[1]

Maja Turnšek

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of new technologies and following the anchoring of new social movements in the majority of western democracies, we are now witnessing a shift in our theoretical thinking there are moves away from the traditional understanding of political participation and aspirations towards what we might term civic participation – actions outside the political realm. This shift might be best illustrated by the question posed by Livingstone et al. (2005: 289): *'What exactly must young people do online before society will judge them "politically active" or engaged in "civic participation?"'*. New media have begun to emerge at a time of an important power shift from political to economic actors in the system of market globalisation. The first question which will be addressed in this paper is: *What are consequences for public participation of this shift of powers, together with the mediatisation of politics and the process of individualisation.* Partially enabled by the transfer of power from political to economic actors, and partially driven by the transformation of power from material to symbolic codes, participation is extending from political to the civic realm. The actions in this civic realm are less standardised and coordinated, but more individual-based and personal in their origins.

The second question is: *How important and effective can the new media be, as a tool to facilitate these new ways of public participation.* On the one hand, new media play a vital role in facilitating changes in public participation – globalisation could never have reached its current intensity without the support of global digital media. On the other hand, these changes determine how and for what purposes new media can be used, with regard to the public participation of citizens. As participation extends to the civic

arena, new media seem to provide individuals with enormous potential for (re-) constituting the public. Historically, access to traditional mass media has been restricted to only a very small number of people, though this has been regarded as 'public participation'. With the new media, the number of people making contributions has dramatically increased. Paradoxically, however, now that we have the technology that enables virtually every citizen to participate, their output is no longer self-evidently understood as participation.

## 2. DEFINING PARTICIPATION

Public participation, citizen's participation, political participation – whatever we decide to term it – is a contested terrain, full of ideological disputes. A quest for a definition is inevitably burdened with different, even opposing normative positions about the political, the democratic, the nature of individuals and the definition of the common good. The theoretical disposition here is taken from participatory and deliberative democracy's theorists (Rousseau, 1762/2001; Pateman, 1970; Barber; 1984) and most notably Dewey (1954) and his concept of the public/private distinction. Dewey builds this distinction on '*the objective fact that human acts have consequences upon others, that some of these consequences are perceived, and that their perception leads to subsequent effort to control action so as to secure some consequences and avoid others*' (Dewey, 1954: 12). According to Dewey (1954: 12) a transaction is private when the consequences only affect persons directly involved in the transaction and it is '*public when the consequences affect others beyond immediate involvement*'. He defines the public as '*consisting of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transaction to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for*' (Dewey, 1954: 15–16).

Since there are individuals who are not direct participants in transactions with public consequences, it is – according to Dewey (1954: 16) – necessary that certain persons be set apart to represent them, and see to it that their interests are respected and protected – this is a process where the public organises itself and eventually becomes a state. But Dewey (1954: 30–35) does not totally equate the state with political agencies. The formation of states must be an experimental process. The state must always be rediscovered. Political institutions can even obstruct the organisation of a public and transform themselves into a new state, leaving the public sometimes with no alternative but to break with existing political forms.

Analogous to Dewey (1954) – and with the additional support of Barber's (1984) work – the following definition of public participation is proposed (and used) in this chapter:

> *Public participation refers to actions of citizens who are seeking to regulate the consequences of public transactions in two possible ways:*
> *(a) to influence regulators of public transactions (political agencies), or*
> *(b) to start constituting the public (which ultimately becomes the state) and to seek to regulate public transactions directly.*

*Action* means that *'politics is something done by, not to, citizens'* (Barber, 1984: 133). Participation does not encompass political elites and is not a paid-for activity. It is something that citizens do because of their interests and sense of responsibility and not because they are guided by the prospect of individual benefit. It also means that participation is something that is performed; it is an activity, and more than a mere interest in public issues or attitudes toward these issues (Brady, 1997).

Moreover, Barber argues that politics describes a realm of action, but that not all action is political. *'We may more properly restrict politics to public action, to action that is both undertaken by a public and intended to have public consequences'* (Barber, 1984: 123). He adds: *'When I act, the publicness of the act can only be measured by the publicness (or privacy) of its consequences, when we – the community, the people, the nation – act, the act is public regardless of its consequences.'* (Barber, 1984: 124). The definition of participation given above was constructed in order to include both actions which are traditionally recognised as public participation, and actions where citizens seek to work on solving common problems outside the political realm. This broad definition allows us to incorporate the shift in theoretical thinking which moves away from the traditional understanding of public participation and pins its hopes on actions undertaken outside institutionalised politics.

The above definition of public participation includes the traditional understanding of political participation (by political theory scholars), as actions which are directly or indirectly trying to influence government officials (Verba and Nie, 1972). It also, however, extends this understanding through theories of social movements, where participation is seen as actions outside the system of official state politics and is regarded as actually complementary to routine political participation (Goldstone, 2003: 8). Although the definition builds on ideals of theories of participatory democracy (Rousseau, 1762/2001; Pateman, 1970), it does not include their normative distinction of 'true' from 'false' participation. Pateman (1970), for instance, asserts that 'full' participation is only equal

participation in decision-making, where the individual has equal powers to influence the outcomes of decisions. Pateman thus defines participation on the basis of what an individual succeeds in doing and not on the basis of what an individual is seeking to achieve (as Verba and Nie (1970) do). This is what I will refer to as the problem of publicness. If we start with a normative distinction between 'full' and pseudo-participation, we can overlook all actions where the public is still in the process of beginning to constitute itself, which happens within the realm of private and is performed only by one person or a small group of individuals.

## 3. FROM POLITICAL TO CIVIC PARTICIPATION

As modern and postmodern society is defined by capitalist markets, bureaucratic states, scientised relationships, and instrumental rationality, there is a shift of action, according to theories of new social movements, against the 'colonising efforts' (Habermas, 1984) of the invasive and controlling aspects of social life in late modernity (Buechler, 2000: 46). The individuals within society are developing what Cohen and Arato (1994) refer to as 'defensive' responses – where the primary targets of new social movements are the institutions of civil society. '*These movements create new associations and new publics, try to render existing institutions more egalitarian, enrich and expand public spaces of political society, potentially expanding these and supplementing them with additional forms of citizen participation*' (Cohen and Arato, 1994: 548).

The shift from political to civic participation is partially based on the changing roles of the regulators of public transactions. Although there are numerous explanations (all of which cannot be discussed here), one set of explanations focuses on processes of (market) globalisation. With the increase of globalisation, the traditional political agencies of states have started to lose their regulatory powers, especially for those public transactions which influence citizens' lives the most: the global economic transactions. By globalisation I mean what Habermas (2003) has termed market globalisation. The international economic system, where states form boundaries between their domestic economies on the one hand and foreign trade relations on the other, has been transformed into a *transnational* economy. In this new system, state actors are no longer the nodal points that shape global economic exchanges (Habermas, 2003: 88). With market globalisation, states have been effectively disempowered and are witnessing the loss of their capacity to control, are facing growing legitimisation deficits in decision-making, and are having to deal with

their increasing inability to provide legitimate and effective guidance and organisational support. This loss of powers on the part of political agencies on the one hand and the empowerment of economic actors on the other, means that public participation – where individuals seek to influence regulators of public transactions (political agencies) – does not bring about any changes. The regulators have lost their power to regulate. Following Dewey's argument, it therefore becomes necessary for the public to start re-constituting itself, in an attempt to establish new effective ways of for regulating their public transactions.

The other set of explanations focuses on the changes in the ability of regulators to represent new moral issues and the changing needs of the citizenry. Meluci (1989) stresses that the rise of a 'complex society' has displaced the material production from the centre of social life, and replaced it with the production of signs and social relations (Melucci, 1989: 45). By implication, power is no longer concentrated in a materially dominant class; it is dispersed across the diverse fields of the social and resides in symbolic codes and forms of regulation. This has given rise to new social movements which concern themselves with cultural symbols, lifestyle, the everyday and identity. According to Melucci and Avritzer (2000), contemporary democracies are being challenged by the fact that more and more citizens do not see (or accept) that the plurality of moral values is adequately represented through the system of the aggregation of majorities. *'Institutions designed to deliberate on behalf of majorities become completely out of tune with the plural moral conceptions of a significant part of the population. As a consequence, the decision-making capacity of political institutions decreases due to their inability to channel new moral issues and non-economic needs through their decision-making process'* (Melucci and Avritzer, 2000: 508).

The shifts of powers from political to economic and from material to symbolic codes contribute to the shift from participation within the political system (political participation) to participation outside the political system (civic participation). The more civil actions become embedded in the political system, the more political these actions become in the traditional meaning of political participation described by Verba and Nie's (1972) first three modes of political participation: voting, campaign activity and contacting officials. But the deflation of the state (described above) has inflated the political role of civil society[2], which allows the public to become (re)constituted, thereby increasing its own regulation and its civil participation.

In Dewey's approach the constitution of the public always starts in civil society, and even in the realm of private, because the necessary

condition for a public to constitute itself is built on the idea that some specific interactions have public consequences. Just as with any other innovation, the first realisation that a transaction has public consequences is still a personal moment. *'Invention is a peculiarly personal act, even when a number of persons combine to make something new. A novel idea is the kind of thing that has to occur to somebody in the singular case'* (Dewey, 1954: 58). This first personal moment of realisation only occurs in the eyes (and minds) of one individual or of a small number of individuals. Later this person or these people (might) start informing and raising awareness among the citizenry. Only when the citizenry – those who are affected by the consequences of public transactions – perceive these consequences as such, can it be said that they have constituted the public. *'The lasting, extensive and serious consequences of associated activity bring into existence a public. In itself it is unorganised and formless. By means of officials and their special powers it becomes a state'* (Dewey, 1954: 67). When political officials regulate the consequences of public interactions, they can be said to be(come) the state. If not, the public has first to (re-)constitute itself, in order to start creating a new state.

Media have always played a crucial role in this process. Traditional mass media have provided an effective means for a person or a group of people to initiate the constitution of a public. Firstly, newspapers, radio or television have transformed private perception into public perception – they were able to reach large enough numbers of citizens who became aware of the indirect consequences of transactions. But this powerful way of informing the citizenry has always been restricted to only a small elite. Now, with the advent of new information and communication technologies, it seems that the possibilities for constituting the public have grown enormously. Everyone who has internet access can start writing his or her own blog; people can deliberate on public consequences through online public forums; provide information on MySpace, comment on online newspaper articles, publish a video documentary on YouTube, start a viral campaign through email person to person networks; publish group websites, write a wiki, do some adbusting (see also Tobias Olsson's chapter in this volume), hack corporate websites, or work on free open source software. The use of internet by so-called media activists or grassroots journalists has attracted a lot of scholarly attention, (explicitly or implicitly) building on the history of alternative and community media research (Atton, 2002; Carpentier et al., 2003; Downing et al., 2001; Jankowski, 2003). Carrol and Hacket (2006: 84) define media activism as *'organised grassroots efforts directed to creating or influencing media practices and strategies'*. A most prominent example is

the Indymedia network (Couldry, 2003: 46). But the spectrum is much broader, from neighbourhood and local community online endeavours, to global human rights, anti-war and environmental online actions. Especially the anti-globalisation movement (Yuen et al. 2004; Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2004) – also termed the anti-corporate movement (Rosenkrands, 2004: 57) – has been prone to use the internet in the (at least potentially) global distribution of their warnings against global capitalism and its lack of social responsibility.

Another consequence of market globalisation is that the world is facing the indirect consequences of global capitalism, which has created what Beck (1992, 2000) has called the 'risk society'. The public has to constitute itself in a way that bypasses national borders in order to start regulating the indirect consequences at the global level. This has resulted in new ways of public participation, which could be considered glocalised (Robertson, 1995) actions. Attention has been drawn to these actions by analysing environmental movements and are best depicted by the Greenpeace slogan: *'Think globally, act locally'* (Tomlinson, 1999: 26). This form of participation is glocalised in the sense that individuals try to act on a local level, 'repairing the damage' that has been caused on a global scale.

New information and communication media have an enormous potential for internationalising participation. This may be seen in the global online activities of 'big' civic players such as Greenpeace or Amnesty International. But it can also (and even more) be seen in the global distribution of collective initiatives such as adbusting or freehugs, which are distributed online but work offline. In both cases, individuals participate offline – they 'bust' advertisements, or they give hugs to people on the street – and provide information about events and communicate online. The locality of the offline event could be anywhere in the world and at the same time they try to constitute an international public. Furthermore, these online spaces for interaction are not limited to national or local peer-networks. They are much more globally dispersed, with networks extending beyond national divisions. Just as is the case with the claim that mass media could bring about a cosmopolitan identity (Thompson, 1995) when people become aware of their connection to the global (Tomlinson, 1999), the same argument could be even more valid for internet applications where individuals can learn about the world from other individuals (and not only from mass media organisations that provide global information).

## 4. FROM COORDINATED TO INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE PARTICIPATION

Beck claims that (as a consequence of processes of individualisation and globalisation) we have witnessed the development of 'sub-politics'. Sub-politics is built on the processes that shape society from below. Its arenas are media publicity, the judiciary, citizens' initiative groups, and new social movements; its ultimate field is privacy (Beck, 1992: 198). Because of processes of individualisation, it is up to individual to engage in a self-driven identity construction which is characterised by diversity, fluidity and an emphasis on 'weak ties' in personal relationships rather than on obedience to strong traditional authorities (Beck, 1994). Sub-politics therefore means the transformation of public participation, from a form of participation, coordinated by organisations towards more individual and (ideally) collective participation. Bennett (2003) names these new forms of participation the actions of the 'self-actualising citizen' in contrast to the traditional notion of participation, which is represented by the 'dutiful citizen'. This new self-actualising citizen sees her/his political activities and commitments in highly personal terms, and performs in the field of consumerism, community volunteering, or trans-national activism.

This shift has implied the rise of individualised forms of participation. This does not necessarily concern interaction but something that an individual does by her/him self (e.g. 'life-style politics' (Giddens, 1991), or environmentalism), or the first step taken in an interaction, trying to inform the citizenry (e.g. writing blogs, initiating a petition or a viral campaign, writing a letter to the editor). Participation can also be collective, when it is based on the interaction (meaning two-way communication) of individuals, forming associations and starting to constitute the public. There are two kinds of associations: ones where an individual is still an equal partner and is still able to participate in collective decisions ('full' participation according to Pateman, 1970) (e.g. deliberation, cooperative work, participating in a 'spontaneous' protest and others where an individual is not an equal partner anymore but is guided by the associational leaders, and where her/his action is coordinated from a top-down perspective –participation thus becomes *coordinated* (see Nico Carpentier's chapter in this volume)).

The research which has been done on internet and participation outside official political channels has mostly been based on social movement organisations and their online top-down mobilisation activities through

the use of websites and e-mailing (Scott and Street, 2000; Washbourne, 2000; Smith and Smythe, 2000; Rosenkrands, 2004); it was therefore focused on coordinated participation, and not on individual or collective participation. New media do not favour collective or individual participation over coordinative, but they do give individuals or small groups a chance. Online individual or collective participation has been researched mostly within a frame of analysing the 'quality' of people's deliberation, usually with Habermasian (1984) criteria of an ideal public sphere (Schneider, 1997; Tsaliki, 2002). But, as Graham (2007: 3) stresses, these studies have focused on politically-oriented discursive forums, thereby neglecting the plethora of non-political spaces available online. And these non-political spaces are exactly where individuals start to form the public. If participation is extending beyond the coordinated and political field, then interactive internet applications (online discussion forums) and web 2.0 applications (blogs, Myspace, YouTube) are exactly the online spaces where such participation is found.

## 5. TO NO PARTICIPATION AT ALL?

Despite the above-mentioned societal transformations, the influence of the 'old' (political) actors has far from disappeared. Some authors argue that the informational role of mass media has been fused into new forms of infotainment, with strong emphasis on the personal lives of political personalities, horse-race journalism, spin and targeting, and the spectacle of a public debate, with no possibility for ordinary citizens to join this debate (Dahlgren, 2001; Hardt, 2004). The political system has become highly orchestrated, professionalised and exclusionary (Bucy and Gregson, 2001). Due to the competition of social groups who serve as mediators between the government and its citizens, the pluralist ideal of a well-balanced government is losing ground. There is an increasing inability on the part of these groups to attract the attention of, and mobilise these citizens. Their professional public relations methods and rhetorical techniques – supported by professional communicators – do not necessitate them having to defend their claims (Mayhew, 1997). This situation provides only rare and unconvincing possibilities for participation. What Mayhew (1997) terms the 'New Public' is quite the opposite of the public as Dewey understood it. It is rather a presentation, a spectacle of the public in which political leaders claim to be prolocutors of the citizenry. By using anti-discursive techniques, developed from advertising and created by media specialists, they pull communication away

from its mooring in the solidarity of (and among) groups (Mayhew, 1997: 208).

It is therefore not surprising that these professional practitioners see the internet as a new tool they can use. 'Politics as usual' has managed to settle on the internet because the latter allows politicians to circumvent journalists by creating a direct line of communication with their constituents. This direct line is unfiltered and unrestricted by the norms and structural constraints of traditional print and broadcast journalism (Stromer-Gallery and Jamieson, 2001: 175). Political websites are often official one-way channels for providing government information to the individual, and very rarely *vice versa*. The internet is in this sense no different from other media in helping governments to maintain the status of the citizen as a citizen-consumer (Needham, 2004) – a passive recipient of information generated and delivered by the state. Even in situations where political authorities express their support for citizen input, their efforts remain only at the level of information distribution with low levels of interactive communication (Åström, 2004). But this is not only restricted to the sphere of the political. Civic organisations have been quick to adapt and exploit the advantages of new ICTs to facilitate top-down mobilisations, as it is cheap to use, difficult to censor and, most importantly, it gives access to potentially enormous numbers of people. Civic organisations are not by definition any more participatory than political institutions, as van de Donk et al. (2004) warn. The 'big players' in particular are powerful and centralised organisations, where communication remains one-way, helping to mobilise people to do something and not *vice versa*.

## 6. CONCLUSION: THE PROBLEM OF PUBLICNESS

The traditional notions of political participation include only highly coordinated actions that belong to the state or to civic 'big players'. But individual innovative actions, even if they are performed by a group of people, have their origins in the realm of private. This is clearly shown by the historical development of collective action into modular forms (Tarrow, 1994): *'The strike became an institution of collective bargaining; the demonstration was covered by a body of law that distinguished it from criminal activity; and the sit-in and building occupation were eventually treated with greater leniency than ordinary delinquency'* (Tarrow, 1994: 46).

With the traditional mass media (e.g. letters to the editor) there was no questioning of the publicness of participation – it was assumed that

the information reached large enough numbers of people who in Dewey's terms had started to perceive interactions with public consequences and begun to generate a common interest and thus to constitute the public.

Due to ICTs' capacity to (potentially) reach extremely large numbers of readers it has been easy to talk about online participation as public participation. New media offer tools for new innovative ways of participation. As anyone with internet access can write blogs, comment on online articles, deliberate on online forums, screen a documentary, start a viral campaign, etc. this technology has an enormous potential for enlarging public participation. Online public participatory practices, which today appear as only private because they are not standardised and in some cases include only a small number of people, can develop into potent methods of constituting the public (and finally the state). But this development is dependant on the scale of public participation. If individual actions remain at the level of reaching a small group of people and fail to inform enough people in order to start constituting the public, then these actions inevitably stay private. The basis of public participation lies therefore not only in what an individual tries to achieve, but much more in what she/he actually does achieve and at what level this is being done.

Nevertheless, it has taken decades or even centuries for an action to become a modular and politically accepted form of public participation (Tarrow, 1994). Whether new media will show themselves to be useful tools for participation – extending to more civic and individual arenas – is a question that allows of no easy answer. New media do provide a substantial potential in these two spheres of participation, but the question of publicness of online public participation still needs a careful, long-term examination before we can come to conclusions about its effectiveness.

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## NOTES

[1]  I hereby thank my supervisor prof. dr. Slavko Splichal, Head of the Social Communication Research Centre at the University of Ljubljana, who has once again found the time and necessary patience to help me unravel some of the inconsistencies in my thinking.

[1]  Cohen and Arato (1992) build on the Habermasian (1962) and Gramscian (1914-1926/1987) distinction between civil society, the state and the market, as they define civil society as '*a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere, the sphere of associations, social movements, and forms of public communication*' (Cohen and Arato, 1992: ix).

# New citizenships?
# New technologies, rights and discourses

Zoetanya Sujon

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Emerging technological initiatives, literatures and global practices are juxtaposing new technologies with citizenship, frequently suggesting that nations, governments and geographically bounded cultures no longer solely determine who can become citizens; indeed, new technologies are often causally linked with the emergence of 'new' political subjectivities, processes and territories. The central role of new technologies within citizenship discourses is often justified and positioned through emerging civic practices based on three primary areas of influence: the enablement of more democratic and expanded membership systems; the introduction of new publics and social territories; and the establishment of new de-territorialised citizen rights and obligations.

This chapter focuses on the latter, particularly new citizen rights (rather than obligations), as represented in a small sample of discourses about the technological mediation of citizenship, namely cyber citizenship, netizenship and technological citizenship. First, I establish some of the ways citizenship has been defined, and analyse the discursive construction and positioning of what is new about 'new' technologically mediated citizenship rights. The emergence of such rights is important as, according to Turner (2001: 204–205), '*new patterns of citizenship*' are illustrated by a '*new regime of rights*'. Second, I concentrate on the inherent tensions, commonalities, overlaps and shifts in the discursive organisation of citizenship in new citizenship discourses.

It is not the aim of this chapter to establish the legitimacy, truth or potential of 'new citizenships'. Nor is it my aim to analyse the many ways technological determinism is reiterated through citizenship discourses. My aim in this chapter is also not to establish a comprehensive overview of the 'new rights regime' and the many different ways we can

interrogate the social and political significance of 'new' rights related to communication technologies. Instead, this is a necessarily incomplete survey and as a result, there are many omissions. My aim is to develop an indicative sense of the discursive construction of new citizens. I argue that new citizenship discourses re-articulate rights, highlight important tensions around universality and suggest that there is a discursive shift in the organisation of citizenship from institutional bodies to collective associations akin to technologically oriented trade unions.

## 2. DEFINING CITIZENSHIP AND THE ROLE OF RIGHTS

Before turning to the issue of what, if anything, comprises 'new citizen-ships', we must first establish what comprises 'citizenship'. Citizenship is a contested term and citizenship scholars, advocates and practitioners approach the subject from multiple perspectives and often-diverging fields of practice. As so many have acknowledged, defining citizenship is neither an easy or straightforward task.

Nonetheless, in the traditional discourses on citizenship the concept has been defined as a kind of membership 'status' (Marshall, 1992 [1950]: 18; c.f. Faulks, 2000) or as the political means used to '*identify subjects*' and establish the '*conditions for full membership*' (Jenson and Papillon, 1999: 2). Citizenship is articulated as a way of thinking about national membership, social belonging and the regulation and negotiation of such belongings through legal and cultural frameworks established through citizen rights and obligations (Miller, 1994: 12). Gershon Shafir expands this argument when he suggests that citizenship functions not only as a kind of national framework but also as a kind of '*sociological perspective*' or '*strategic concept*' (Shafir, 1998: 3; c.f. Citizenship Studies, 2003).

The largely normative quality of this citizenship discourse, articulat-ing it as a status, as a framework and as a strategic concept, complicates understandings of what is new about 'new citizenships'. Although his work has been heavily critiqued, it is here that Marshall's three dimen-sions of citizenship (civil, political and social) outline a valuable frame-work for both operationalising citizenship and situating citizenship dis-courses within a broader rights based view (see Table 1)[1].

**Table 1:** T. H. Marshall's Dimensions of Citizenship

| Dimension | Rights | Obligations |
|---|---|---|
| **Civil:** 'Courts of Justice' (circa 1832) | *'the rights for individual freedom – liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice'* (1992: 8, 17) *'the right to work'* (1992: 10) | Responsibility to other civilians: e.g. to ensure labour equity through fair wages and unionisation (1992: 41–43) |
| **Political:** 'Parliament and Local government' (circa 1918) | *'the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body'* (1992: 8, 17) | Obligation to work: in order to contribute to the economy and support the government through taxes (1992: 45–48) |
| **Social:** 'Educational system[s] and social services' (circa 20th century) | *'the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society'* (1992: 8, 17) | Public duty: to ensure the betterment of the individual and the polis or common good through education (1992: 37, 43) |

As Shafir argues, Marshall's civil, political and social realms go significantly beyond thinking of citizenship only as a status or form of membership (Shafir, 1998: 13)[2]. Although based on historical analysis of rights and class in England, Marshall's account is also a discursive account, one that has been important in generating a great deal of further work on citizenship, equality and the development of citizenship. There are two important discursive characteristics in Marshall's account. First, citizen rights are allocated '*from above*' through institutional bodies; and second, although there are tensions between rights to '*liberty*' and to '*participate in the exercise of political power*', subjects are, for the most part, positioned as passive citizens (Turner, 1990: 199–201).

Related to the positioning of political subjects, Saskia Sassen argues that analysing citizens or '*the rights-bearing subject*' provides insight into the foundational ways in which people can and do become part of national or 'de-nationalised' social and political systems of membership (Sassen, 2006: 278). For Sassen, the forces involved in establishing new avenues for the '*destabilizing of national bundlings*' are connected to the emergence of '*new political subjects*' (Sassen, 2006: 279)[3].

Daiva Stasiulis (2002: 365) notes that Marshall '*saw the defining features of twentieth century citizenship as consisting of the expansion of social citizenship rights*'. Stasiulis' observation is important, because in the form of legal systems, rights formally outline the relationship between citizen and state, allocating a framework for regulating political and cultural members as well as establishing avenues of action for citizens to exert and negotiate power. For example, Michael Schudson describes feminist and civil rights movements as '*widening the web of citizenship*' by extending civic participation[4] into the courtroom, federal government and the '*nationalisation of public policy*' (Schudson, 1998: 264, 250, 258). As such, the contestation and negotiation of rights provide political and civil avenues for people to be political actors in ways and in places that had been institutionally closed or denied.

Thus, rights are central for citizenship in at least two ways. First and building upon Sassen, rights are also formative because they establish a frame for political subjectivities. In both cases, rights and obligations establish formal and informal mechanisms for citizens to negotiate social and political territories, and as such, the emergence of new rights is often correlated with new kinds of political actors and subjectivities. Second, according to Stasiulis and Schudson's link between rights and '*widening the web of citizenship*', rights are important because they are major contributors to the extension of realms of participation and potential spheres of action.

## 3. MAPPING 'NEW CITIZENSHIPS'? TECHNOLOGICALLY MEDIATED DISCOURSES OF CITIZENSHIP AND 'NEW' RIGHTS

The links between citizenship and new technologies are broad, and depending on how you define the interaction between the two, can include discussions centring around civil society, media literacies, social movements, communities, public spheres, local and transnational spheres, government among many, many others. Citizenship, and technologically mediated discourses of citizenship, can refer to everything and nothing; marking a major tension between the democratisation of citizenship processes and the hollowing out of meaningful citizenship through the empty proliferation of nominal citizenship categories.

In order to counter this, I ask you to think of technologically mediated discourses of citizenship as a broad categorisation of a wide array of concepts, practices, initiatives and texts which overtly connect new technologies with citizenship. I offer a strategic overview of these discourses, and

focus on only three of them, namely cyber citizenship, netizenship and technological citizenship. I have chosen these discourses because they, like many other technologically mediated citizenship discourses, propose emerging citizen rights in relation to new technologies in a manifesto-like fashion. Characteristically, the majority of these discourses hold ICTs as at least partially responsible for creating new kinds of political, social, economic and cultural forms of belonging, transforming existing dimensions of citizenship and/or significantly reconfigure citizen practices and phenomena[5]. The number of these different discourses suggests that there has been a proliferation of citizen frames, resulting in the pluralisation of citizenship or the emergence of 'new citizenships'.

After a closer look, I conclude that there are distinct shifts in the organisation of citizenship according to the re-articulation of rights to access, participation, education and freedom of (collective) association. Even within this brief overview of new citizenships, there are numerous contradictions, conflicts and ellipses; yet synthesising the overlaps and interstices, complementary or otherwise, across and between these discourses suggests that 'new citizenships' represent a shift in the organisation of citizenship power from institutions to almost guild-like, technologically based citizen collectives.

## 3.1. New Citizenships: Cyber citizenship, netizenship and technological citizenship

There are often tensions in the literatures and arguments linking technologies and citizenship because, although new technologies are centrally featured as either a singular or bundled set of sources of (and for) change, many discourses often do not explain the role of new technologies in the transformation of citizenship; rather new technologies are positioned as defining the public sphere through the organisation of information, education (particularly new literacies) and participation in a normatively universal public good.

### 3.1.1. Cyber citizenship: The doubling of access

Vincent Mosco, who implements the notion of 'cyber citizenship' in a much more sophisticated fashion than others (e.g. Odzer, 1997), flags the importance of creating an inclusive 'culture of technology' that adheres to the values and conditions of technological 'have-nots' as well as 'haves'. Mosco cites education as the principle vehicle for establishing '*this new form of [cyber] citizenship*' (Mosco, 2000: 377; Turkle, 1995).

Mosco proposes that we need to utilise cyber citizenship in order to combat the concretisation of the digital divide. For example, Mosco states:

> Citizenship in the new electronic age means treating cyberspace as a public space or 'new commons'. Here, all people have rights of access and participation, reasonable expectations of privacy and security, and, along with these rights, civic responsibilities of active involvement and mutual respect for fellow cyber-citizens. Genuine education for an information society starts by teaching these principles and uses the Net as one among the many means to implement them (Mosco, 2000: 383).

In this sense, Mosco is claiming that new technologies have to be viewed as a central point of everyday praxis because they enable the betterment of the common good and as such, it is important to protect and establish 'cyberspace' as a ground that can improve the individual and the *polis* or community to which that individual belongs (c.f. Ogden, 1998: 67). LITA (Library and Information Technology Association)[6] emphasise 'cyber rights', claiming that cyber citizenship entails the *incorporation* of ICTs into civil society, because ICTs have become important gatekeepers between civil society and its citizens. Thus, in order to ensure citizens have cyber rights, LITA calls for the institutionalisation of a '*universal opportunity of access*' that should be employed through the implementation of ICTs in order to prioritise '*equity of access*' (Reynolds, 1992: 27–28, 31). In this sense, LITA builds upon issues of access by adding both 'equity' and incorporation of ICTs into the discussion.

The meaning of 'access' here is doubled. Access is not only about the rights to have access to the tools mediating information, but is also about 'access' to the ways knowledge is embedded within technological systems through education. Both of these forms are connected to the right to equal access to public spheres, and access in and through these means is positioned as establishing socio-economic and cultural equality. In this sense, new technologies are conflated with civic life equality and the development and enrichment of both individual and public goods. This resonates with Marshall's social dimension and the ways an educated citizenry ensures the 'betterment of the individual', not only for the individual's benefit, but also for enriching the public. Notably, and also like Marshall, the emphasis for cyber citizenship is on the institutionalisation of technological access and education.

### 3.1.2. Netizenship: Participation, collectives and freedom of association

> The Net is not a Service, it is a Right. It is only valuable when it is collective and universal. Volunteer efforts protects the intellectual and technological common-wealth that is being created. DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THE NET and NETIZEN (emphasis in the original, Hauben and Hauben, 1996: np).

New technologies in these discourses are presented as fundamental tools or instruments for establishing and negotiating collectivities, and through the use of such tools, new political and social subjectivities and associations are constituted (Pal, 1998; Odzer, 1999; Ogden, 1998). The Haubens ([1995] 1996: np), attributed with inventing the term in the early 90's, argue that the term 'netizen' captures the unique emergence of 'citizens of the Net', citizens who carry invigorated rights and obligations and are '*people who care about Usenet and the bigger Net and work towards building the cooperative and collective nature which benefits the larger world*'.

For the Haubens, the internet enabled an empowering platform for the freedom of expression and the democratisation of participation (for those that had the technical access, knowledge and time to participate in the netizens community). In this sense, netizenship also promotes the doubling of access rights discussed above.

Netizenship has also been strongly associated with the Korean 'citizen journalism' site *OhmyNews* (Hauben, 2007b; Hauben, 2007a; Seok, 2005). The director of *OhmyNews*, Oh Yeon Ho, challenges some of the premises of early netizenship when he raises interactivity, shifts in power and the importance of political and cultural contexts in realising technologically mediated capacities to push positive political change (Oh, 2004: n.p.)[7]. For Oh, the issue is not about unique and inherent technological capacities, or rights; instead, it is about people achieving *their* own capacities to enable positive social change[8]. In this way, the associational, membership expanding potential of the internet crumbles without the motivation, preparedness and will of citizens.

Finally, Alex Argote (2007, n.p.) explicitly outlines a unique characteristic of netizens, that is, the '*great mission and duty to lift humanity to even greater heights…. [to] thunder across the digital void…to break…down the barriers to total change and prosperity for all*'. Although comparatively understated in the Haubens' earlier accounts, the almost missionary zeal with which netizens are urged to take responsibility for 'enlightening' and connecting the 'unconnected' is also present (Hauben and Hauben, 1996: n.p.). This has two connotations. First and in terms of rights, this suggests a formalisation of citizen-to-citizen associations and

a shift of responsibility to citizens, as individuals to be part of collectives to and for other citizens. Second, 'the great mission' highlights a disjuncture between the democratisation of participation with and between engaged subjects and a kind of colonial logic where the digitally 'unenlightened' need to be taught how to participate in the 'technological commonwealth'.

Like cyber citizenship, netizenship re-prioritises rights of access and participation while positioning the individual, collectives and the freedom of association to and within a 'technological common-wealth'. Netizen advocates call for recognition and legitimisation of a technologically bounded public and communities, merging civil, political and social rights through new technologies.

### 3.1.3. Technological citizenship: Education, informing and learning

[Technological Citizenship is] a set of binding, equal rights and obligations that are intended to reconcile technology's unlimited potentials for human benefit and ennoblement with its unlimited potentials for human injury, tyrannization and degradation. Such status, rights and obligations are thus intended to reconcile democracy for lay subjects of technology's impacts with the right of innovators to innovate … Technological citizenship affirms human freedom, autonomy, dignity, and assimilation [versus alienation] of people with fellow people and with their built world (Frankenfeld, 1992: 462).

Philip Frankenfeld (1992: 470) defines technological citizenship specifically in relation to risk communications and as a general means for instituting protective measures against dangerous technologies (e.g. the atom bomb, genetically modified foods and pharmaceuticals like thalidomide). Frankenfeld is arguing that science and technology are pervasive forces capable of transforming everyday life, and without a system for regulating these forces, their capacities can invite threatening and negative consequences. These points suggest a diffusion of the national or institutional locus of citizenship power across a number of corporate, agricultural and civil sources, culminating in technologically bounded collectivities.

As a result of this pervasiveness and the technological capacity to inflict individual and cultural damage, humans must formalise new spheres of citizenship to account for and protect against such hazards. Frankenfeld presents a complex and compelling argument. In addition to the doubling of access rights, technological citizenship calls for the formalisation of collective associations, not only by those in science and

technology fields but also by and to '*lay subjects*'. Frankenfeld repeatedly emphasises the reciprocity between informing and *learning* (1992: 472, 462). Informing and learning are not only an extension of the 'right to education' but also introduce specific rights and responsibilities to intervene in the 'unavoidable' advance of technologies into the social world. In this way, the importance of balancing both the negative and positive sides of technological capacities is also being formalised as the responsibility of individuals[9].

Thus, discourses of technological citizenship propose that new sciences and technologies not only reconfigure and require technologically mediated rights to access, education, equality, information, participation, privacy and security; but also emphasise the reorganisation of citizenship processes from civil, political and social institutions towards expert and 'lay' technological enclaves.

## 4. 'NEW RIGHTS'? REARTICULATING RIGHTS, SHIFTING DIMENSIONS AND TECHNOLOGICAL COLLECTIVITIES

Technological determinism plays, to varying degrees, an ideological role in all of these perspectives; yet despite this, new citizenship discourses point to shifts in the locus of citizenship power and re-articulations of existing rights (for critiques on technological determinism, see for example, Mackenzie and Wajcman, 1999; Winner, 1999 [1980]; Silverstone, 1994).

In all of the new citizenship discourses discussed here, there is a reconfiguration and expansion of rights to access, participation, freedom of collective associations, and finally, of education. So the question remains, what is interesting or new about a new technologically mediated 'regime of rights'? One of the challenges in addressing this question and analysing technologically mediated discourses of citizenship is the ellipsis between implied and direct rights and characteristics of new citizenships. Although not every right listed below has been addressed in this chapter, I offer a summary of 'new' rights emerging from new citizenship discourses below (see Table 2).

**Table 2:** Technologically mediated rights

| Forms of citizenship | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Right to** | Cyber | Netizenship | Technological | Marshall's Dimensions |
| Access [Technical] | ✓ | ✓ | – | Implied in the social |
| Access [knowledge] | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Social (in the form of education) |
| Freedom of association | ✓ | ✓ | – | Political, social and civil |
| Freedom from commercial manipulation | – | ✓ | – | – |
| Education | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Social |
| Freedom of expression | ✓ | ✓ | – | Civil |
| Equality | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Political |
| Information | ✓ | – | ✓ | Social |
| Of innovators to innovate | – | – | ✓ | – |
| Participate | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Political |
| Privacy and Security | ✓ | – | ✓ | Social Security [privacy excluded] |
| 'Technological commonwealth' | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | – |

Despite the multiple tensions, contradictions and overlaps within and between these new citizenships, there are a few notable commonalities. First, these discourses point to the creation of a fourth technologically bounded dimension and/or emergence of important public resources that not only reintegrates existing rights, but also establishes technological prerequisites for actualising citizenship. New citizenships position a 'technological common-wealth' as 'fundamental' to the exercise of polity, identity and the actualisation of humanity; and as such, the re-articulation of individual rights in terms of technologies provides the means to '*widen the web of citizenship*'. The less positive aspect is that new technologies also provide a narrowing of citizenship by organising rights through access to technologies.

However, these reconfigurations of rights and shifting prioritisations do not illustrate the emergence of new political subjects or legitimate new citizenships. The blurring of civil, political and social rights and dimensions does not have to be about the technological transformation of citizenship (Marshall, 1992 [1950]: 8). The counter explanation here is that new technologies shift prevailing social standards. In this sense, new technologies amplify basic standards of living but do not necessarily qualitatively change public, political or social frameworks.

The right to equality is present in all the technologically mediated discourses discussed here, and this has two implications. First, this right emphasises that things are not equal. Many of the rights and freedoms included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have yet to be guaranteed for citizens from advanced democracies as well as emerging ones (1948; c.f. Benhabib, 2004; van Dijk, 2005; Isin, 2002). Second, there is a tension between elite and ordinary citizens and between who is able to actualise their rights, newly acquired or otherwise, and who cannot. This tension is highlighted in terms of rights and obligations to knowledge in technological citizenship; but is also prevalent in cyber citizenship and netizenship. For example, Mosco bases the importance of cyber citizenship, in line with traditions of 'negative rights', as a protective force from the 'concretisation of the digital divide'. For Mosco, socio-economic inequities mean that people have differential levels of engagement with new technologies and as such, with citizenship. In 'new citizenships' discourses, guaranteeing an equal capacity for citizenship means reprioritising rights and obligations in terms of shifting material (and technological) standards.

Related to the digital divide, both netizenship and technological citizenship implicitly refer to establishing new 'technological' or 'internet' associations, positions which support Pippa Norris' work on the role of new technologies in '*connecting the connected*' (Norris, 2001: 65).

The emergence of the political dimension of citizenship did not involve the introduction of new political practices; rather, the political dimension came to be '*not in the creation of new rights … but in the granting of old rights to new sections of the population*' (1992: 12; c.f. Turner, 2001b). Thus, the transfer (rather than creation) of organisational processes to different dimensions led to the creation of new citizenship elements. Such a shift is noteworthy. For example, Marshall claims that citizen rights began to hold more power around the same time that trade unions introduced collective bargaining. Marshall argues that trade unions could '*exercise vital civil rights collectively on behalf of their members without formal collective responsibility*' (1992 [1950]: 26). Marshall maintains that

collective bargaining did not extend civil rights. In contrast, it '*represented the transfer of an important process from the political to the civil sphere of citizenship.*' Trade unionism has, therefore, '*created a secondary system of industrial citizenship*' (1992 [1950]: 26).

Perhaps one of the unique elements of new citizenships relates to the shift from an 'industrial' model of citizenship, where the rights to work, welfare and education are pre-eminent, to a 'technological' model of citizenship. In this model, the responsibility for the development of public resources is individualised and the regulation of the 'public' shifts more towards both technologically mediated networks of individuals and the private sector. This marks a tension from rights being developed from 'below' as implied through the repeated prioritisation of technologically enabled communalities over national or institutionally organised citizenship rights; and the diffusion of citizenship power and control based on the responsibilisation of individuals and pluralisation of guild-like collectivities or technologically based associations.

In conclusion, although carrying 'new' technologically-specific names, new citizenships do not replace pre-existing forms of citizenship. Rather, technologically mediated citizenship discourses incorporate and expand existing citizenship dimensions and models rearticulating rights in highly normative ways.

However there is a tension between the legitimacy of expansions to citizenship dimensions and the hollowing out of citizenship by neologisms, shallow conceptions of citizenship as loose associations and an over-prioritisation of the technological. I argue, following Marshall, that it is valuable to consider 'new citizens' and their cyber, net and technological communities as kinds of new trade unions. And following the shift from the political to the civil sphere and the beginning of industrial citizenship, we have what discourses of 'new citizenships' would likely frame as a tertiary form of 'technological citizenship'. I would argue, instead, that we have a pluralisation of citizenship and a diffusion of the locus of citizenship power (e.g. through the blurring of dimensions) and the responsibilisation of individuals – to other individuals and to the 'technological commonwealth'. The threat is a narrowing of citizenship based on divisions between technologically elite and ordinary citizens. The promise, of course, is that new citizenships formalise technological collectivities who successfully champion and re-articulate existing rights and freedoms to protect and develop increasingly technologically bounded spheres of civil, political and social action.

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## NOTES

[1]    For example, Marshall has rightly been attacked not only for the absence of women in his citizenship schema (Pateman, 1994 [1989]; Lister, 1994 [1990], 2003), but also for his anglocentrism and sole focus on Britain (Manning, 1993; Mann, 1996). He is perhaps most often critiqued on his evolutionary conception of citizenship – because the dimensions do not tend to occur in a linear fashion in other cultural contexts, and because they tend to appear in a substantially different order than Marshall had suggested (e.g. Turner, 1993, 1990; Manning, 1993; Shafir, 1998). Brian Turner, one of Marshall's keenest critics, argues that the dimensions are lacking because they are primarily applicable to the welfare state and rapidly lose relevance outside of this kind of British national framework (Turner, 1990, 2001). And finally, Turner (2001: 204–205) claims that the Marshallian framework for citizenship is being eroded primarily because of globalisation and the decreasing influence of the nation-state.

[2]    Such extensions of and to the meaning of citizenship are necessary because including a 'general vision of humanity' has real implications not only on women, migrants, refugees, non-citizens and many excluded others, but also on 'full' citizens. Advocates of this position rightly argue that it is not enough to limit definitions of citizenship to the '*formal relationship between an individual and the state*' (Yuval-Davis and Werbner, 1999: 4). Broadening the scope of citizenship also allows for a more holistic relationship '*inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices and a sense of belonging*' (Yuval-Davis and Werbner, 1999: 3–4).

[3]    Sassen (2006: 329) describes digitisation as an 'assemblage' of forces that are '*deeply caught up with other dynamics*' and cannot be interpreted as either technologically deterministic or as merely consolidating existing social and political patterns.

[4]    Participation is also a loaded concept. It is important to not only ask who participates and in what; but also what is participation? Is surfing the web a kind of participation? Creating a web page? For further examination of the subtleties of varying forms of participation, see for example, Arnstein (1969) and Carpentier (2007).

[5]    Some of these broad claims include 'cyber citizenship' (Mosco, 2000; Kranich, 1992; Harrison, 1992; Gray, 2002; Ogden, 1994, 1998); 'netizenship' (Hauben and Hauben, 1996; Pal, 1998); 'technological citizenship' (Frankenfeld, 1992; Barry, 2001); 'digital citizens' (Lieshout, 2001; Rommes, van Oost and Oudshoorn, 1999);

'online citizens' (Harcourt, 1999; Riemens and Lovink, 2002); 'e-citizenship' (Coleman, 2005, 2004, 2001; Coleman and Norman, 2000; Alexander and Pal, 1998; Gutstein, 1999; Larsen and Rainie, 2002; Monnoyer-Smith and Merlin, 2002; Dahlberg, 2001; Tsaliki, 2002); and 'cyborg citizens' (Gray, 2002; Gray, Mentor and Figueroa-Sarriera, 1995; Haraway, 1993).

6   A large part of LITA's (1991) published essays revolves around citizenship rights to government protection from information abuses, invasions to privacy and the exemption of the private sector to the FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) (Reynolds, 1992: 5, 8–22). For further information on privacy in relation to library and information technologies, see Kapor (1992: 65); on library patron records (Harrison, 1992: 121ff); and on legislation (King, 1992; Kling, 1999). Additionally, there are excellent critical inquiries into the changing nature of individual privacy in relation to the increasing surveillance capacity of governments and corporations (Mulgan, 1991; Bogard, 1996; Gandy, 1996, 2002a, 2002b).

7   Specifically, Oh argues that the success of *OhmyNews* is because of the distinctive political and cultural history of Korea. For example, Oh explains that Korea has '*active netizens*' because Koreans have long struggled against military dictatorships silencing citizens (e.g. the Korean War in 1950 and The Kwangju Massacre in 1980), and this long history has contributed to a citizenry keen for alternative news sources and an end to the repression of information (Oh, 2004).

8   Oh historicises *OhmyNews*'s slogan, '*every citizen is a reporter*' when he refers to times when news and information were passed on through face to face interaction rather than through media technologies (Oh, 2004: n.p.).

9   In contrast to Frankenfeld's view, Andrew Barry argues that although these kinds of technological rights and obligations are central for 'public knowledge' they are too big a burden for most citizens to bear (Barry, 2001: 128). Barry also argues that technological citizenship is not new, rather it is historically rooted in cybernetics and is not only about developing particular complexes of technological knowledges, but also about the mediation of those expertise complexes, through science and technologies to the public.

# What makes an integrated public sphere? Applying the concepts of the research on the European public sphere to the national public sphere of Germany

Katharina Kleinen-v.Königslöw

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, a number of European scholars have joined the '*Quest for a European Public Sphere*' (Wessler et al., 2007) [1]. Most of the studies adopt the normative stance that the European Union needs an integrated public sphere where the exchange of opinions and arguments between politicians from all member states and their citizens provides a source of legitimacy for political decisions. As Europe-wide mass media to support a common European public sphere (EPS) do not exist as yet [2], research has focused on the 'Europeanisation' of the separate national public spheres (Gerhards, 2001). The European public sphere is thus conceptualised as a *network* of – or a sense of community across – Europeanised national public spheres. The question of the existence (or not) of the European public sphere correspondingly transforms into a question of degree: the degree of integration of the different national public spheres into a more or less cohesive transnational unit.

This conceptualisation of the European public sphere draws our attention to another basic premise shared by most studies in the field: they either implicitly assume that some form of cohesive public sphere already exists on the level of the individual nation-states [3] or they openly advance the national public sphere as the ideal to which a EPS should aspire but is not likely to ever achieve. However, this ideal vision is backed up by little empirical knowledge on the actual degree of integration of national public spheres themselves. After all, in each nation the public discussion of political matters may take place in a number of different fora, and national public spheres should hence also be con-

ceived as a *network* of smaller public (sub)spheres. Even when focusing only on the public sphere of the mass media, it should be obvious that even this limited public sphere is constructed by a number of different venues, the individual media outlets. Why should we now be safe to assume that these form one cohesive, integrated public sphere?

## 2. QUESTIONING THE INTEGRATION OF THE NATIONAL PUBLIC SPHERE

Before the research community turned the spotlight on the Europeanisation of the public sphere, the cohesiveness and integration of the national public sphere was more frequently the subject of scientific contention. For instance, one of the main points of Fraser's influential critique of Habermas' concept of the public sphere was to question '*that a single, comprehensive public sphere is always preferable to a nexus of multiple publics*' (Fraser, 1993: 9). Habermas himself has acknowledged and incorporated the critique and now defines the public sphere as '*a highly complex network that branches out into a multitude of overlapping international, national, regional, local and subcultural arenas*' (Habermas, 1997: 373–374). At the same time, the introduction of new media technologies and changes in social cohesion have triggered wave after wave of debate on the possible *fragmentation* of the national public sphere (Curran, 1998; Gitlin, 1998; Holtz-Bacha and Peiser, 1999; Neuman, 2001; Webster, 2005; Turow, 1997; Jarren et al., 2000).

But moving beyond these theoretical discussions, how can we empirically determine the level of integration or fragmentation of a public sphere? First, we can define a public sphere as *integrated* when the concrete socio-spatial extension of the public sphere as a whole (with all its possible sub-spheres) is coextensive with the bounded political community or sovereign territorial state. EPS research is looking for a public sphere whose socio-spatial extension corresponds to that of the EU, while this article also looks at the public sphere that is coextensive with a nation-state. Second, the perspective of communication studies teaches us to analyse both the audience and the content of the concrete vessels of the public sphere – the mass media – since the integration of the public sphere could occur on either or both levels. If different media have a highly similar audience that encompasses all citizens of the polity, the public sphere would be integrated, independent of the concrete media content. At the same time, if citizens of a political community strongly differ in their media use, their public sphere could still be integrated

through the content of these separate media outlets; which particular characteristics this content would have to fulfil to ensure integration will be discussed in the next section.

For the European public sphere, integration on the level of media use is almost impossible: the overlaps between users of media from different European countries are minimal, and only a small elite group consumes media from different countries. The language barriers and a low availability inhibit a more widespread use of foreign media. An integration of the European public sphere can therefore only occur on the level of the content of the national media, hence, EPS research understandably focuses on this level.

In national public spheres language barriers may not be (that much of) a problem[4]. However, differences in media use persist due to ingrained habits of media use and the regional availability of certain media content (e.g. for local newspapers). Even though all members of a national public sphere have the theoretical chance to use all media distributed in their country, user groups of different media may, in practice, differ greatly so that there are significant restrictions on the public sphere integration at the level of media use. Thus the degree of integration at the level of media content becomes a relevant parameter in the analysis of national public spheres. Only empirical analysis will reveal whether, instead of a nationally integrated public sphere, there will be signs of segmentation or even fragmentation: the national public sphere may be divided by the thematic specialisation, political polarisation, stratification, ethnicisation or regionalisation of the different media outlets and their audiences. Even though all of these forms of differentiation of a public sphere may evidently also occur on the European level, regional differentiation displays the clearest similarities to the questions discussed by EPS scholars.

When focusing on the possible regional differentiation of a national public sphere, Germany appears to be a particularly interesting case. In Germany, regional structures and regional politics as well as regional media are more important than in many other European member states. Hence a fragmentation of the national public sphere along regional lines is more likely and at the same time would be more threatening to the cohesion of the national political community. The German reunification only added to the importance of regional tensions in German politics as, for example, West-Germans have been paying a 'solidarity tax' to finance reconstruction efforts since 1991. At the same time the conditions for the integration of the public sphere are clearly more favourable than at the European level: a shared language and fairly homogeneous culture, a

shared history in which the separate experiences of the two German states plays only a short, albeit very important part, as well as organisational and structural overlaps in the media system. The process of political restructuring that has taken place in Germany should thus have resulted in an extension of the corresponding public spheres beyond their original, historically grown spaces of communication in the Eastern and Western parts of the country. Whether this has occurred or not, however, remains an unresolved empirical question so far.

## 3. A FOUR-DIMENSIONAL MODEL OF THE INTEGRATION OF A PUBLIC SPHERE

But how would we conceptualise a nationally integrated public sphere? Here the fast-growing research field on the European public sphere provides us with abundant suggestions. Instead of limiting their analysis to one particular definition and conceptualisation of the public sphere and its transnationalisation, Hartmut Wessler and his collaborators have structured (almost) all recent efforts in the research field into a four-dimensional model (Wessler et al., 2007; Wessler et al., 2008) and then put these four dimensions – monitoring governance, convergence of discourse, discursive integration and collective identification – to the empirical test. The results represent a differentiated, yet clear picture of the current status of Europeanisation of the national public sphere and helps reduce the conceptual chaos of the field. Hence their model might provide a useful framework for the analysis of the integration of a *national* public sphere as well.

### 3.1. Monitoring governance

The first dimension in the model of Wessler and his team is labelled 'monitoring governance'. It relates to the one function of a public sphere that, according to Neidhardt (1994), is included in all normative models, the transparency function: a public sphere should create political transparency by ensuring that citizens and politicians receive information about all political issues that are relevant to them[5]. In the European integration process, the range of information relevant to citizens and politicians alike has expanded in two directions: vertically and horizontally. On the one hand, another level of governance has been added whose political decisions may affect every European citizen and whose composition they can partly codetermine. On the other hand, the

interdependency of the individual member states has greatly increased, and the results in national elections may now affect politics in other EU member states as well. Therefore the public sphere can only fulfil its transparency function if it adapts to these changes in the political space, i.e. expands in the vertical and horizontal direction.

In EPS research this dimension is often narrowed down to the question of whether the public sphere provides sufficient information at the different *levels* of government, especially at the newest, the European level (e.g. Eilders and Voltmer, 2003; Kevin, 2003; Gerhards, 2000; Trenz, 2004). The dimension is then sometimes conceptualised as *vertical* integration (see Koopmans and Pfetsch, 2006). This focus is based on the perceived greater political impact of this extension of the political sphere together with the often-lamented lack of knowledge of, and support for, the EU among the citizens of the EU member states[6].

The main challenge lies in the evaluation of the findings. Just how much information on a certain level of government is needed for the public sphere to exist (or not) or be integrated (or not)? Hitherto, research on the EPS has offered mostly rather unconvincing solutions to this problem. Some authors argue that the debate about European politics has to reach a certain share in the total amount of political coverage compared to other topics, e.g. the share of EU politics should be higher than that of other foreign politics. However, these comparative standards are difficult to justify: why should the debate about European politics be of greater importance to European citizens than, for example, coverage of the Iraq War? Even the use of external indicators as a basis of comparison may be problematic. Gerhards (2000) and Sifft et al. (2007), for example, use the number of laws passed on a certain level of governance to judge whether the public sphere is sufficiently 'Europeanised'. This may be one possible standard of comparison, but is the number of laws actually the most fitting indication of the importance of the corresponding level of governance? Laws and regulations can be of different scopes and can relate to issues of varying impact on citizens' lives.

Another strategy has been to compare the amount of EU politics in public discussion over time. As the importance of EU-level governance has increased in recent years, the share of EU-politics in the discussion should also have risen correspondingly. However, political integration could also result in a 'domestification' of former EU issues, if decisions on the EU-level are increasingly discussed as part of the debate on national politics, resulting in a decrease in articles focusing on the EU. For the national public sphere, a comparison over time would only make sense where clear indicators for the rise or decline in importance of one

particular level of governance can be found. One such case would be the German reunification. Whereas politics in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) only took place at the subregional and regional (=Eastern-German) level, the share of debate of the national (=Federal Republic of Germany) level of governance ought to have increased with the integration of the Eastern-German states into the Federal Republic of Germany[7].

EPS research started from the premise that the object of its research did not (yet) exist (Gerhards, 2000), or could never even come into existence (Grimm, 1995; Kielmannsegg, 1996). From this starting point, integration on the dimension of monitoring governance (i.e. the existence of a European public sphere) could be proven by a minimal amount of reporting on, or discussion of, European politics. For the national public sphere, this hypothesis could be pursued in the opposite direction. Here the basic assumption would be that the national public sphere exists, hence, one would need to find proof of its fragmentation. Thus disintegration would occur whenever members of one sub-sphere did not receive any information on one of the levels of governance relevant to them, be it the regional, national or EU-level. For example the German elites tend to prefer nationally distributed quality newspapers to the regional press (AWA, 2007) and as most of these only contain regional sections for their home regions, elite readers in other parts of the country will not receive any (or at least very little) information on their regional representatives. Thus for once the fragmentation of the national public sphere – in the form of regional differentiation – might turn out to be a problem for the societal elite. Therefore, on the dimension of *monitoring governance*, a public sphere should be considered as integrated if its sub-spheres provide their audiences with information and discussion at all levels of political governance.

## 3.2. Convergence or similarity of discourse

The second dimension of Wessler et al. (2008), 'convergence (or similarity) of discourse'[8], appears to be the most popular dimension in the research on the European public sphere. A number of authors base their conceptualisation of the European public sphere on Habermas' call for '*a political public sphere which enables citizens to take positions at the same time on the same topics of the same relevance*' (Habermas, 1998: 160). According to this view, 'similarity of discourse' is important for the legitimacy and acceptance of political decisions; it is supposed to ensure that all citizens and politicians of all parts of the political community base those deci-

sions that will affect the entire community on similar information. Moreover, a transnational discourse can only develop if communication is synchronised. If topics are discussed in all sub-spheres at the same time, this facilitates exchange between the different arenas, as all citizens have access to information as a basis of the discussion and consider the topic relevant and newsworthy (Tobler, 2006: 114). Eder and Kantner even consider the similarity of discourse to be the best indicator for the existence of a European public sphere (2002).[9]

While most studies agree on the importance of similarity, they do not appear to agree on the particular aspects of public discussion on which this similarity is to be judged. As quoted above, Habermas demands a similar *level* of relevance which was somewhat misinterpreted by Eder and Kantner who deduce a need for similar *criteria* of relevance. They are supported by Tobler who argues that, as long as problems are considered and discussed based on completely different categories of meaning, no open communication about the issue can be realised (Tobler, 2006: 115). Meanwhile Wessler et al. (2008) analyse the similarity of speakers and discourse constellations, i.e. the similarity (and convergence) of the combination of speakers and their main lines of arguments in the debate of a particular topic.

When adapting this dimension to the integration of national public spheres, it becomes obvious that similarity should not be a normative requirement in itself. One of the central criteria for evaluating whether the media of a national public sphere fulfil their transparency function is the direct opposite of similarity: diversity (Voltmer, 1998; McQuail, 1992; Napoli, 1999). In other words, the media of a public sphere cannot comply with both normative requirements at the same time: the stronger the similarity of content between the different arenas, the smaller will be the diversity of topics, frames or speakers offered by these public spheres. Therefore, maximum similarity ought not be the normative goal for the different arenas of a public sphere. Instead, Peters and Wessler (2006) propose to look for *completeness,* in this case the use of frames. All frames used in the debate of a certain topic in one public sphere should also be discussed in the other public sphere. This should be sufficient to ensure that the participants of one public sphere are able to relate to the discussion in the other public spheres.

The most problematic point on this dimension, however, is that any evaluation of similarity heavily depends on the broadness of the categories employed. If these are defined rather narrowly, high similarity is highly unlikely, while broad categories make an easy case of similarity. Thus the degree of similarity between certain public spheres can only be

evaluated convincingly in relative terms, in comparison to other arenas. For example, if a comparison between media from different EU countries yields higher similarity than the comparison of these media to Swiss and US American newspapers, one could argue that the debate between EU countries is more integrated in comparison to that of EU and non-EU countries (for such a comparison, see van de Steeg (2004)). The same approach could be applied to the German case. If the similarity between public debates in West- *and* East-German media taken together is as high as the similarity between the debates in only the West-German (or only the East-German) media, this would be an indication of the national integration of the German public sphere. In general terms, on the dimension *similarity of discourse* a public sphere should be defined as integrated if the similarity of the information and discussion provided by its different sub-spheres is greater than that compared to external spheres.

## 3.3. Discursive integration

The third dimension proposed by Wessler et al., 'discursive integration', inquires whether the discourse in the different arenas of the public sphere is actually a *shared* discourse, i.e. whether the process of opinion formation transcends the borders of the different arenas. Most normative models of the public sphere also include what Neidhardt summarises as the '*validation function*' of public discourse (Neidhardt, 1994: 10–11): the public sphere is conceived '*as a space for the communicative generation of public opinion*' (Fraser, 2007:7). As people observe the public exchange of opinions on a certain topic, they build their own opinions and share them again with others. The confrontation with the opinions and arguments of others forces everybody to justify their own preferences argumentatively. Depending on their theoretical background, authors propose different criteria that need to be satisfied for public discourse to be able to fulfil its validation function (for a recent overview, see Wessler, 2007 [forthcoming]). Some of these criteria relate to the way issues are discussed, others to the issues themselves or the speakers quoted in the public arena. In the context of the research on the European public sphere, the most important criterion appears to be the following: the socio-spatial scope delimited in the individual arenas of the public sphere by the issues discussed and the speakers cited should correspond to that of the entire political community. Thus, in each public (sub)sphere, issues and speakers from all regions of the political community should be included occasionally. The ideal European public sphere as described by Risse and van de Steeg (2003: 2) requires that '*speakers*

*and listeners […] observe each other across national spaces*'. Additionally, Habermas (2001: 120) demands that the national public sphere '*should become so interwoven that relevant contributions are absorbed into the other arenas through osmotic diffusion*'[10].

Without a doubt, the conditions for discursive integration are more favourable in the German case than on the European level due to the shared language, culture, history and a common media system. Still, national media can ensure discursive integration only under two conditions. First, they should not limit themselves to issues and speakers from the national level or systematically ignore issues and speakers from a specific region. As German media are characterised by a strong West-German dominance in ownership and personnel[11], it is to be feared – and preliminary results from a content analysis of both national and regional media appear to confirm this – that the national media favour West-German topics, actors and speakers. Second, the national media need to be actually watched, read or listened to by a majority of the population in all parts of the country. In the case of Germany, audience studies have shown that many citizens, especially in the newly integrated Eastern states, favour regional TV programmes and newspapers which define themselves by their regional outlook and may not be as likely to include information and discussion of topics from other regions. In the dimension of *discursive integration*, an integrated public sphere requires that all sub-spheres include issues and speakers from all parts of the political community.

## 3.4. Collective identification

While the importance of a sense of collective identity for the political community is usually not questioned, definitions differ as to the necessary *depth* of this feeling of identity. Does the European Union require a community of *solidarity* to ensure its survival, or would a community of *communication* suffice? The lack of a demos, a societal community with a stable, politically resilient sense of identity has often been put forward as the main problem causing the democratic deficit of the European Union (Cederman, 2001; Zürn, 2000). Only when people see themselves as a community will they accept majority decisions against their individual interests. This is especially true in times of political changes or crises which require '*more than specific support flowing from direct rewards perceived as such by the members or the compulsory support flowing from the use of coercion by political leaders*' (Easton, 1965: 325). Collective identification with the political community as a community of *solidarity* also greatly

facilitates the functioning of a democracy: '*Such a collective identity might also provide or at least support certain forms of mutual civic trust and solidarity required to overcome divisions of interests*' (Peters, 2005: 109).

Not all authors share the conviction that such strong feelings of identification with the political community are in fact necessary. Risse considers an '*identity light*' (2003) sufficient for the European political community. Such a community of *communication* would only necessitate that the speakers accept each other as legitimate participants in the European debate (Risse, 2002: 21). In a similar vein, Taylor argues that '*a public sphere can exist only if it is* imagined *as such. Unless all the dispersed discussions are seen by their participants as linked in one great exchange, there can be no sense of their upshot as public opinion*' (2004, emphasis added by KKvK).

And what kind of collective identification would be needed for the integration of the national public sphere? In general, it seems plausible that nation states require a stronger form of collective identification – at least as long as the majority of decisions affecting the lives' of citizens are still taken on the national level. Thus, one would expect a community of *solidarity* to be found in national public spheres. Germany, again, represents a particularly interesting case here, as the continuity of its collective identity has been disrupted and changed several times in the last century. It might therefore be possible that in some German public (sub)spheres the sense of collective identity evoked in public discussions only includes a subgroup of the political community or even openly excludes one particular group. Survey data for Germany reveal that during the first decade after the German reunification, at least a quarter of the East- and the West-German population consider their compatriots on the other side of the former border to be more foreign to them than the citizens from other countries (ALLBUS, 1991–2000, cited in Neller, 2006: 31). It remains to be seen whether this rift in the sense of collective identity is still in existence, and if it is also mirrored in the public debates in the different regional (sub)spheres. In the dimension of *collective identification*, a public sphere would be considered as integrated if the image of collective identity evoked in all sub-spheres includes all parts of the political community.

## 4. CONCLUSION

While national public spheres have been the subject of much theoretical discussion in the past, they have largely escaped the enquiring gaze of empirical research (with few notable exceptions such as Ferree et al. (2002) and Wessler (1999)). The growing research field on the European public sphere also draws our attention to the question of integration of the public spheres in general – whether on the European or the national level. In addition, this article has shown that the wide variety of conceptualisations (and later of empirical indicators) developed by the EPS research field can also serve a more general purpose by applying them to the analysis of national public spheres. The four-dimensional model of the transnationalisation of public spheres which was proposed by Wessler et al. (2007, 2008 – forthcoming) can thus be generalised to a *four-dimensional model of the integration of public sphere*s. For the analysis of the degree of integration of a public sphere irrespective of its concrete socio-spatial scope – be it German, European or Western – the four dimensions can be defined as shown in the following table:

**Table 1:** Four-dimensional model of the integration of public spheres

| Dimension | In an integrated public sphere… |
|---|---|
| Monitoring governance | … all sub-spheres provide their audiences with information and discussion on all levels of political governance. |
| Similarity of discourse | … the similarity of the information and discussion provided by the different sub-spheres is greater than that compared to external spheres. |
| Discursive integration | … all sub-spheres include issues and speakers from all parts of the political community. |
| Collective identification | … the image of collective identity evoked in all sub-spheres includes all parts of the political community. |

The four dimensions of integration proposed by the model have manifold relations between each other, however, none of these is strictly linear – integration on one dimension may facilitate integration on other dimensions, but is not necessarily a sufficient condition. Empirical analysis will provide further insight into these relations and may even succeed in establishing a hierarchical model of the integration of public spheres. For the moment, the analysis of the degree of integration of a national public sphere such as the German public sphere may in turn provide a much needed set of comparative standards to help re-evaluate the

normative and empirical criteria employed in the discussion of the European public sphere.

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## NOTES

[1]  See Neidhardt (2006) for an overview of the existing empirical research on the European public sphere.

[2]  Despite several attempts, no truly European mass media have been able to establish themselves; the few media with a Europe-wide circulation reach only a small (and mostly elite) minority of the population (see e.g. Schlesinger (1999).

[3]  Theoretical approaches to the EPS often neglect to reflect on the fact that their main theoretical concepts – those of the public sphere – were actually developed before the backdrop of the Westphalian *nation* state, for a detailed discussion of this, see Fraser (2007). The assumption of the homogeneity of the national public sphere allows them to analyse only one or two media outlets per country which are supposed to be 'representative' of the national public sphere.

[4]  At least for the majority of the population that was born or educated in the respective nation. Language barriers are obviously becoming increasingly important as the share of the population with a migration background grows in most European countries. Ethnicisation may turn out to be the greatest challenge to the integration of national public spheres in the 21st century.

[5]  In normative media theories that operate without a public sphere concept, this would be the information function of the media (Ronneberger, 1964; Voltmer, 1998).

[6]  As documented by the Eurobarometer surveys as well as the failure of the French and Dutch referenda on the EU constitution in 2005.

[7]    As well as the share of debate of the European level of governance, as the Eastern-German states also automatically became part of the European Union.

[8]    Unfortunately, a number of authors claim to analyse 'convergence' of discourse, but use empirical data from only a single point in time (for example Tobler, 2006).

[9]    Their main indicator is called '*thematische Verschränktheit*' (roughly translated as 'thematically interwoven'), however, closer inspection reveals that they are in fact looking at similarity of discourse, not exchange or 'interweaving'.

[10]   '*so miteinander verschränken, dass die relevanten Beiträge osmotisch aus den jeweils anderen Arenen aufgesogen werden*' (translation by KKvK).

[11]   All nationally distributed private TV programmes are produced in the west of Germany, print media are almost exclusively owned and operated by West-German media companies (see Röper, 2002).

# SECTION FIVE:
# EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES
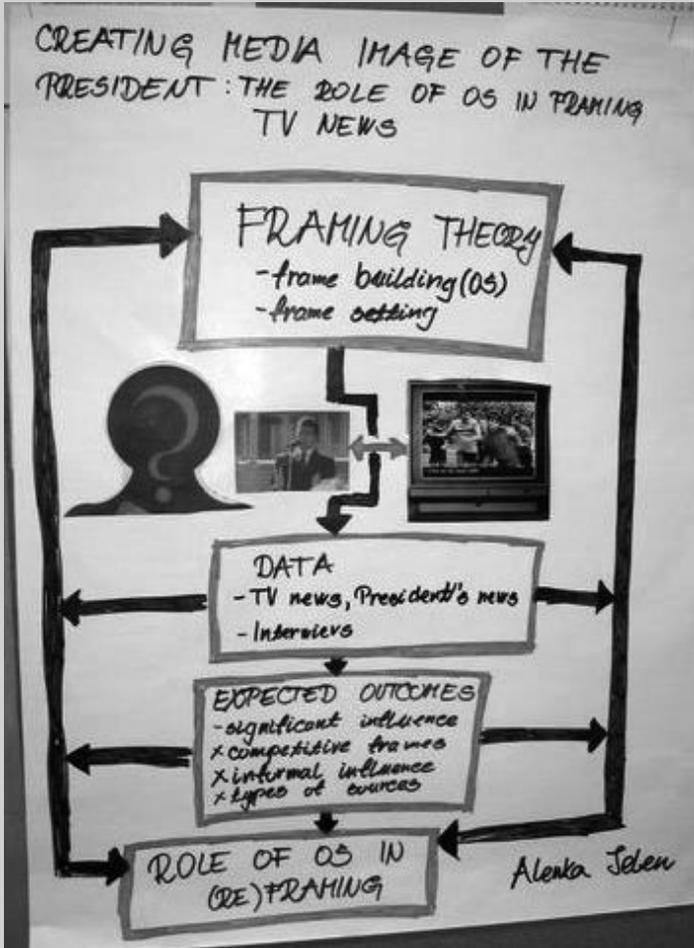


Poster by Alenka Jelen

# European cultural identity

*Manuel Parés i Maicas*

## 0. Introduction

The concept of identity is one of the most complex notions in the social sciences, and issues relating to European identity have, over the last few decades, been the subject of frequent and intense debate. In the following chapter, I shall be discussing a number of different views on the subject put forward by some well-known thinkers. Before entering into this debate, I should like to emphasise that most of the contributions that I have chosen – corresponding to the different national and cultural backgrounds from which the writers emanate – agree on the controversial nature of the idea and the reality of Europe.

My chapter consists of the following parts:
1/ The concept of Europe
2/ European culture
3/ Complexity
4/ Cultural diversity
5/ Interculturality
6/ Cultural identity

## 1. The concept of Europe

From a historical perspective, Duroselle (1965: 316–317) states that the concept of Europe – as a geographical expression – first saw daylight in the 7th century B.C. Europe was seen as a large continent surrounded and penetrated by different seas. Moreover, the continuous invasions that the continent suffered, enhanced the intimate connection with its geography.

In a famous lecture in Vienna in May 1935, Husserl asserted that Europe could not be geographically defined, because Europe encompasses a unity of life. It is a spiritual creation, with all sorts of objectives, interests, worries and problems, which are related to ideological formations, to institutions and to organisations (Semprún, 2006: 129ff). Husserl

added that within these societies, individuals act at several different levels: families, tribes, nations, whose aim it is to become one spiritual entity.

The Frenchman Julien Benda (1933/1979: 17) indicated that Europe cannot be the result of a mere economic transformation, nor of a mere political process. Europe will not 'really' exist, as long as it does not adopt a certain system of moral and ethical values.

According to Jorge Semprún (2006: 138–139), present-day Europe was born out of the fight and resistance against Nazi and Soviet totalitarianisms. He points out that the process of European integration is combined with the explosion of national, regional, and local identities.

In summary, from one perspective, the main European trait is located at the supranational level, but from another perspective, we see the assertion of a multitude of identities.

Another point of view was formulated by Joseph Rovan (1992: 70), who believed that Europe is a cultural and economic community, with a certain common history. But because Europe is not a nation, it does not possess either a common language or a territory.

Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande (2006: 24ff) consider that Europe should be conceived as:

a/ An open political project;

b/ With the political principles of democratic stability, market economy and the application of a regulatory framework;

c/ A combination of an <u>internal</u> process conforming to national interests and promoted by supranational institutions, and an <u>external</u> process which obliges Europe to take up an outside-position – Beck and Grande mention the cases of Iraq and Turkey. In their opinion, this explains the difficulty of conceiving Europe with respect to its homogeneous cultural traits;

d/ A singular and different process, especially in comparison to the formation of the national states, as Europe's identity formation has been a dynamic and open process.

Europe does not 'really' exist. What effectively does exist is an <u>inner</u> process, with the introduction and (internal) expansion of its rules, and an <u>outer</u> process with Europe's continuous development and addition of member-states. In any case, Europe cannot be identified with a specific institution, because there have been several which have been associated with the European project. Beck and Grande summarise this argument by saying that Europe is a very complex and differentiated political project, is in a permanent state of evolution. I wish to add here that the

European identity not only raises political questions, but also global-philosophical ones. In fact, Europe is the synergy of a theoretical construct and a complex reality.

Beck and Grande (2006: 85ff) plead for an open and cosmopolitan Europe, and strongly doubt that Europe can be only defined as a transnational system of decentralised negotiations, territorially differentiated and dominated by some elites.

Moreover, Dahrendorf (in Dahrendorf et al., 1993: 24ff) states that he has always thought of Europe as an attempt to protect the common interests of the European nation-states. Geremek (in Dahrendorf et al., 1993: 138) affirms that Europe integrates a diversity of national cultures, and that this is exactly what constitutes Europe's richness. But at the same time this diversity requires a permanent dialogue between all these European cultures.

The overview of these different positions again illustrates the complexity of the concept 'Europe'. In the next part we will have a closer look at what is understood by European culture.

## 2. THE ROLE OF CULTURE

Smith (1991: 174) believes that European culture was formed through:

    a/ the heritage of Roman law;
    b/ the Judeo-Christian ethics;
    c/ the Renaissance, humanism and individualism;
    d/ the Enlightenment, rationalisation and science;
    e/ artistic classicism and romanticism;
    f/ and above all by the civil rights and democratic traditions, which have emerged on the European continent at various times and places.

These elements have created a common cultural heritage. They have formed a unique cultural area, straddling national boundaries and interconnecting their different national cultures through common motifs and traditions. This description is wide-ranging enough in itself, but the idea of a European culture should nevertheless be complemented by other approaches.

Koslowski (1992: 43ff) asserts that – globally speaking – European culture is a system of common meanings, which allows Europe's inhabitants to communicate with each other. Europe's culture forges the sense of belonging to a community, and as a concept, culture therefore enables

Europeans to communicate as human beings, which in turn allows for the emergence of a consensus on essential priorities. Moreover, a personality is created, that we may tentatively refer to as 'the European'. At the same time, in this context of a pan-European culture, we see the emergence of the cultures of smaller groups, namely national and regional cultures.

Koslowski mentions the following characteristics and values that structure the European culture:

a/ The human being is at the core of the values system;

b/ A strong desire to understand the human existence and condition, and a search for the meaning of life;

c/ A desire to know – a cognitive curiosity;

d/ A love of freedom and of human dignity, which leads to an emphasis on human rights;

e/ A willingness to transform individuals, society and nature, which is linked to the role played by social change and education;

f/ Empathy for the others and their fates.

Koslowski concludes that the European integration cannot be aimed at homogenising and levelling out cultural differences. The aim is not European uniformity. Unity requires that Europeans accept the same basic ideas, values and norms, whilst simultaneously taking into account the diversity of events, of experiences, of feelings and of desires. This integration process should always acknowledge the cultural otherness, based on the history of old and new migrations.

In contrast, Jan Figel (2006) for his part claims that is impossible to speak of a single European culture. He sees Europe as a vast mass of separate manifestations and practices that are vaguely cultural and loosely European. Europe is a mixed bag of customs and popular traditions; of great art treasurers and intellectual works; a vast repertoire of dance, music and songs; a catalogue of great palaces, historic sites and worldviews. It consists of a repository of cultural icons through the work of artists, writers and musicians. Figel nevertheless underlines that there are cultural elements than can be recognised as European, but he also observes that it is difficult to define what they actually have in common. It is, however, impossible to define European culture by ethnicity or religion. European culture is, in short, based on a multilayered set of loyalties, with the interlocking of the national and the European, the local with the regional.

In this debate, one might usefully refer to a research project on the European culture of 27 states (European Community, 2006), carried out in June 2006. The main results of this research project are as follows:

a/ A large measure of convergence in the perception of the notion of culture;

b/ But there still exist different notions of culture;

c/ The role of education, traditions and ontologies is linked to the notion of culture. Knowledge, civilisation and leisure activities remain less univocal;

d/ Culture is a positively connotated notion, and it is judged to be crucial for the individual development;

e/ There are obstacles that reduce the access to culture. There are more objective material conditions; the lack of financial resources; the cultural constraints imposed by elites; and the psychological barriers. Of course new information and communication technologies (especially the internet) can play a role at this level;

f/ Initially, European citizens showed some hesitation (and even perplexity) when addressing their European cultural identity. These hesitations coexist with a more or less evident feeling that a European cultural community exists. This cultural community is based on the following arguments: the common roots; the history and the rich cultural heritage; certain notions of wisdom and refinement that came out of this history, despite all of its conflicts; the organisational forms and the largely shared project of democracy, liberty and laicity. Simultaneously, it is recognised that cultural diversity is also a European characteristic, linked with tolerance and open-mindedness;

g/ A number of values are seen as 'truly' European (without disregarding the diversity in their articulation) because of the European historical heritage. The values mentioned are: respect for the land (environmental issues); liberty; intellectual curiosity; respect for the other; tolerance; solidarity and the reduction of inequalities; and human, scientific and technological progress;

h/ The feeling of communality is strongly activated by the 'mirror effect', which positions the European identity in relation to other states or regions in the world. Especially the United States appears as an anti-model;

i/ Significant symbols or events also co-construct the European cultural community. This is evidenced by the fact that those interviewed are concerned more with European issues than with national ones.

In this study, citizens express an interest in the lives of those belong to different cultures; but perhaps the Britons are the one exception to the general rule. Human interaction and all types of events are seen to enhance mutual knowledge. European institutions are viewed as key actors in this process, but they appear to be able to achieve relatively little, with the possible exception of the setting up of exchanges for young people. The main outcome of this research is that culture is recognised to be a key in the construction of Europe and the belief that European institutions have a leading role to play. This study also stresses the importance of diversity and exchange in the face of globalisation. Nevertheless, there are a number of perceived risks, such as the homogenisation of the European identity through supranational processes, and the dominance of an elitist culture, which excludes the participation of the majority of the population.

In relation to these cultural values, we can here return to Koslowski's (1992: 49ff) contribution. He too lists a number of values that are considered to be European: the central place of the human being in our values systems; the desire to understand the human condition; to continuously enlarge knowledge (which is related to technological progress); the love of liberty, personal dignity and human rights; the importance of change and progress, as is reflected in the role attributed to education; the interest in the lives of others; the concurrence between idealism and materialism; the presence of religion and faith, which are weakened by agnosticism and atheism that have caused religion to transform and move beyond its traditional forms.

Another list can be found in Figel's (2006) contribution. He mentions: liberty, fairness and responsibility, solidarity, equality, interculturality, the right to live, impartiality, democracy, public service, human rights, the welfare society and tolerance. They are of course not exclusively European.

## 3. CULTURAL DIVERSITY

But the main characteristic that defines Europe in all its aspects is its diversity. Edgar Morin (2003: 125ff) emphasises that Europe's diversity is part of its natural wealth. He considers that Americanisation is a threat the lives of a good number of European citizens. Moreover, he thinks that Europe has become smaller, because today it constitutes but a fragment of the Western world, while four centuries ago the Western world was a part of Europe.

Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande (2006: 39) underline Europe's diversity of lifestyles, of economic systems (a statement which, in my opinion, can be contested because of the prevalence of the capitalist model), and of states. They believe that Europe's diversity is the source of the cosmopolitan European self-consciousness, and not a barrier to its continued integration. From another perspective, Jan Figel indicates that the European community is still inchoate and weak, and that it needs to be nurtured and encouraged, in spite of its diversity. Jorge Semprún considers (2006: 283–285) that the European unity can only be founded on the basis of democracy and the certainty generated by its values. He also underlines the importance of linguistic diversity, which partially explains the European cultural diversity, but also the respect this diversity receives.

## 4. COMPLEXITY

Edgar Morin (2003: 23ff) pays special attention to complexity as a characteristic of Europe. His argument is that – when looking at the European conception – it is difficult to think of Europe as having conceived itself, or as having a specific country as its origin. Morin argues that the European identity is based on complexity because:

a/ It is a geographic notion without borders;

b/ It is an historical notion with changing borders;

c/ It has gained its unity through its multiplicity. We have to think in terms of fragmentation;

d/ Europe has to deal with its past;

e/ European identity is partially based on a European sceptic and evanescent spirit;

f/ Europe is also structured by law and by force. Europe is a democracy, but it can be oppressive. Morin points to the relations between spirituality and materialism, between reason and myth.

Morin concludes by stating that Europe is an uncertain notion, because it lacks any real boundaries. Moreover, for many years, Europe has experienced a superiority complex in relation to other civilisations, and we cannot forget that Europe's policies of domination have affected the entire world.

## 5. INTERCULTURALITY

Even in this short text, a reference to Europe's interculturality is necessary. For this reason, I wish to refer to a text of the Spanish professor, Adela Cortina (2005, in El País), where she distinguishes three conceptions of liberalism in relation to the intercultural:

   a/ Frightened intolerant liberalism, which is very present in Europe, and which is directly related to the process of migration;

   b/ Multicultural liberalism, which pleads for the integration of all social groups, and recognises their differences. The starting point is that no alien culture should be a priori refused. Cortina refers in this context to Kylmicka (1989), who has indicated that multiculturalism also generates difficulties. For instance, ghettos and the related situations of injustice can put severe pressure on societies.

   c/ Intercultural radical liberalism, which is preferred by Cortina. This liberal model implies that people cannot claim absolute autonomy, and group-specific restrictions are not acceptable. Because of these conditions, an intercultural dialogue becomes unavoidable. It needs to be based upon a) cultural respect; b) a dialogical process that allows citizens to evaluate which values and habits are worth keeping and which ones should be forgotten. It is of course crucial that this dialogue is not limited to the countries' leaders and elites, but that also institutions and citizens have to become engaged.

Although I am convinced that these brief paragraphs provide us with a sufficient overview of this important issue, I would also like to recommend that scholars devote more attention to this important aspect.

## 6. CULTURAL IDENTITY

Again (and fortunately), the contributions in this field are numerous, and I shall mention only the most appropriate ones for this chapter. For instance, Leon Dyczewski (1992: 44ff), lists the following criteria to describe the relationship between national cultures and identities:

   a/ Love and the feeling of the magnanimity for one's own culture;

   b/ The establishment of a dialogue with other cultures, because a cultural identity must be open and capable of building relationships with others. This kind of dialogue respects the cultural distinctive-

ness and values, and revitalises and enriches the identity through contacts with traditions and values of other nations;

c/ A feeling of respect in relation to other cultures, because, otherwise, one risks the emergence of stereotypes and prejudices;

d/ It is advisable to promote exchange and common cultural creation instead of practices of domination, assimilation and polarisation. We have to be conscious that culture is regulated by different norms than those that rule the economy. The relations between cultures should be principally regulated through exchanges of common cultural creation, which are based on the principles of partnership;

e/ It is necessary to push for the institutionalisation of these connections.

In different parts of his book, Edgar Morin (2003: 108ff) refers to the underlying need for a dialogue between the members of specific cultures and the benefits of mutual contamination. The history of the formation of this dialogue is dominated by conflicts and crises of different kinds. He refers to the influence of laicism, and the formation of a new European consciousness. He also refers to the disappearance of the French-German antagonism, and of other inter-European threats, combined with the increase of extra-European threats, as for instance generated by Russia. Morin frames his analysis in terms of the European Union (Morin, 2003: 144ff), observing that the common European identity has been consolidated through threats of invasion and resistance against enemies. His position is that these threats have generated a natural will to live together, something which Renan (1957: 106) has called the national soul.

Morin stresses that the divisions and conflicts are the causes of Europe's cultural diversity. He states that we have to act now, on the basis of what has happened in the past, in order to learn from the past and not to focus on our divisions and antagonisms. He contrasts the old European identity, which was segmented by the belligerent nationalisms, with a new identity, which he calls a 'unitas multiplex'. This new identity should still be based on a critical tradition and on reasoned self-criticism, and remain open to a plurality of world cultures. In summary, following Morin: European identity is a poly-identity, which integrates a variety of different identities. In turn, in the contemporary planetarian age, this European identity has to be part of a broader human identity. At the same time, the past cannot be forgotten, as Morin deems it necessary to save the past as to save the future.

Another interesting contribution to this debate is made by Jan Figel (2006), when he proposes that Europeans do not only need to learn more of history, but also need to do this critically, placing the development of the own cultural identity in a wider context. Of course, more attention has to given to the European history anyhow, with the aim to cut across the nation-states and to trace the overall development of politics and ideas on our continent. A focus on national histories implies that our peoples become locked in their particular brand of national identity, which emphasises the differences with their neighbours and overlooks what it is common. This would support a narrow worldview, excluding and denying the positive influence of intercultural exchanges, and the fertile impact of cross-cultural contacts that nurture artistic and intellectual life.

The French journalist, Jean Daniel, who is one of the founders and director of Le Nouvel Observateur (1988, in Le Monde) says that the main aim of Western cultural identity is to protect human rights. The European cultural identity is built on the capacity to reconcile moral idealism and political realism, within a market economy and in a world filled with conflicts and forms of competition. But here I would like to add that it is difficult to articulate a substantial European identity project merely on the basis of values and principles, and that it remains necessary to construct an identity based on a common history, which is recognised by the European citizens themselves.

Biedenkopf et al. (2004, in Le Monde) believe that the European identity is the object of a negotiation between the European peoples and their institutions. The European Union and its citizens should act in such a way that values remain the basis of the common European identity, within a context that is always evolving.

I shall end this chapter by referring to Philip Schlesinger (1992: 18–22), who again points to the considerable diversity in Europe, and to the evidence that not one nation can become the core of Europe. He asserts that if we prefer the supranational model, the possibility of constructing a European identity within the European Union becomes rather slim. But he also recognises the continued and powerful appeal of national identities as they are articulated by the states of EU. We must admit – he says – that the official national identities remain persistant sources of potential contradictions with a putative EU identity. Another level of contradictions is based on the existence of strong nationalisms, which in practice means that, for instance, Catalonia, Euskadi or Scotland hope that the road to Brussels will allow bypassing Madrid and London. It leads to the

conclusion that Europe is simultaneously undergoing processes of centralisation and fragmentation, which only adds to its complexity.

## 7. A brief conclusion

I am convinced that this repertoire of viewpoints on Europe, from a variety of approaches, provides us with sufficient evidence of the complexity of Europe. This overview has introduced so many different viewpoints that it becomes practically impossible to summarise all contributions. A careful reading of this chapter, with all its different perspectives may be a useful starting point from which to gain some understanding of what is really meant by the word 'Europe'.

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# From forbidden fruit to overabundance. The consumption of US movies and television in Poland

Tomasz Goban-Klas

## 1. THE LONG TRADITION

In the 1910's, film distribution in Poland was dominated by French movies, especially productions made by the Pathé film company. This was the case in many European countries. However, in the turbulent 1920's and 1930's, US movies became popular in Poland. This was partly because they were considered to be an interesting *novum* (especially westerns), partly due to the marketing talents of US distributors. In reaction to the rapidly growing share of the US movies, the national Polish producers became very vocal in their opposition to Hollywood's 'cultural imperialism'. In 1936, the quota system for foreign movies was adopted, which resulted in an impetus for national productions. In order to omit the rigorous quota system, the powerful and rich US distributors – Fox, First National and Universal Pictures – set up their bureaus in Warsaw to avoid intermediaries and to gain a dominant position on the Polish film market.

During World War II, the theater movies showed only Nazi-made propaganda films. Therefore, Polish patriots called for a movie theatre boycott. No wonder that immediately after World War II, in the late 1940's, when the Polish movie theaters reopened, US movies became predominant again. In this regard, the almost total destruction of the Polish film studios and the difficulties that European productions were facing, were also to blame.

## 2. CLOSING POLAND

The period of intensive US import of movies was abruptly ended in the early 1950's when the Stalinist Soviet Union imposed a strict 'social realism' cultural policy on all its satellites. In the so-called Stalinist era, i.e. between 1948 and 1958, only one U.S. film was screened in Poland, namely *The Adventures of Martin Eden* (1942, directed by S. Salkow), a story of a sailor who, as a member of a trade union, fights against the capitalist system. In addition, U.S. jazz, country music, and especially the then popular boogie-woogie genre were blacklisted.

## 3. REOPENING POLAND TO THE WEST

After the first peaceful Polish revolt against the orthodox communist regime in October 1956, the cultural policy changed, and imports of foreign books, records and films were allowed.

History often repeats itself, and the story of the arrival of jazz to Poland in the late 1920's and early 1930's was pretty much repeated in the 1950's, when rock-and-roll and later beat music arrived and knocked at the door of an emerging independent youth culture. To a certain extent the government supported this reopening to Western culture. French, Italian, and English movies began to be screened and later on Hollywood productions entered Polish cinemas again. However, foreign films screened in Poland were still closely selected by a state-controlled commission, which was composed of a highly educated group of liberal filmmakers, writers and academics together with a few party apparatchiks. The composition and work of this commission resulted in the best, internationally recognised, films to be imported (Lipoński, 1990: 4).

The work of the commission can be called a policy based on a 'pull' strategy. It was the film connoisseurs from the commission who searched for films and carefully selected a repertoire of international productions. The import of US films was significant, yet not dominant.

The situation changed with the advent of colour television in the 1970's. An even more liberal cultural policy of the communist government, together with the inability of the state television to provide enough quality programming for two state channels, brought more indiscriminate film and video programming to the Polish homes. Especially, (mini-)series such as *Washington Behind Closed Doors* or *Dynasty* showed and strengthened the image of the US as a free, democratic and above all rich country. This was in accordance with common knowledges and public

imaginations, and strongly opposed to the traditional communist propaganda.

The US influence in Europe is clearly not just a story of an unwanted, cultural 'invasion'; it is also a story of liberation and modernisation of old European cultures, which had difficulties in dealing with processes of globalisation and the rise of new cultures, often in the form of youth cultures and mainstream popular cultures.

The power of those images was seen during the 1980's, when the revolting Polish workers and intellectuals frequently referred to democratic procedures (for example, Congress hearings) or the quality of life 'in the West'. And they did not mean the Wild West, but rather the wealthy ranches and shopping malls as portrayed in for example *Dallas*.

## 4. FROM 'PULL' TO 'PUSH' – AFTER THE FALL OF COMMUNISM IN POLAND IN 1989

After the fall of the communist regime, a new law adopted in 1994 allowed for private, commercial television stations to become operational. After this decision, the programming of audiovisual media became flooded with US imports, music records, movies and TV mini-series. These productions were professionally made, appealing to viewers, and most importantly: cheap to purchase. The first Polish commercial TV station 'Polsat' (a shorten form of Poland, or Polish, and Satellite), is often said to be better called 'Amsat' (from American and Satellite), due to an ample amount of US shows being aired on it.

In the early 1990's series such as *Dallas*, *Bonanza*, *Beverly Hills 91210*, *Santa Barbara*, *Twin Peaks*, *Star Trek* or *The Twilight Zone* confronted audiences of public and commercial television stations with diverse and above all uncensored Western content. As something new on state television, US music videos were also shown.

In the sphere of films, pretty much the same happened. Today, the share of Hollywood productions in the Polish film repertoire being shown at any given time is almost 90%, and the Polish premières of these productions are usually only a few weeks late compared to the US or UK. The distribution and promotion in the network of multiplex-cinemas is excellent. Therefore, while discussing the current situation, we can speak of a 'push' policy to dominate the offer and the market, rather then a pull-strategy, which was identified earlier.

Denis McQuail (2006: 265), quoting Hoskins and Mirus, remarks that '*The price of the US exports is always adjusted to the particular market situa-*

*tion, and there is "cultural discount" factor in operation that relates the price to degree of cultural affinity between exporter and importer (the lower the affinity, the lower the price) (Hoskins and Mirus, 1988)'.*

The results of this policy can be seen at box offices. Millions of Polish viewers are going to see US movies, whereas only a few thousands are going to European films. Occasionally, the Polish home productions, based on Polish classical literature, beat US blockbusters in numbers. However, the only medium allowing viewers to regularly watch Polish films is the satellite and cable channel Kino Polska. Cable and satellite dish owners also have access to the European movie channels (such as Ale Kino, Russian film – War and Peace, Canal +, and Europe). Both the satellite and the cable show US movies and European classics and new productions are balanced with HBO. As a result, the Polish TV viewers and/or movie-goers are getting 'the pictures into their heads' mostly from US productions, which – if George Gerbner's cultivation theory is right – are the basic form of acculturation (Gerbner and Gross, 1976: 76).

## 5. MOVIES AND TV KEEP THE US ON POLISH MINDS

The clearest sign of the impact films and TV programs can have, is seen in the case of commercial ads. Marketers – as Marshal McLuhan once argued – are more aware of the real impact of media and culture than sociologists. Cultural themes of the US way of life are appearing in ads created by Polish advertisement agencies, despite the cultural differences (Szymkowska-Bartyzel, 2006). Why is the situation like this? Since the late 19th century the US appears as a paradise in the mental map of Poles, a true El Dorado. Letters from the first immigrants, journalistic reporting and especially movies and television mini-series created in the Polish collective imagination a magical and miraculous image of this country. The commercials that have been flooding the Polish market since the 1990's exploit that mythical image for market purposes.

## 6. A WORD OF CAUTION

As Ang (1985) stressed in her study *Watching Dallas*, interpretations of the same media product differ depending on the context. I found an interesting general explanation for her analysis in a novel *Small Word* by David Lodge (1984: 29–30) in the form of a fictional lecture of professor Zapp. Let me quote it at length.

To understand a message is to decode it. Language is a code. But every decoding is another encoding. If you say something to me I check that I have understood your message by saying it back to you in my own words, that is, different words from the ones you used, for if I repeat your own words exactly you will doubt whether I have really understood you. But if I use my words it follows that I have changed your meaning, however slightly; and even if I were, defiantly, to indicate my comprehension by repeating back to you your own unaltered words, that is no guarantee that I have duplicated your meaning in my head, because I bring a different experience of language, literature, and non-verbal reality to those words, therefore they mean something different to me from what they mean to you. And if you think I have not understood the meaning of your message, you do not simply repeat it in the same words, you try to explain it in different words, different from the ones you used originally; but then the it is no longer the it that you started with. [...] Conversation is like playing tennis with a ball made of Krazy Putty that keeps coming back over the net in a different shape. Reading, of course, is different from conversation. It is more passive in the sense that we can't interact with the text; we can't affect the development of the text by our own words, since the text's words are already given. That is what perhaps encourages the quest for interpretation. If the words are fixed once and for all, on the page, may not their meaning be fixed also? Not so, because the same axiom, every decoding is another encoding, applies to literary criticism even more stringently than it does to ordinary spoken discourse. In ordinary spoken discourse, the endless cycle of encoding-decoding-encoding may be terminated by an action, as when for instance I say, 'The door is open', and you say, 'Do you mean you would like me to shut it?' and I say, 'If you don't mind', and you shut the door—we may be satisfied that at a certain level my meaning bas been understood. But if the literary text says, 'The door was open', I cannot ask the text what it means by saying that the door was open, I can only speculate about the significance of that door—opened by what agency, leading to what discovery, mystery, goal?

This reasoning applies quite well to the impact and interpretation of the American media text (and images) in a European (Eastern and Western) cultural and social context.

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# The Iraq crisis and theories of media-state relations. An analysis of Finnish and British press coverage[1]

Janne Halttu

## 1. INTRODUCTION

From the beginning, it was clear that the removal of the Iraqi regime posed more of a public relations than a military challenge for the US-led coalition (Calabrese, 2005), and political marketing played a central role in efforts to mobilise support for the invasion (Rampton and Stauber, 2004; Rutherford, 2004). The Bush administration built the case for war on dubious intelligence on an Iraqi threat allegedly manifested in its WMD capability and links to terrorism which were never substantiated. In the lead-up to the war, many European governments had to choose between their loyalties to the US, the UN (Mouritzen, 2006: 138) and their domestic constituencies. In Britain, Prime Minister Tony Blair had committed himself to the US-led invasion of Iraq early on while Finland put greater emphasis on the role of the UN Security Council in the disarmament of Iraq (Cabinet Committee for Foreign and Security Policy, 2003).

The crisis and the subsequent war dominated the news for several months. Governments, political parties and the anti-war movement were among those actors who tried to set the agenda of news coverage. At stake was the legitimacy of both the invasion and national foreign policy responses. On 5 February 2003, six weeks before the invasion, US Secretary of State Colin Powell made the case for war at the UN Security Council meeting indicating that the war was inevitable regardless of the positions of the UN weapons inspectors, the Security Council or hostile world opinion. This chapter discusses the applicability of theories of media-state relations that originate from American political commu-

nication literature to a European context by analysing British and Finnish press coverage during the week that followed Powell's presentation. This literature suggests that the government policy line together with the level of elite consensus on the policy are the most important factors in explaining how the media cover international conflicts.

## 2. *MANUFACTURING* CONSENT LITERATURE

Over the years, a considerable amount of predominantly American academic research has addressed the relationship between media and foreign policy (e.g. Cohen, 1963; Entman, 2004; Nacos et al., 2000) especially during international crises (e.g. Hallin, 1986; Bennett and Paletz, 1994; Mermin, 1999; Thussu and Freedman, 2003). No conclusive evidence has emerged to support such radical views as the CNN effect thesis which claims that real-time news media have started to drive foreign policy (Gowing, 1994; Jakobsen, 1996; Strobel, 1997; Mermin, 1997; cf. Robinson, 2002). While Somalia is often used as an example of the CNN effect (Cohen, 1994: 9–10), Mermin's (1999: 137) study concluded that it was rather a demonstration of '*the power of governments to move television.*' Similarly, the claim that the media 'lost' the Vietnam War has been rather painstakingly rejected by arguing that the media coverage was a mere reflection of, rather than an active player in, the breakdown of consensus on Vietnam policy in Washington (Hallin, 1986; cf. Culbert, 1998). In fact, the findings suggest that the media tend to serve the interests of the government by 'manufacturing consent' behind the official policy. For this reason Zaller and Chiu (1999) have called the media '*government's little helper*'.

### 2.1. Executive and elite versions

While only a few well-tested theories on the nature of this relationship between media and foreign policy have emerged, convincing amount of evidence suggests that the range of debate is set by the executive branch of the government (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Herman, 1993; Entman, 1991) or wider elite (Hallin, 1986; Bennett, 1990; Mermin, 1999) in the US. These notions are known as executive and elite versions of the manufacturing consent paradigm[2].

Herman (1993: 45), drawing on the executive version, argues that '*[b]oth structural analysis and empirical evidence of media performance support the view that the mainstream media tend to follow a state agenda in reporting on*

*foreign policy*'. This is not surprising if one considers how heavily news production relies on government sources (Gans, 1979) that provide '*easy access to information*' (Luostarinen, 2002: 274). Consequently, government institutions can have disproportionate access to the media (Hall et al., 1978: 57).

However, several studies maintain that the government has such dominance only under certain conditions, e.g. when the government has a clear policy line (Robinson, 2002), when elites agree on the policy (Hallin, 1986) or when policy is successfully implemented (Mermin, 1996). In accordance with Hallin's (1986) findings on the Vietnam War coverage, W. Lance Bennett's (1990: 108) influential 'indexing hypothesis' suggests that '*mass media news is indexed implicitly to the dynamics of governmental debate*'. In effect, this rule implies that views that are not expressed in elite debate would not be found in the news coverage while conflict among the officials '*serves as a signal for journalists to expand a story to encompass the views of experts, social groups, opinion polls, and other sources that reflect the observed differences among powerful politicians*' (Bennett, 1996, 376). A number of case studies support the theory while they have also added further nuances to the theory (Bennett, 1990; Hallin, 1986; Livingston and Eachus, 1996; Mermin, 1996, 1999; Zaller and Chiu, 1999; Bennett et al., 2006).

Althaus (2003: 387) points out that some previous studies in the US, including Bennett's (1990) and Mermin's (1999) studies, have omitted international actors from the analysis. Meanwhile, Althaus et al. (1996: 418) argue that when elite consensus prevails, journalists turn to foreign news sources to provide the 'other opinion' in order '*to satisfy the norms of conflict and balance*' which implies that coverage is indexed to international elite opinion. Yet, Zaller and Chiu (1999: 24) suggest that journalists evaluate the newsworthiness of sources by their '*capacity to foretell or affect future events*'. This 'mechanism' which may give foreign sources greater access is sometimes referred to as 'power indexing' (Zaller and Chiu, 1999; Billeaudeaux et al., 2003).

While it has been argued that the level of independence of the American media from official frames of reference has increased after the end of Cold War (Althaus et al., 1996; Entman, 2000; Zaller and Chiu, 1999; Rojecki, 2002), this independence may have been eroded after 9/11 2001 (Sreberny and Paterson, 2004: 18–19). From a normative point of view, media should be more than just a propaganda arm of the government, elites or other already powerful domestic or foreign actors as suggested by the executive, elite versions and power indexing respectively. Circula-

tion of views at odds with the official foreign policy is crucial for democratic processes (Entman and Page, 1994).

## 3. EXPORTING THEORIES OF MEDIA-STATE RELATIONS

The main bulk of research on media and foreign policy focuses on the United States while no extensive theoretical and cumulative literature exists on any other country with regard to the relationship between foreign policy and the media. Moreover, cross-national research on media-state relations has remained rare (Stolle and Hooghe, 2005) even though '*[r]ecent research has demonstrated the importance of the comparative method in testing media theory across national borders*' (Dardis, 2006: 410). Daniel Hallin (1997) has also emphasised that the study of war and media would greatly benefit from comparative studies.

There are two main concerns when exporting American theories of media-state relations to Europe or other regions. First, it has been noted that American media theories may not work outside its borders because '*other democracies organize press coverage on the basis of different normative understandings about power, citizen information, and the role of the press in political communication*' (Bennett, 1996: 376). For example, among the most noticeable differences between the US and European media systems is the weight placed on Public Service Broadcasting and higher level of competition between newspapers in the latter (Sparks, 2007: 77). Despite these differences, some studies suggest that the executive version (Lehmann, 2005; Glasgow University Media Group, 1985) and elite version (Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Eilders and Lüter, 2000) might have wider relevance across countries. Stolle and Hooghe (2005) analysed television news coverage in nine countries and the pan-Arab Al-Jazeera, suggesting that government policy line was a crucial factor in determining coverage of the Iraq War. Tumber and Palmer (2004: 164–65) concluded that their findings on British media-state relations during the Iraq Crisis are consistent with Hallin's (1986) findings. Eilders and Lüter (2000) analysed editorials of the German press during the Kosovo War, concluding that the editorials failed to provide perspectives that were not already present in parliamentary debate; this indicates that the indexing hypothesis might explain media-state relations also in a multi-party system (cf. Otopalik and Schaefer, 2006).

Second, states and news organisations are part of hierarchical international systems. Hence, some studies emphasise the American influence on national media during international crises through the dominant

position of both the US government and news organisations as sources of information (Mucunguzi, 2005; Nohrstedt, 2005; Nord and Strömbäck, 2006; Ottosen, 2005; Thussu, 2000a, 2000b). Kupe and Hyde-Clarke's (2005) study on South African media during the Iraq War points out that national media may have insufficient resources to cover international conflicts independently. Instead, they rely on Western news agencies which conform to the interests of Western governments. Thussu (2002: 205) suggests that, in the case of Kosovo, geopolitical realities went unreported because Western television news channels '*tended to repeat uncritically the Western position*' and provide moral justification of 'humanitarian intervention' rather than report on Western strategic and economic interests in the Balkan region. These findings suggest that the media, rather than 'manufacturing consent' for the views of national foreign policy elites, reflect the viewpoints of major powers in the international system. This is also suggested by power indexing.

Soderlund et al. (1994) compared the TV news coverage of the Panama invasion in the US and Canada, concluding that, in both countries, sources favourable to the invasion had greater access to media and, consequently, the US point of view prevailed in the coverage. It has to be noted, though, that there was no significant Canadian opposition to the US invasion of Panama and other studies have found evidence of the independence of the Canadian media from the US. Kim et al. (2007) concluded that despite the traditionally strong influence of the US media on the Canadian news coverage, the Canadian press coverage of the Darfur crisis reflected the view of Canadian foreign policy and the influence of the US media was limited. In addition, Hibbard and Keenleyside (1995) draw a similar conclusion with respect to Canadian coverage of the Persian Gulf crisis in 1990–91.

In sum, it is still unclear to what degree country characteristics, such as differences in national media systems, political systems and position in the international system, affect the generality of the theories of media-state relations but, eventually, '*[r]eal advances in theoretical development with respect to the media and foreign policy will ultimately depend on our looking at more countries, rather than just at more cases*' (Cohen, 1994: 11).

## 4. ANALYSIS OF PRESS COVERAGE

In the days that followed Powell's presentation at the Security Council meeting, the debate intensified and spilled into NATO. This chapter attempts to answer the following questions, based on a content analysis of Finnish and British articles published between 6–12 February 2003:

1/ Do the editorial responses to Colin Powell's presentation reflect the government policy line?

2/ Are there notable differences in the use of foreign sources?

3/ Does the Finnish government policy line of peaceful disarmament of Iraq give greater latitude to Finnish journalists to investigate and report on possible oil-related motives for the invasion?

The Finnish sample consists of the only national quality daily, *Helsingin Sanomat* (HS), the second largest regional quality daily, *Turun Sanomat* (TS), and *Ilta-Sanomat* (IS) which is the largest tabloid paper. In Britain, the conservative *Daily Telegraph* (DT) and the *The Independent* (I) represent different ends of the political spectrum and should provide an indicative sample of the range of debate in mainstream news[3].

### 4.1. Editorial responses to Powell's presentation

The assumption here is that the editorial responses to Powell's presentation reflect the papers' attitudes towards the use of force against Iraq in general, and that these attitudes would reflect elite opinion in the respective states if not the government position.

The editorial in TS (7 February) basically restated the position of the Finnish government by arguing for more time for weapons inspections and warning about the use of force without specific UN authorisation. HS (7 February) stated that '*if the UN Security Council sticks to its unanimous decision [resolution 1441] and interprets "serious consequences" as war, there is a legal justification for war*'. However, the editorial argues that Powell failed to make the moral and political case for war. Both TS and HS were unconvinced of Iraqi links to terrorism and similar views had been expressed by the Finnish Foreign Minister Tuomioja the previous day (The Finnish Parliament, 2003). With regard to possible continuation of weapons inspections, HS called for a final deadline since the US was getting impatient. In general, both editorials conformed to the views expressed by the government with HS more in line with PM Lipponen's view which tended to place the burden of proof on Iraq. Meanwhile, TS reflected the slightly softer tone expressed by Tuomioja. During the ana-

lysed period, IS did not publish an editorial which would have revealed its position on the use of force but summarised Powell's presentation in six short articles and ran a story on Iraqi response to Powell on February 6[4].

In the UK, there was a higher degree of disagreement on foreign policy since the Liberal Democrats and a faction of Labour Party were not persuaded by the case for war. While the Independent (7 February) called Powell's presentation a '*bravura performance*', it preferred the old policy of sanctions for containing the threat posed by the '*tyrant*'. A war '*would virtually guarantee an upsurge in global terrorism*'. In effect, the editorial denounced the position held by the government and the largest opposition party, the Conservatives. The DT, in turn, took a pro-war position: '*Saddam is a madman who is equipped with weapons of mass destruction. We cannot rely on rational judgment preventing him from using them. If we continue with this current combination of deterrence and containment, he will not disarm, and he may use them*'. The Telegraph also published more than half of Powell's 76-minute speech in six 'edited extracts' on 6 February.

## 4.2. Sourcing

The analysis of sources focused on the access of the UN, the most vocal anti-war states (France, Germany, Russia, China and Belgium) and the US to the press coverage[5]. The only tabloid, IS, strongly favoured US sources. One possible explanation would be that its sourcing was driven by power indexing, thus preferring the only source that could eventually tell whether there was going to be a war and when. Another possibility might be that it had inadequate resources to cover international developments independently and depended on Anglo-American news agencies which may have favoured US sources. There is also a possibility that US sources were used to provide an alternative view to Finnish sources, as suggested by Althaus et al. (1996). However, Finnish sources were not quoted at all in IS's Iraq coverage and to provide the 'other opinion' US views were occasionally balanced by both Iraqi civilians and government sources. Further analysis is needed in order to establish sourcing patterns and to examine whether IS's coverage conformed to the US rather than the Finnish government and elite opinion.

**Table 1:** Distribution of quotes between US, anti-war states (France, Germany, Russia, China and Belgium) and UN sources 6–12 February

|                  | DT  | I   | UK  | %   | HS  | TS  | IS  | FIN | %   |
|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| US               | 50  | 40  | 90  | 58  | 25  | 6   | 40  | 71  | 69  |
| Anti-war states  | 21  | 22  | 43  | 28  | 13  | 4   | 1   | 18  | 17  |
| UN               | 7   | 14  | 21  | 14  | 8   | 5   | 1   | 14  | 14  |
| Total            | 78  | 76  | 154 | 100 | 46  | 15  | 42  | 103 | 100 |

Quality papers were more balanced, all giving anti-war countries over a quarter of the share even though official US sources were quoted more often than UN and the five most vocal anti-war states put together (with the exception of TS in which case the sample is very small). The high portion of US sources in all papers supports the notion of the power indexing thesis.

Interestingly, the Independent quoted UN sources more often than the Telegraph which raises the question of whether editorial policy may influence the selection of foreign sources. HS and the Independent cited these three groups of sources equally. If a larger sample produces similar results, it would seem that the most important factor in manufacturing consent literature – government policy line – does not seem to have a clear connection with the selection of foreign sources. Instead, this selection would seem to be influenced by the perceived power of the sources while editorial policy may also be a factor.

## 4.3. Oil-related motives

Alan Greenspan, the former US Federal Reserve Chairman, said recently that he is '*saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows: the Iraq War is largely about oil*' (Paterson 2007)[6]. Many Europeans had suspected this from the beginning, with 44% of the British public agreeing that US policy can be better explained by Iraq's oil resources than by the Iraqi threat (Pew, 2002). However, during the analysed period, oil as a possible motive for invasion attracted only few references which were often confined to one sentence or a citation.

Since the Finnish foreign policy elite emphasised peaceful solution through the UN, investigation of possible oil-related motives for invasion would not have brought journalists into a direct conflict with the government policy line. In fact, such views were expressed in the Parliament. While cabinet ministers avoided discussions of oil that could have harmed relations with the US, two Left Alliance MPs, Jaakko Laakso and

Outi Ojala, suggested in a parliamentary debate on 6 February that the '*control of Iraqi oil resources*' is among the US objectives (The Finnish Parliament, 2003). However, this did not seem to have encouraged the press to investigate possible undeclared motives for the invasion. The above-mentioned quotation from Jaakko Laakso was the only reference to the issue in HS, and all references in the Finnish newspapers were confined to one sentence.

In the British newspapers, references to oil-related motives were countered almost as often as invoked by raising the argument that the coming war is not about oil or questioning the evidence to the contrary. The Telegraph had fewer references to oil being among the motives while both papers rejected this argument on two occasions. These differences also reflect their editorial positions.

**Table 2:** References to possible oil-related motives for invasion 6–12 February

|                    | DT | I | UK | HS | TS | IS | FIN |
|--------------------|----|---|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Oil-related motives | 1  | 4 | 5  | 1  | 2  | 1  | 4   |
| Not about oil       | 2  | 2 | 4  | –  | –  | –  | –   |
| Total               | 3  | 6 | 9  | 1  | 2  | 1  | 4   |

In sum, any serious debate on the strategic significance of Iraq's oil resources and the role they might have played in the current crisis was lacking in both countries. In this regard, the media hardly fulfilled two of its roles in society: scrutinising the power and reflecting the public opinion (Curran and Seaton, 2003: 346). This finding supports the notion of alternative motives of Western interventions going unreported (Thussu, 2000a). McChesney (2006: 119) provides one explanation as to why journalists may avoid certain topics: '*If people in power agree on an issue, presuppose it, or do not seriously debate it, it is almost impossible for a journalist to raise it without being accused of partisanship and pushing an ideological agenda. So it is rarely done, and when it is done it is dismissed as bad journalism*'. Clearly, official sources were reluctant to discuss Iraqi oil (Duffield, 2005) and, for example, in the House of Commons Iraq debate on February 6, oil was mentioned only once by an anti-war Labour MP Jeremy Corbin.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The editorial policy of the Independent seems to suggest that the press in Britain does not simply follow the government policy line as the executive version of manufacturing consent literature would suggest. The elite version, however, would suggest that the Independent was only able to assume the anti-war position due to the conflict among the elite. In the absence of a substantial disagreement among the Finnish elite, the editorials of the quality dailies reflected the government view and, in this regard, the findings are in accordance with the manufacturing consent literature.

The five prominent anti-war countries and the UN were outnumbered by the US sources in both countries. Analysis of sourcing supports the power indexing thesis and indicates a notable difference between quality dailies and IS. Further analysis is needed in order to investigate whether the selection of foreign sources is influenced by the editorial policy of the newspaper. Meanwhile, possible oil-related motives for the invasion and the geopolitical significance of the second largest oil reserves in the world received only few references as journalists hardly pursued this topic independently in the absence of real governmental debate. This negligence did not seem to directly relate to government policy line and, instead, the salience of the issue in the UK papers may have reflected their editorial positions.

While the sample analysed here does not allow for far-reaching conclusions, it indicates that theories of media-state relations predict the behaviour of Finnish and British press rather well, although the editorial policy of the news outlet may play a more important role in the European context than is assumed by the US-originating theories of media-state relations.

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## NOTES

[1]   This chapter is part of an on-going PhD research project which analyses press coverage in Finland, Ireland and the UK at four stages of the Iraq crisis of 2003. Only some preliminary findings are presented here.

[2]   The executive version '*emphasises the extent to which news media content conforms with the agendas and frames of reference of government officials',* while the elite version '*holds that news media coverage conforms to the interests of political elites in general whether they are in the executive, legislative or any other politically powerful position in society*' (Robinson, 2001: 525–526).

[3]   The sample includes their Sunday editions, *the Sunday Telegraph* and *the Independent on Sunday*. Both news and op-ed items were analysed while financial news was excluded from the sample. Around 350 items had direct references to the Iraq Crisis.

[4]   IS published an editorial on 19 March after president Bush had issued an ultimatum to president Saddam Hussein to flee the country within 48 hours or face a military conflict. By this time, the Cabinet Committee on Foreign and Security Policy held the view that '*[a]ny use of military force will require the authorization of the UN Security Council and all unauthorized use of military force is unacceptable*'. In this editorial, IS implies that the US intentionally misinterprets the UNSC resolution 1441 as de facto authorising the use of force. However, the editorial does not take a clear position either for or against the use of war. The following extract illustrates the ambiguity: '*Hardly anyone will miss Saddam Hussein. He is a tyrant who seized the power in a coup and has hundreds of thousands of innocent lives on his conscience. In addition, there is a lot of oil in the land he rules which makes it very attractive for the Americans to intervene in the matters of this criminally run stat*e.' However, another commentary on the same day was highly sceptical of US claims.

[5]   Only governmental sources were included in the analysis since, for example, a British journalist might look for members of the public and opposition sources in Germany that conform to the position of the UK government rather than choosing German government sources.

[6]   It is not relevant for this study whether oil played a role in the US and UK decision-making process. What is relevant here is that it would have been a reasonable assumption that this vital energy resource could be a factor in the crisis and that this view was widely held by the public.

# PART TWO

Table art at lecture hall – © Ilija T. Tomanic and anonymous

# SECTION SIX:
# METHODOLOGIES
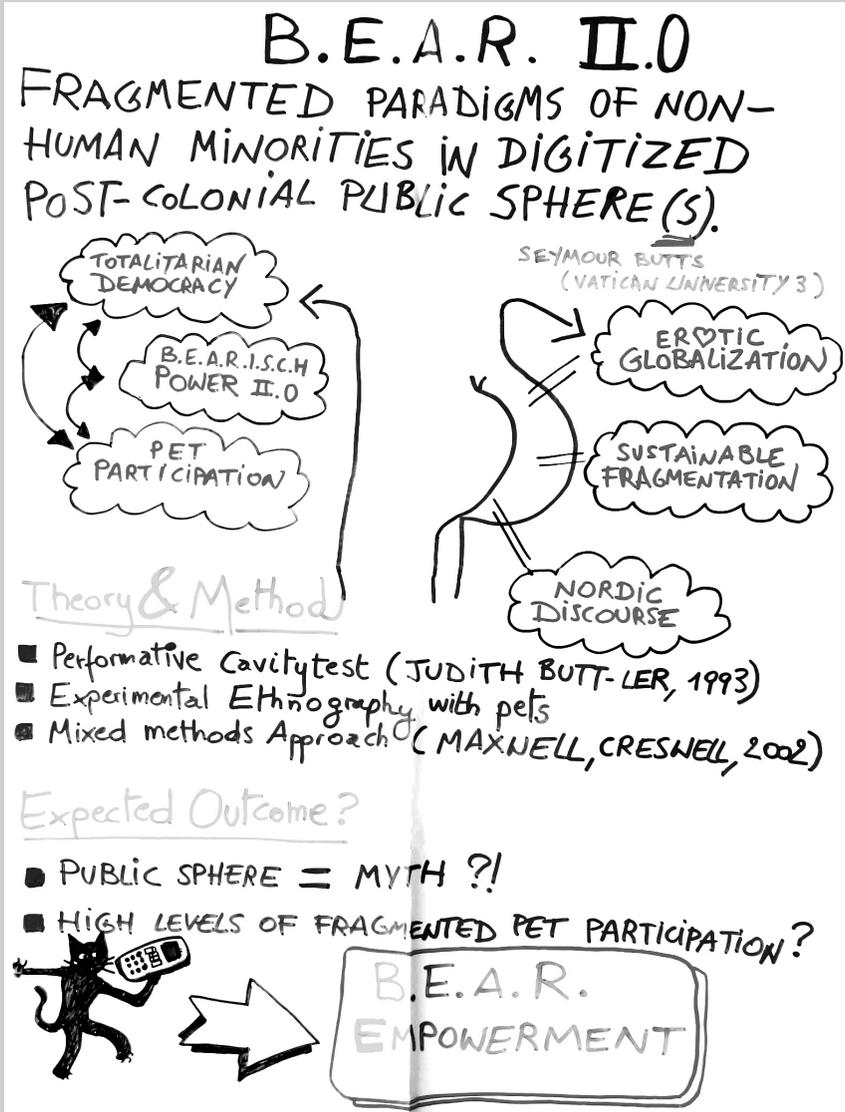


Poster by Seymour Butts (ghost participant)

# Research ethics in a virtual world. Guidelines and illustrations

*Nicholas W. Jankowski and Martine van Selm*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Perhaps one of the most contested areas in internet research involves ethical considerations for conducting online studies. A number of research organisations and associations are grappling with the issues involved. The American Association for the Advancement of Science, for example, issued a major report detailing the ethical problems with internet research (Frankel and Siang, 1999). The Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR[1]), at its very first conference in 2000, installed an Ethics Working Committee. In this chapter we review and comment on initiatives to establish ethical guidelines for internet research. We situate these efforts within more general efforts to develop ethical guidelines for social science research. Some commonalties and differences are suggested between the ethical considerations for doing research in the virtual and 'real' worlds.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Although ethical concerns with scientific practice can probably be traced to the earliest days of the scientific enterprise, attention to ethical aspects of research involving humans maintained a prominent place during the Nuremburg trials in Germany after World War II. The Nuremburg code was developed and applied to the practices of medical researchers then on trial. Application of the code was extended to biomedical research generally. Later, in the 1950's and 1960's, ethically disputed cases emerged in the social sciences. One involved the study of a sect who believed the world was coming to an end, and the role of the researchers (Festinger, Riecken and Schachter, 1956) in studying this group during

and after the critical date. Another, perhaps the most famous and controversial, was an experiment involving the testing of obedience of subjects in a laboratory setting (Milgram, 1963; see also Miller, 1986). Subjects in this experiment were led to believe that they were applying increasing levels of electrical shocks to other persons for failure to accomplish learning tasks; these 'learners' could only be heard screaming in reaction to the shock treatment in a separate room. The experiment was designed to determine how far subjects would go in following authority, even when seemingly inflicting pain on other persons. Another case within the discipline of sociology that created much commotion was a study of homosexual encounters in public lavatories, and the deceptive role undertaken by the investigator (Humphreys, 1970).

These and other incidents contributed to a reassessment of the ethical conduct of social science research and the eventual formulation of the Belmont Report (1979). In this document the groundwork was paved for delineating the three central ethical concerns for research involving humans: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. These terms have found their way into ethical discussions around social science research more generally and usually are reflected in the ethical issues presented in the standard social science research methodology textbooks and in the guidelines of professional associations.

In some countries, particularly in the United States, guidelines for ethical practices have been institutionalised into the procedures for grant applications and research proposal assessment. Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) are mandated by federal government funding bodies, and virtually all American universities and research institutions that receive federal funds for research have created IRBs. These boards have come to be seen as the major screening instruments for essentially all research conducted on American university campuses by staff and students for almost any form of research involving human subjects. The guidelines applied by the IRB at the University of Illinois are reflective of the mandate these ethical review boards have in the United States[2]. Essentially all research involving human subjects, conducted by either scientific staff or students, is to be reviewed by such boards, independent of the size or scale of the research projects. Research involving children is always subject to review and the level of scrutiny is much higher. In all cases, for adults and children, participation in research projects is supposed to be voluntary and subjects are to be informed on general matters such as the purpose of the research, who is collecting the data and how confidentiality is to be assured.

## 3. Enter the Internet

With the emergence of internet research, confusion and concern has been voiced regarding the authority and procedures of IRBs for this new research terrain. Much of the discussion relates to how the conventional areas of attention by IRBs – protection of the privacy of subjects, assurance of informed consent especially for studies involving children, and prevention of harm to those involved in investigations – are to be applied to studies involving the internet.

Internet research can roughly be divided in studies that take the internet as an object of inquiry, on the one hand, and studies that use the internet as a research tool, on the other. Ethical issues are at stake in both types of research. In the former type of research these issues may relate to (content) analyses of messages posted by visitors to communication environments on the world wide web, or to the monitoring of internet behaviour of web surfers. In studies that use the internet as a research tool ethical issues relate, for instance, to approaching potential respondents to web surveys (Van Selm and Jankowski, 2006).

Researchers attend in different degrees to ethical issues. Markham (1998), for example, performed an extensive ethnographic study of online discourse, engaging in participant observations in MUDs and other internet arenas. In the text, she quotes extensively from participants in these venues. She explains that she '*purposely left the participants' statements unedited for typing errors…. A person's text is vital to his or her presentation of self online, and whether these practices are intentional or not, they contribute to the reader's perception of the writer*'. She did, however, alter the '*names, locations, and other markers of all the participants to protect their anonymity*' (Markham, 1998: 22). She did not always identify herself as a researcher, though, and often disguised her real identity (e.g., modifying her age to fit the conditions of an interaction). As described later in this chapter, such deception is not considered appropriate in other contexts and from the perspective of other ethical procedural guidelines.

### 3.1. AAAS Report

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), in acknowledging the increasing use of the internet for research purposes and associated problems, organised a special workshop on the ethical and legal aspects of internet research. The resulting report (Frankel and Siang, 1999) provides an extensive treatment of the ethical issues related

to internet research. Taking the principles of the Belmont Report – autonomy, beneficence, and justice – as points of departure, the AAAS report illustrates how some of the conventional interpretations of these principles come into question in an internet environment. For example, three key questions are usually posed regarding informed consent: when is it required, how can it be obtained, and how can it be validated. Some features of the internet – such as the uncertain distinction between private and public areas, the common use of pseudonyms, and the global coverage of the internet – pose special problems for acquiring informed consent.

Not all researchers are hampered by this situation, however. Frankel and Siang (1999: 7) note that some researchers argue that newsgroups, listservs, Internet Relay Chat and Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs) should be considered public territory since they are generally accessible, much as traditional media are. From this perspective, then, responsibility rests with the disseminators of the messages and not the researchers, and informed consent is unnecessary.

Still, researchers that do want or need to secure consent, the procedures for online research are not as straightforward as for studies in the 'real' world. Usually, consent is arranged through signing a printed form or, in the case of telephone interviewing, through verbal agreement. As Frankel and Siang point out, online *'equivalent would be a click to a statement such as "I agree to the above consent form". But how valid is such consent when the age, competency, or comprehension of the potential subject is unknown?'* (Frankel and Siang, 1999: 10).

The authors also address an important distinction between information that is publicly accessible and that which is publicly distributed: '*…an online support group may be publicly open to anyone who wishes to participate in its discussions, but its members may perceive the exchange of information as a very private matter*' (Frankel and Siang, 1999: 11). Groups could be arranged on a scale of perceived privacy whereby academic email lists could conceivably be ranked low in privacy and support groups concerned with sensitive topics as high in privacy. Such an approach may be helpful in distinguishing groups on this issue and in determining when consent is required.

But even when the issue of consent is resolved, there remains concern as to how confidentiality or anonymity is to be provided. In many groups participants use pseudonyms and construct fictive characters that take on a significant role within the internet arenas of MUDs and other discussion settings. The fictive characters within these groups can be known and subject to harm should a researcher use the identities in

publications. The AAAS report does not resolve this issue, but poses the concern clearly: '*How, then, should a researcher cite online text without violating the privacy and confidentiality of his or her subjects? How much description of an online community should a researcher provide?*' (Frankel and Siang, 1999: 13).

## 3.2. AoIR Report

The AoIR Ethics Working Committee issued its final report in 2002 (Ess and AoIR Ethics Committee, 2002). The original mandate of the committee requested formulation of a set of values that all internet researchers should uphold. The committee felt there were special features of internet research that required additional attention beyond what was generally expected from social science researchers involved in human subjects research.

Although the report deals with these issues and is rich in providing examples where there are similarities and differences between traditional and online human subject research, the main implicit message of the report is that no definitive, single set of ethical guidelines is possible for a field as diverse as internet research. The diversity involves a wide range of settings for study, a panorama of disciplines concerned with these settings as well as a multiplicity of cultural backgrounds of the researchers.

## 4. ETHICAL GUIDELINES

A number of ethical guidelines for conducting various forms of internet research have been and are being developed. For example, Scharf (1999) is concerned about the ethical implications of qualitative studies conducted in naturally occurring settings such as in newsgroups. Based on her study of a breast cancer discussion list, she suggests five guidelines for engaging in this type of research. First, Scharf (1999: 253) feels a researcher '*should contemplate whether or not the purposes of the research are in conflict with or harmful to the purpose of the group*'. Second, the researcher should inform subjects of the study, providing information on the researcher and purpose of the study. Third, consent should be obtained from any persons the researcher wishes to quote. Fourth, the researcher should be receptive to feedback from subjects in the study, and fifth, the researcher should practice '*respectful sensitivity*' towards the group studied. As Scharf notes, many of these guidelines stem from the general ethical concerns formulated for scientific research by IRBs and other bod-

ies. Some of the guidelines, like encouraging feedback, are specific formulations for this type of internet research.

Several IRBs have prepared special guidelines involving internet research. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), for example, has composed a list of 11 points for researchers utilising the internet as a research tool (see Figure 1). Although many of the points are derived from standard ethical guidelines for social science research, some are unique to an internet environment.

**Figure 1:** IRB Policy for Using the internet as a Research Tool

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Institutional Review Board
IRB policy for using the internet as a research tool
Available at: http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/EHSRM/IRB/
guidelines-procedures.html#g9

*Researchers utilizing the Internet as a research tool must address the following issues and include information on each numbered item, 1 through 11, in their protocol procedures and informed consent:*

1. State whether the Internet site is considered public or private space. State whether you have obtained permission from the list owner or administrator to recruit subjects from, or post messages on, the site. Researchers shall also obtain permission to use archived data from a list or site. (Permission may be verified by an email from the list owner or administrator, and a copy should be included in your protocol.)
2. Inform the subjects that online communications, in general, are considered public in nature. Electronic records of such communications may therefore be subject to open records requests.
3. Inform the subjects that there is no completely secure interaction online. The following statement must be inserted into the informed consent document, as it relates to keeping collected data confidential and the risk/benefit of participation in the study: As an online participant in this research, there is always the risk of intrusion by outside agents, i.e., hacking, and therefore the possibility of being identified.
4. State that subjects provided with an online email account are allowed to change passwords at regular intervals.
5. If the researcher uses encryption software, a thorough set of instructions shall be included in the protocol and provided to the subjects.
6. The protocol will describe how subjects will be identified in written reports, whether by use of their screen names or pseudonyms.
7. The researcher will state that the data and identifiers shall be kept on different servers.

8. Researchers shall provide a forum for participants to ask questions online before consenting to participate in a research project.
9. Researchers shall identify how confidentiality will be safeguarded on a forum where some participants consent while others do not.
10. The researcher will provide a yes/no statement in the online format to substitute for a signature on the consent form.
11. Online research with minors is strongly discouraged. If minors are recruited for online research, written, signed informed consent by a parent or guardian is required.

The approach in these guidelines differs from the position taken by the ProjectH research team that conducted pioneering study of newsgroups in the period 1993–94. The research team debated whether to request permission to record and analyse the archived discussion lists and eventually decided against such an approach. Rafaeli, one of the project coordinators, expressed the position of the team as follows:

> We view public discourse on CMC as just that: public. Analysis of such content, where individuals', institutions', and lists' identities are shielded, is not subject to 'Human Subject' restraints. Such study is more akin to the study of tombstone epitaphs, graffiti, or letters to the editor. Personal? – yes. Private? – no. (quoted in Sudweeks and Rafaeli, 1996; discussed in Paccagnella, 1997)

A member of the AoIR Ethics Working Committee, Amy Bruckman developed her own guidelines that reflect '*a strict interpretation of what is ethical*' (Bruckman, 2002). Bruckman meant these guidelines, to be general in nature, suitable for conducting responsible research in an online setting. She stresses that they are not meant to be absolutist in nature, but flexible and sensitive to the context of the research, the research objectives and intentions of the researcher. At the same time, Bruckman's guidelines represent a strict interpretation as to what is ethically permissible in the world of online research.

There is often tension between ethical obligations to the subjects of a research project and the integrity or quality of the research project. Bruckman notes that researchers frequently take the side of research project, particularly when faced with troublesome issues such as securing consent from subjects on an ephemeral discourse environment. In her opinion, consent is nevertheless required '*from each individual you wish to record, quote, or study in any way*' (Bruckman, 2002). Bruckman suggests that internet-based material may be freely cited when:

- It is officially, publicly, permanently archived;
- No password is required to archive access;
- No site policy prohibits it;
- The topic is not highly sensitive. (Bruckman, 2002)

In all other cases, permission must be requested and, in the case of subjects under 18 years, consent must be in given in writing from parents or legal guardians. One of the consequences of these guidelines is that most study of chatroom interactions would not be possible.

Susan Herring (2001) felt the guidelines proposed by Bruckman would unduly hamper discourse analysis of online interactions. She prepared guidelines tailored to this type of study, which were presented at a conference of the Association of internet Researchers in 2001. She emphasised that the general concerns of discourse analysis involve attention to the *form* of the communicative exchange rather than the *content*. This feature of discourse analysis makes verbatim citing of interactions crucial to this type of study. Herring pointed out that discourse analysis does not generally require IRB approval, and the restrictive guidelines proposed by Bruckman would unduly restrict the work permissible from the discourse analysis approach.

From Herring's perspective, computer-mediated discourse analysis research should always protect subjects from risk or harm and that informed consent is always required when private computer-mediated communication (CMC) is the field of study (e.g., personal email exchanges, private chatroom conversation, discussion groups that restrict access and groups that present their discussions as private exchanges). Herring (2001) feels that informed consent is not required for all other forms of CMC.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The consideration of ethical questions discussed in this contribution will undoubted vary between researchers of different disciplines and between theoretical and methodological approaches. Differences will also be evident between researchers operating in different countries and cultures. Such diversity, as mentioned earlier, impedes formulation of ethical universals. Furthermore, development of ethical guidelines for different types of internet research (focusing either on the internet as object of study or as a research tool) is at an early stage and, as a conse-

quence, highly dynamic. This feature also precludes clarity at this point in time.

In all likelihood, however, existing ethical guidelines for social science research will remain the 'bedrock' for further discussion. Most initiatives for internet research guidelines are modifications of existing guidelines and not proposals for radical change. As guidelines specific to internet research develop they will, in all probability, be reflections of the practices already in place for human subject research within different scientific cultures and disciplines. Perhaps the most striking difference in approaches will be evident between national and regional scientific cultures. Institutions in the United States will probably continue to frame their guidelines within the structures and constraints present for government funded research in that country. The general trend in the United States toward legalistic resolution of differences will continue to have an impact on further development of guidelines for internet research. In other regions of the world where this characteristic is less prominent, ethical questions and resulting guidelines will be markedly different.

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## NOTES

[1]    The AoIR Ethics Working Group final report was completed in 2002 and may be retrieved at the AoIR web site: http://aoir.org/.

[2]    See http://www.irb.uiuc.edu/chklist.htm.

# Doing discourse analysis.
# A brief introduction to the field

Louise Phillips

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Discourse analysis[1] represents a heterogeneous field made up of a number of approaches which share a range of features with respect to metatheory (ontology and epistemology), theory and methodology and, at the same time, diverge from one another with respect to a number of metatheoretical, theoretical and methodological features. Through the points of convergence, the approaches can be said to form a research field that offers a distinctive set of perspectives for research. But by virtue of the points of divergence, the different approaches produce different forms of knowledge. Hence in research on communication, culture and society it can sometimes be productive to combine more than one discourse analytic approach, often together with non-discourse analytic theories and methods. In this chapter, I give a brief impressionistic introduction to discourse analysis. I outline some of the main points of convergence among different approaches and also points of divergence[2] and I end with a brief illustration of how discourse analytical questions can be applied in a preliminary analysis of a piece of research data. The aim of the chapter is to provide a first entry-point into the field and an indication of the paths to follow in considering whether to adopt discourse analysis as a research methodology.

## 2. POINTS OF CONVERGENCE

Different approaches to discourse analysis operate with different concepts of discourse but the concepts all converge on the view that discourses create representations of the world that are not just reflections of an already-existing reality but construct – or contribute to constructing –

reality by ascribing meanings to the world in ways that exclude alterna-
tive meanings. In this sense, discourses are constitutive in the construc-
tion of reality, including knowledge and identities. Discourses produce
the subjects we are, and the objects we can know something about
(including ourselves as subjects). For example, a discourse on 'the war on
terror' constructs particular subjects such as 'defenders of democracy',
'terrorists' and 'illegal combatants' and objects such as 'terror', 'security
threats' and 'terrorism' in particular ways. These constructions are
materialised in the suspension or violation of human rights law in the
treatment of the discursive subjects 'terrorists' and 'illegal combatants'
and in institutions such as the Guantanamo Bay detention centre. More-
over, all approaches converge on certain, central properties of discourse
as pointed to in the following poetic image of a 'discourse':

> Sometimes I think that a discourse is like a soap bubble. It is created
> by a breath on the soapy water and floats around the room seemingly
> more or less arbitrarily. It appears both as itself and as a reflection of
> the light of the room, colours and movements. In an attempt to grab it,
> it evaporates and disappears. All that is left is the memory of the soap
> bubble, a little dampness on the fingers and the taste of soap in the
> mouth. And I'm left asking, 'Did I destroy this discourse, or did I
> become part of it as it changed?' (Strand, 1999: 25)

The metaphor of the soap bubble encapsulates a number of key qualities
intrinsic to discourse. First of all, it captures the unstable, ephemeral and
context-dependent nature of discourse that is based upon the
poststructuralist view of knowledge, identities and social relations as
contingent: that is, as socially and historically specific entities that
change over time and across space.

Second, the interlinking or conjoining of soap bubbles with one
another also illustrates how discourses inhabit spaces in which different
discourses are articulated side by side or compete in struggles to dictate
the truth, as opposed to the Saussurian, structuralist view of language as
a stable, unchangeable and totalising structure. Discourses, then, are
particular ways of constructing the world in meaning which stand in
unstable relations to each other. The discursive production of meaning
can thus be understood as a *co-production*, in which different discourses
are co-articulated by people in meaning- making in social interaction. For
instance, the discourse on the war on terror may be challenged – for
example, in political speeches, media texts and audience reception – by
alternative discourses which ascribe competing meanings to 'terrorism'
and 'terror', deny the opposition between 'defenders of democracy' and

'terrorists' and question the legitimacy of the material effects of the 'war on terror'. A key issue for empirical analysis is the relations of dominance and subordination among the different discourses articulated, including the issue of whether one discourse has achieved momentary hegemony in the struggle over meaning.

Finally, the question asked at the end of the citation – '*did I destroy this discourse or did I become part of it as it changed?*' – points to the issue of identity and the tension between structure and agency. All the approaches share a view of the subject as created in discourses – and therefore as decentred – but differ in the degree of emphasis ascribed to people's 'freedom of action' in the co-production of meaning, including people's capacity act as agents in creating – or destroying – discourses, that is, as producers, as well as products, of discourse.

To greater or lesser degrees, Michel Foucault has left his mark on all approaches to social constructionist discourse analysis. All approaches follow, to some extent, his view of discourses as relatively rule-bound sets of statements which impose limits on what gives meaning and his view of truth as something which is created discursively (Foucault, 1972). But they tend to diverge from Foucault's tendency to identify one single regime of knowledge in every historical epoch, operating instead with a more conflictual picture in which different discourses exist side by side, or struggle for the right to define truth, as in the conjoining of soap bubbles.

All approaches to discourse analysis take on board – at least to some extent – Foucault's understanding of power. For Foucault, power – like discourse – does not belong to particular agents such as individuals or the state or groups with particular interests, but rather is spread across different social practices. And power should not be understood as exclusively oppressive but as *productive*; power constitutes discourse, knowledge, bodies and subjectivities. Thus power provides the conditions of possibility for the social. It is in power that our social world is produced and objects gain individual features and relationships to one another. And power is always bound up with knowledge which is constructed discursively (Foucault, 1977). With respect to *knowledge*, Foucault's coupling of power and knowledge has the consequence that power is closely connected to discourse (including ourselves as subjects). For instance, 'the war on terror' has gradually been created discursively as an area with its own institutions (e.g. US' detention centre at Guantanamo Bay), particular subjects (e.g. 'terrorists' and 'illegal combatants') and particular practices (e.g. 'detention without trial', the permitting of 'moderate physical pressure' in interrogation of suspected terrorists).

## 3. POINTS OF DIVERGENCE

Discourse analytic approaches, then, share premises that lead to a common theoretical and empirical focus on how the social world – knowledge, identities and social relations – is constituted in discourse. But they also diverge in key ways so that the different approaches each provide distinctive programmes for research. To give an indication of this diversity with respect to the knowledge forms sought and produced, I now outline three key ways in which approaches to discourse analysis differ.

First, they differ in relation to their conception of ideology. The more poststructuralist approaches such as Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory (1985) follow most loyally in Foucault's footsteps and reject the assumption of 'real' relations and the hope of liberation from ideology and deliverance to truth common to most traditional concepts of ideology; instead they embrace the view that truth is created in discourse and there is no possibility of getting beyond discourse to a 'more true' truth. In contrast, many approaches within discursive psychology and Fairclough's critical discourse analysis do not completely diverge from the classical Marxian tradition in relation to ideology: although they adhere to Foucault's view of power as productive rather than an instrument of force, they also stress patterns of domination whereby one social group is dominated by another.

Another point of divergence separating discourse analytic approaches has to do with *discourse's role in the construction of the social world*. For all approaches, the operation of discourse does not just represent the social world but contributes to constituting it. Some approaches, such as Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, distinguish between discursive practice and other social practices, reserving the concept of discourse for *text, talk and other semiological systems*. Discourse works in dialectical relation with other dimensions to produce social practices and thus to constitute the social world. Social phenomena operate according to other logics as well as those of discourse (for example, economic logics), and thus non-discourse analytic tools must be drawn on in addition to discourse analytic ones. Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, in contrast, does not make a distinction between the discursive dimension of social practice and non-discursive dimensions, instead viewing discourse as fully constitutive of the social world. This does not mean that, for Laclau and Mouffe, the world is made up only of text and talk but, rather, that discourse is also material and that elements such as the economy are also forms of discourse.

And a third point of divergence relates to analytical focus. Some approaches focus on the creation and transformation of discourse through

social interaction in everyday life, thus stressing that one should do systematic empirical analyses of people's texts and talk for example in studies of audience reception of media texts or in studies of doctor-patient communication. Other approaches try to map out in more abstract terms the discourses which circulate in society at a specific point in time or in relation to a specific social field. It is much more a question of differences of degree than of qualitative differences. For instance, although discursive psychology focuses on people's concrete everyday practices, they often presuppose bigger, socially shared, discursive structures which people draw on and transform in text and talk. And although Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is most interested in the more abstract 'depersonalised' discourses, they presuppose that these discourses are created, maintained and changed through concrete articulations in everyday life. But, at the same time, differences in focus reflect differing theoretical emphases: discursive psychology is more interested in people's active use of discourse as a resource in the co-production of meaning in social interaction than discourse theory which focuses on how discourses restrict possibilities of action and exclude alternative constructions of the world. This reflects their differences with respect to the weight placed on people's agency, noted above. For instance, while all approaches view people as subjects of discourse – and hereby decentred, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory follows Foucault and views the individual as determined by discursive structures whereas Potter and Wetherell's version of discursive psychology (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1992) [3] (in common with Fairclough's critical discourse analysis) stresses *both* that people use discourses as resources in uttering sentences which have never been uttered before *and* that discursive resources work to constrain people's language use as they provide the terms of talk.

## 4. APPLYING DISCOURSE ANALYSIS TO TEXTS: FIRST STEPS

There is no space here to illustrate how different discourse analytical approaches, by virtue of their distinctive concepts and methods, produce distinctive analyses of texts. I will instead present a rudimentary, preliminary analysis based on an analytical question that is founded on a knowledge interest common to all discourse analytical approaches[4]: *Can we identify the contours of particular discourses that construct 'health', 'knowledge', identities and social relations in particular ways?* The text for analysis emanates from the corpus of data produced in a current research project based on case studies on the 'dialogic' communication of research-based

knowledge whereby communication is conceived as a dialogue between knowledge forms rather than the one-way transmission of expert knowledge to a less knowledgeable target-group. The project combines discourse analysis and dialogic approaches to communication in order to investigate the enactment of 'dialogue' as a discursive construction that constitutes knowledge and power in different cases of dialogic communication practice. The text for analysis belongs to the corpus of a case study of a health communication initiative in which so-called 'drugs guides' (trained educators in their early 20's) go out to schools and carry out one hour sessions with classes of pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 about alcohol and drugs consumption. The main research question is: *How are 'dialogue' and the 'negotiation of knowledges' constructed in the communication between drug guides and young people and with what consequences for the scope of action of the different participants in the session?*

The text is an extract from one of 1-hour sessions in which two drugs guides engage in communication on drugs and alcohol consumption with a class of young people between the ages of 14 and 16. In the interaction, different discourses are articulated which each construct different understandings of health and knowledge and position the speakers and addressees in different ways resulting in differing scopes of action. In the extract, the drugs guides Peter and Mathilde are discussing the factors that influence the physical effects of alcohol consumption:

> Mathilde: So there isn't really anything that keeps it in the stomach is there? So it goes into the bloodstream immediately, so you can get drunk really fast.
> Peter: It's the case that in the stomach a little of the alcohol is burned off. So if you have a lot of food in there, the stomach is more active, so there's more that can be burned off. If you don't have very much food, it goes straight out into your blood, so it comes out much faster and you get more drunk or drunk more quickly. […]
> Mathilde: So that was something – food – what else plays a role?
> Peter: Whether or not you come from Jutland, like Sophie.
> Mathilde: Yes
> Valdemar: Does weight also play a role?
> Mathilde: What?
> Valdemar: Your weight.
> Mathilde: Yes, there's one other thing that plays a role?
> Jonas: If you drink something at the same time
> Mathilde: Mmm
> Jonas: Isn't there something about drinking a unit of alcohol and a glass of water?

Mathilde: It definitely plays a role because then you don't drink as much – there is a longer time between drinks. So it definitely plays a role. But more specifically to do with your body. There is ONE thing that plays a role? Yes
Pupil: Whether or not you're used to it, maybe?
Mathilde: That definitely also plays a role – but it isn't what I'm looking for either. But it's right. But what is the difference between the two of us?
Peter: Me and Mathilde.
Pupil: Sex
Mathilde: Precisely but why – take a shot!
Peter: That's right- just say it.
Pause/No answer
Mathilde: What is that women can do that men can't do?
Pupil: I don't know
Mathilde: They can give birth to children!
Peter: Oh, yes!
Mathilde: And what do women have so that they can give birth?
Valdemar: A womb
Mathilde: A womb, that's right (laughs). They have a lot more fat on their body also, they have huge hips, breasts – what do men have more of?
Pupil: Muscles

In the text, a discourse of medical science is constructed in which 'the body' is a central sign. The *medical discourse* is a discourse which stresses the dangers of over-consumption of alcohol in relation to the functioning of bodily organs and processes. The discourse ascribes to individuals an identity as responsible individuals who should be active in protecting their own personal health. The individual's identity then is constructed around the subject position of 'responsible agent'. This discourse is co-articulated with a *traditional pedagogic discourse*. Both the medical discourse and the pedagogic discourse share an objectivist understanding of knowledge: according to both discourses, there are correct and incorrect answers. When the two discourses are co-articulated in the talk of the drugs' guides, the drugs' guides are given the subject position of experts in possession of objective knowledge and the pupils are positioned in the subject position of less knowledgeable recipients. Thus the truth claims of the drugs guides are presented as objective truths using categorical, objective modalities, for instance, in an account of the effects of food on the body's absorption of alcohol: *'So if you have a lot of food in there, the stomach is more active, so there's more that*

*can be burned off'*. And the assumption of the existence of correct and incorrect answers underpins the drugs guide, Mathilde's questions, within the traditional pedagogic discourse, that are designed to elicit the correct answer, for instance, in her utterances, '*What else plays a role?'*; '*Yes, there's one other thing that plays a role?'*; '*That definitely also plays a role – but it isn't what I'm looking for either. But it's right'*; '*Precisely but why – take a shot'*.

At the same time, a **dialogic discourse** is articulated through the repeated giving of affirmative answers: when Mathilde probes for the right answer, she simultaneously provides appreciative confirmations of the validity of pupils' views: it is not the answer that she's looking for, '*But it's right'*. Across the three discourses, the pupils are positioned as pupils who are expected to participate actively in answering the guides' questions.

If we were to venture beyond this preliminary stage of analysis, the specific concepts and analytical tools of different discourse analytic approaches could be enlisted. For example, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory could be applied in order to analyse how particular discourses are formed by the partial fixation of meaning around certain nodal points (which are privileged signs around which the other signs are ordered), whether the different discourses engage in a hegemonic struggle over meaning and how identities are constructed relationally – in relation to something outside – through the construction of chains of equivalence.

Critical discourse analysis could be used to explore how discourses are realised linguistically in the text, and this focus on language would help to identify and demarcate the discourses. Moreover, critical discourse analysis involves the systematic analysis of *social practice* as an analytically distinct dimension of discursive practice. Here theories about the dialogic turn within the communication of research and questions of power, social control and democracy could be drawn upon in critical discussion of the social and political implications of this highly circumscribed form of dialogic communication, including discussion of the question of whether and how dialogic discourses mask other possible ways of knowing and doing by offering the false promise of a power-free site for conversation among equals.

Were Potter and Wetherell's approach to discursive psychology to be applied, the focus would be on the ways in which speakers use discourses as flexible resources (*interpretative repertoires*) in this particular context of interaction, and on the rhetorical strategies speakers use to establish their accounts of the world as solid and objective and competing accounts as

false and subjective. Attention would also be paid to speakers' flexible positioning within different discourses and on the ways in which speakers' positioning of themselves and others support or challenge particular constructions of the world, producing – in the case of the drugs guides' session – a consensus of meaning.

## 5. TO CONCLUDE

The distinctive contribution of discourse analytic approaches lies in the focus – across approaches – on how discourses work to constitute knowledge and power relations in particular ways that mask, marginalise or totally exclude other ways of knowing and doing. Whether or not this focus is appropriate for a particular research project obviously depends on the research question, but of course the research question itself is shaped by metatheoretical (ontological and epistemological) assumptions about the nature of social reality and ways of obtaining knowledge about that world (see eg. Silverman (2006) for an account of the interrelations between metatheory, theory and methodology in project design). Thus the choice of a discourse analytic approach as a methodology for doctoral (and other!) research in communication, culture and society must be based on consideration of analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of discourse analytical approaches both *within* the terms of the discourse analytic field and from *external* perspectives that critically interrogate discourse analytical approaches.

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## NOTES

[1] The field of discourse analysis as conceived and outlined here is restricted to *social constructionist* approaches. These are approaches that embrace the fundamental social constructionist premise that the phenomena of the social and cultural world and their meanings are created in social interaction. It thus does not cover uses of the label 'discourse analysis' such as its use in linguistics to denote the analysis of relations between sentences and statements on the micro level (for example, Brown and Yule (1983)).

[2] This introduction draws on Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), in particular Chapter 1.

[3] Potter and Wetherell's (1987) approach to discursive psychology represents a synthetic approach that unites two other perspectives in discursive psychology: namely, a poststructuralist perspective that focuses on how specific discourses constitute subjects and objects, and an interactionist perspective drawing on ethnomethodology and conversation analysis and that looks at ways in which people's discourse is organised in conversational sequences and oriented towards social action in specific contexts of interaction.

[4] In the study to which the data belongs, a much more detailed and in-depth analysis is carried out of the corpus of data, applying key concepts developed in the approaches of critical discourse analysis, Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) discourse theory and Potter and Wetherell's (1987) approach to discursive psychology. The corpus consists of audio-recordings of five 1-hour sessions with the drugs' guides together with detailed observation notes.

# How to do fieldwork?

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

PhD researchers and their supervisors increasingly give more weight to fieldwork, which involves collecting data at sites which are physically and/or culturally distant from the places where researchers are based (Clifford, 1997; Scheyvens and Storey, 2003). There are a range of methodological, practical and ethical issues, which require clarification before a researcher enters 'the field'. This chapter aims to discuss these issues, focusing on four main questions: What is fieldwork? How to design it? How to conduct it? How to evaluate it?

## 2. WHAT IS FIELDWORK?

In order to figure out what is fieldwork, we need to find out what 'the field' means. There are three main views on the concept of 'the field'. First, 'the field' has been attached to '*spatial differences*' (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003: 8) or '*practices of physical movement*' (Clifford, 1997: 54).

Second, the notion of 'the field' points to cultural differences, which can make first time researchers feel difficult to adjust to (Geertz, 1988). In addition, searching an 'exotic' or 'different other' also creates a kind of feeling of excitement or a sense of adventure. This cultural notion is widely accepted by social and cultural anthropologists, who consider fieldwork as an essential part of their research (Freid, 1968). Here the conduct of field research quite often takes place in another culture or another country (Van Gennep, 1960; Burgess, 1984). This approach allows social and cultural anthropologists to engage in the social and cultural context of 'the field' and draw data from 'living cultures' rather than 'laboratories' (Fried, 1968: 136; Burgess, 1984: 11).

Third, the term 'the field' has been conceptualised as 'political sites' (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997) or 'social terrain' (Nast, 1994) in contrast with the senses of spatial and cultural differences. For Nast (1994: 57), '*the "field" is not naturalised in terms of "a place" or "a people", rather it is located and defined in terms of specific political objectives…*'. This line of argument aims to move the notion of 'the field' away from a pure spatial term, which has been occupied by a number of binary oppositions, such as home/away, here/there, staying/moving and insider/outsider (Clifford, 1997; Scheyvens and Storey, 2003). This approach has been adopted by an increasing number of development studies, which are based on fieldwork in the developing countries (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003).

Despite the different views on the meaning of the field, fieldwork remains an under-studied area. Not enough training on methods and critical reflection on the selection of field sites is provided (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997; Scheyvens and Storey, 2003). The following sections discuss the major theoretical, practical and ethical issues concerning field research.

## 3. HOW TO DESIGN FIELDWORK?

Once a researcher begins to prepare for the fieldwork, (s)he has to deal with a variety of methodological and practical issues concerning the selection of research methods and field sites, how to get access, sampling and research ethics. I shall discuss these issues and combining the discussion with my own fieldwork conducted in China between December 2003 and February 2005 for my doctoral study about the most influential news organisation in the country – Xinhua News Agency (Xin, 2006).

### – Philosophical concerns

Selecting a method for many social researchers is about providing philosophical justifications. In other words, the philosophies adopted by social researchers, as suggested, determine the specific approaches they employ for conducting their studies (Cuba and Lincoln, 1994; Lazar, 2004; Smith and Heshusius, 1986). Therefore, the traditional divide in social research between quantitative/qualitative approaches is to a large extent determined by competing philosophies: scientific 'idealism' and social 'realism' (Altheide and Johnson, 1994). These two competing philosophies tend to be favoured by naturalists and interpretivists respectively. Naturalists argue that '*the methods of natural science are mod-*

els for social science', while interpretivists claim that '*there is a sharp distinction*' between natural science and social science (Lazar, 2004: 8). Interpretivists also emphasise '*the meaningfulness of social life and the alleged irrelevance of natural scientists' modes of analysis and explanation*' (Lazar, 2004: 8). According to this philosophical divide, there are two common ways of 'knowing a real world' by social researchers: inductive and deductive approaches (Seale, 1999: 23). However, the clear cut between idealism and realism and that between induction and deduction does not help with but confines the thinking of social researchers to know the complexity of the real world (Seale, 1999).

In order to know the real world, social researchers should detach themselves from philosophical conceptual divisions (Hammersley, 1995; Seale, 1999). This means that '*philosophical positions can be understood by social researchers as resources for thinking, rather than taken as problems to be solved before research can proceed*' (Seale, 1999: 25). In practice, this means adoption of 'a middle way' between idealism and realism and between induction and deduction for conducting social and cultural researches (Seale, 1999: 27). The detachment from philosophical perspectives should allow one to be more concerned with the particular research topic one is dealing with.

**– Selection of research methods**

If research is '*a critical process for asking and attempting to answer questions about the world*' (Dane, 1990: 4), then a research method should be '*a means to an end*' of the academic inquiry about the world (Hansen et. al., 1998: 10). In practice, selection of research methods is a negotiated decision, which has to take into account suitability and possibility of employing a research method.

For social anthropologists, the term 'fieldwork' seems '*synonymous with the collection of data using observational methods*', however it '*is also used to refer to the collection of data using a social survey*' (Burgess, 1984: 2). In fact, there are a range of other research methods which can be adopted by field researchers, including questionnaires, interviews (see Richard Kilborn's chapter in this volume), archive or documentary study. According to Schatzman and Strauss (1973: 7), field researchers are 'methodological pragmatists', which are willing to use '*any methods of inquiry as a system of strategies and operation designed – at any time – for getting answers to certain questions about events*' which interest them.

However, being 'methodological pragmatists' does not mean compromising the quality of research. This also requires awareness of other methodological possibilities. For example, I decided to combine

semi-structured interviews and a qualitative archive study for my PhD research into China's Xinhua News Agency. This decision was based on a comparison with other approaches adopted by other Chinese media and news agency studies. Quantitative content analysis was commonly employed by news agency and Chinese media scholars as a major means of collecting data for their investigations. This quantitative method is good at gaining a general picture of the content of the news coverage of a particular media organisation over a certain period. It can help in capturing of the changes in news content during a selected period. However, a self-contained content analysis is less effective than qualitative methods, such as archive study and semi-structured interview, for exploring the causes and dynamics of changes to the structure and operation of a news organisation. In practice, it is still problematic to analyse the content of the enormous amount of the whole agency's news dispatches. The most comprehensive study of Xinhua's news coverage so far is Elliot's study of English-language news released by the agency for overseas consumption between 1950 and 1989 (Elliot, 2000). Yet, the output of English-language news releases only amounts to a small proportion of Xinhua news wires, the bulk of which consists of Chinese-language news dispatched for domestic consumption. These two kinds of news wires serve different purposes and are approached in different ways. It was thus not realistic for a PhD researcher alone to deal with this huge amount of news wires. Hence, I adopted a combination of qualitative archive study and semi-structured interview as the major methods of collecting primary data for research into Xinhua. In addition, I also used quantitative second-hand data, such as governmental and Xinhua statistics, for illustrating changes to Xinhua's business operation between 1980 and 2005.

**– Access and sampling**
Access has always been an essential issue for all researchers, no matter which methods are adopted  for their academic enquiry. No access, no research. Hence, being 'methodological pragmatists' also means to be realistic when it comes to selection of research methods and field sites for a PhD project with a low budget and under time pressure.

There are several ways of taking non-representative sampling, mostly for qualitative research (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003: 43): 1/ Convenience sample, which '*occurs when people are chosen because they are conveniently available*'; 2/ Snowball (or chain) sample, which '*can be a useful technique for selecting respondents with particular characteristics where information on people with those characteristics is lackin*' (Nichols, 1991: 71, quoted by

Scheyvens and Storey, 2003: 43); 3/ Purposeful sample, which can be adopted '*when the researcher makes a judgement on whom to include in the sample*' (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003: 43); 4/ Quota sample, which '*occurs when people are chosen with characteristics representative of the total population*' (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003: 43).

In terms of sampling, there are often practical problems, such as the lack of time or resources, which might constrain the possibility for PhD researchers to select samples they need. If the researcher is not able to enter the field for sampling, then telephone interviews or online conversations via MSN could be utilised for facilitating sampling outside the field.

**– Check list for practical issues**

Apart from selecting research methods and field sites, the researcher also needs to consider a number of practical issues which are equally important for successful fieldwork (Leslie and Storey, 2003):

1/ Funding. The PhD researcher should apply for sufficient funds either from his/her own university or from outside research funding bodies as early as possible. It is very important to get advice and support from your supervisor(s).

2/ Cultural preparation, including learning the language, in which the researcher will have to communicate with your informants in the field. Basic knowledge of local culture, traditions and laws of the 'field' is also needed.

3/ Health and safety preparations, which are particularly important for those researchers who plan fieldwork in environmentally poor areas, war zones and places with high rates of violence. It is strongly advisable that the researcher receives '*what is deemed necessary by medical authorities before entering the field*' (Leslie and Storey, 2003: 84). It is also necessary to obtain travel insurance, note one's blood group and pack a comprehensive first aid kit. Additionally, it is important to '*realistically evaluate the "degree of danger" that you may be exposed to in the field and its potential sources*' (Leslie and Storey, 2003: 84).

4/ Technical preparations, which include applying for a visa or travel documents, getting an official letter from your university or research associations (if applicable) to support your field research and preparing equipment for recording interviews and taking notes.

5/ Research scheduling, which guides you to decide 'when is the most suitable time to go', 'where to stay' and 'how long to stay for'.

## 5. HOW TO CONDUCT FIELDWORK?

Theoretically speaking, if fieldwork is well prepared, conducting field-work should be a process of reaching your research aims by adopting the methods that a researcher has decided to employ. In practice, however, fieldwork is more complicated than a PhD researcher could anticipate in advance. Unexpected circumstances can occur at any time in the field. Therefore, a researcher needs to be more flexible in following the original research design in the field. It is quite common to reconsider or amend your research design during the fieldwork. Besides, there are ethical issues which a researcher needs to deal with before, during and after fieldwork. According to Scheyvens, Nowak and Scheyvens (2003: 139), '*decisions based on ethics are not determined by how successful the researcher will be but rather by whether the research is just or not; by the extent to which the research takes the participants' needs and concerns into account*'.

### 5.1. Case study: conducting semi-structured interviews in China

My experience of conducting semi-structured interviews in China for my doctoral thesis (Xin, 2006) was a good example to discuss the major issues related to field research in practice.

The research design was based on the following considerations. First, interviewing is helpful in generating '*empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives*' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997: 113). Among the three types of interviews – structured, semi-structured and unstructured – structured interviews mainly refer to standardised survey or questionnaire interviews, which are quantitatively oriented (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997: 113), while the survey-based interview tends to ask 'closed questions', strictly following an interview guide or schedule but allowing little or no flexibility and sensitivity to contextual variations (Bloch, 2004: 165; Byrne, 2004: 181). Semi-structured interviewing is a '*suitable method for accessing complex issues such as values and understanding*' (Byrne, 2004: 182). Therefore, it was suitable for my PhD research, which aimed to examine the values and understandings of Xinhua News Agency's managers and journalists in relation to the business operations and journalistic practices of the organisation.

Second, interviewing can create a 'methodological triangulation' in order to cancel out the biases and limitations of archival research (Campbell and Fiske, 1959: 101; quoted by Seale, 1999: 53).

Third, semi-structured interviews, which follow an interview guide containing key questions, can allow interviewers to be '*free to follow up*

*ideas, probe responses and ask for clarification or further elaboration*' (Arksey and Knight, 1999: 7). The interview guide increases the chances that interviewers will '*get a more considered response than closed questions*' (Byrne, 2004: 182).

In order to conduct interviews more effectively, researchers are recommended to adopt 'active interviewing'. This approach is based on the interaction between respondents and interviewers (Atkinson and Silverman, 2001: 63). However, researchers should also be aware that even a well-managed active interview is still '*a kind of limited "improvisational" performance*' (Atkinson and Silverman, 2001: 64).

The research design of my research took these factors into account. Access is the major concern for all researchers carrying out this type of study. Due to lack of access, most existing studies in Chinese media and news agencies opt for self-contained content analysis rather than interviews as their major research method. I worked as a journalist at Xinhua's headquarters for several years before commencing my PhD study, thus I was able to build good contacts with the agency and obtained many practical insights into how best to access potential interviewees.

The selection of interviewees was based on considerations about interviewees' potential contributions to the research questions, interview sites and access[1]. I adopted the 'snowballing' strategy to start interviewing people who were suitable to be interviewed and available in the first place. The first interviewees approached were mostly former colleagues of mine at Xinhua. Then these interviewees recommended or even facilitated contact with other informants. Between December 2003 and February 2005 I successfully conducted 94 semi-structured interviews mostly with people directly and indirectly connected to Xinhua[2].

In order to fit interviewees' busy schedules, I was flexible in choosing the interview settings, including working, private and public places. Most interview settings were chosen according to informants' preferences and conveniences. The majority of interviews with business and news executives took place in their offices. The interviews with business and news executives lasted for 40–60 minutes. The length of the interviews with journalists varied from 40 minutes to about two hours. Most interviews with Xinhua employees were unrecorded (only 18 out 81 interviews were recorded) because most interviewees preferred not to record the conversations with me. I also noticed that when the recorder was on, interviewees looked a bit nervous or uncomfortable to talk about what they saw as 'sensitive' topics. Some interviewees even asked me to turn off the recorder before telling me the 'sensitive' part of their stories

or opinions. In these cases, I turned off the recorder upon request, and took notes.

All notes were reviewed and transcribed immediately after interviews, mostly on the day when the author's memory was fresh. I had to contact a few interviewees after the interviews because I needed confirmation of some information that was missed in the notes. They all kindly explained any missing information to me. All interviews were transcribed within a week. I also took a research diary to record my observations about interviewees, the interviewing process and what had been discussed before or after interviews.

The major ethical issued related to my research were the following: first, researchers should '*carefully and truthfully*' inform interviewees about the research project (Fontana and Frey, 2003: 89). I provided all interviews with a summary of my research and clearly stated the aim of interviews before the informants agreed to be interviewed. Some informants also received an outline of the interview guide upon request. Second, researchers are obliged to protect informants or interviewees' privacy (Fontana and Frey, 2003: 89). I avoided asking too many personal questions as well as making any value judgments on their personal opinions during interviews. Third, researchers are obliged to protect informants or interviewees from any kinds of harm, including '*physical, emotional or any other kind*' (Fontana and Frey, 2003: 89). There was an agreement between me and interviewees that their names must not be identified in the thesis and the records of the conversations with them would not be shown to third parties.

## 6. HOW TO EVALUATE FIELDWORK?

There are at least five main approaches to evaluate or review fieldwork (Burgess, 1984: 217–218).

1/ A brief survey, identifying the research area the field study falls into, its origins and contributions or originality;

2/ Critical reflections on handling the relationship between methodological problems, theories and methods adopted;

3/ Critical reflections on data collecting process, including the '*problems encountered and the ways in which these problems were handled*';

4/ '*Questions of reliability and validity together with an assessment*' of the way in which the researcher communicates with an audience(s) or informants;

5/ Proposing perspective research areas can help the researcher to be aware of the limitations and strengths of his or her current research.

Here critical reflections on the research design, the field research process and the relationship between researchers and researched are the key to fieldwork evaluations. Critical reflections on the problems encountered and research limitations are very helpful for assessing the reliability and validity of the field research as well as for identifying further research areas.

If we come back to my PhD research, there are at least two kinds of critical reflections which are necessary for evaluating its quality. First, it is about the relationship between the researcher and the interviewees. My position as a former employee of Xinhua in most cases has helped me get more inside stories, as many informants attempted to inform me with something they thought I might not know enough about or I might be most interested in. However, some interviewees apparently were negatively influenced by the fact that I was a former employee at Xinhua, as they attempted to 'filter' or delete some details about the information that they assumed I should know. This can be seen on the occasions when I asked for further explanation or clarification about the points the interviewee had just addressed. Before giving further explanation or more detailed information to my follow-up questions, most informants explained to me that they did not give me detailed information as they assumed that I already knew it. In order to minimise the influence of my possible prejudices upon interviewees, I tried to be a good 'listener', without giving them any clues about the information that I had learnt from my previous experiences of working at Xinhua.

Second, it is about the limitations of the semi-structured interviews conducted for the research. As only a small proportion of the interviewees (13 out 94) were based outside Xinhua, this has made the selection of interviewees less proportional. If I had had more time and resources, I would have interviewed more people who were working for Xinhua's media and non-media subscribers, based inside and outside China.

In addition, about 5 semi-structured interviews were conducted in a manner which is more typical to structured interviews. For these instances, upon their request interviewees were informed of the content of the interview guide in advance and they tried to answer my questions by strictly following the interview guide in order to save time. All these interviews lasted for less than an hour.

Last but not least, there is a question of the 'truthfulness' of the interviewees. In the case of the current research, this is not the question of lack of trust between the interviewer and interviewees. Moreover, it is sensible for me to believe that information given during the interviews was accurate. Rather, it is still necessary to be critical about the 'truth' reflected by any kinds of interviews, which can not be taken as ' "*mirror reflections" of the reality that exists in the social world*' (Miller and Glassner, 1997: 99).

As I have demonstrated in this section, the critical reflections need to be discussed along with the approaches adopted by researchers for handling the methodological problems.

## 7. SUMMARY

This chapter aimed to provide some theoretical and practical insights into field research or fieldwork, using my PhD research experience as an example. It briefly discussed the major methodological and ethical issues related to fieldwork. This remains an under-studied area and thus deserves further investigation.

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## NOTES

[1] I divided potential interviewees into three major groups: business executives, news executives and ordinary journalists, including editors and reporters.

[2] Among all informants, 81 were Xinhua employees, including managers and journalists, based in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Macao, former Xinhua employees and media subscribers. Thirteen informants (including 4 Xinhua former journalists) were based outside Xinhua and most of these (11 out 13) 'consumed' Xinhua's news wires and newspapers, whilst others were working for Xinhua's media subscribers and business partners (6 out 13). In addition to the 10 interviews conducted in Beijing during the preliminary fieldwork, there were 3 sampling interviews conducted in London.

# 'So when did you actually decide to become a journalist?' Interviewing informants as part of a media research project

Richard Kilborn

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The interviewing workshop at the 2007 Summer School was designed to help students develop their interviewing techniques when carrying out a piece of media research. More than half the students participating in the workshop indicated that they had used interviewing in the course of their research work or were planning to do so.

Before moving to a more detailed consideration of interviewing techniques, students were asked whether they had any more comments to make about the process or practice of interviewing. It quickly emerged from the discussion that whilst there was widespread recognition of the importance of interviewing, comparatively low priority seemed to be given to it in the various programmes of postgraduate training in which they had participated. No one present could offer an explanation for this relative neglect, but one or two of the participants suggested that research supervisors in their experience seemed to cling to the belief that interviewing was something you could only really pick up 'on the job'. Whilst some students agreed that, to become a successful interviewer, you have to expose yourself to different forms of interview experience, the majority felt that there were a number of ways in which you could prepare yourself for conducting a productive interview. One very sound suggestion was that, to be a successful interviewer you would be well advised to get to know what it felt like to be an interviewee. Experiencing an interview from the perspective of the interviewee would arguably

make one more aware of the dynamics of the interview situation where one party is so palpably calling the shots.

The other point to emerge in the opening discussion was that one needed to acknowledge that interviewing was one of a whole raft of techniques and methods employed in the process of building up a corpus of evidential material. Each method and approach should, just like a surgical tool, be designed for use at a particular stage and for a specific purpose during the research operation. Complementarity was what was required, since it was unlikely that any one method would in itself be sufficient to generate the range and volume of findings on the basis of which well-founded conclusions could be drawn. Adopting an appropriate mix of methods could also enable the researcher to test the validity of claims elicited by other research methods.

Though students agreed about the usefulness of interviewing, they were all well aware of some of the difficulties of setting up and carrying out a good interview. One student made the point that, for him, it meant a quasi-Faustian pact of moving away from the relative security of the researcher's scholarly domain into the uncertainties of the real world. This in itself represented a considerable challenge. Following up this point, other students observed that they sometimes had great difficulties in setting up meetings with busy media professionals who were working to tight deadlines and operating in a cut-throat business environment. These individuals did not always welcome the information-seeking researcher with open arms. And even if the researcher succeeded in arranging an interview, there was always the danger of a 'clash of cultures', where the party being interviewed simply failed to understand the terms (both linguistic and conceptual) being employed by the researcher. Speaking the same language is, after all, the vital prerequisite for any piece of successful communication.

The final point to come out of the first part of the workshop concerned the extent to which *broadcast interviews* might serve as a model for the aspiring researcher. The general feeling here was that, whilst one might be able to pick up some general hints from analysing such interviews, one would have to acknowledge that the screened interview was in many ways fulfilling functions other than those of simply eliciting information or opinion. As often as not interviewers themselves would be striving to create a polished performance in response to the entertainment-oriented requirements of contemporary news and current affairs broadcasting. It was on the other hand conceded that one might still learn a good deal from media professionals when it came to developing

techniques for probing more reluctant informants when the latter were less fulsome in their responses than one might have hoped.

## 2. WHAT'S THE VALUE OF INTERVIEWING?

At this point students divided into small groups to address three different sets of questions. At the end of each brainstorming session groups reported back on their findings and everyone had the opportunity to debate the issues arising. It was made clear at this juncture that discussion would have to be limited to face-to-face interviews. In the course of their researches students would probably have to resort to a number of telephone interviews, but on this occasion time constraints meant that this would have to be the subject of a future workshop. What follows is a short summary of what came out of these brainstorming sessions.

Asked to assess the value of interviewing within the larger research process, students came up with the following:

- Picking up on an issue already explored in the initial discussion, most groups were eager to stress that interviewing, as a method, could be an extremely useful tool in *corroborating* findings that had been obtained by other means such as questionnaires.
- Groups were also agreed that one of the primary values of interviewing lay in what one student referred to as its 'person-centredness'. Information obtained was the result of a piece of real, live interaction and for this reason had a high degree of 'authenticity'. Such information could claim to have evidentiary value in the sense that the informant's pronouncements were made in a situation where an interviewee had agreed to respond to a number of interlocutor questions. Students placed particular emphasis on the building up of a relationship of trust between interviewer and informant. It was regarded as the vital prerequisite to the successful outcome of any interview. Once established this bond of trust could then act as a 'springboard' for a number of further clarifying interviews. It could also result in suggestions being made concerning additional interview partners or other potentially productive lines of inquiry.
- Several participants wanted to comment further on what they saw as some further benefits of the face-to-face meeting with informants. They suggested that it put the interviewer in the position of being able to interpret and assess the validity and veracity of an informant's comments as they are being delivered. Communica-

tion, as we all know, does not simply occur through words alone. Facial expression, tone of voice and everything else that belongs to the rich paraphernalia of body language are all important markers of meaning. Making a mental note of these telling markers allows the interviewer to draw inferences or read between the lines of what an informant is actually saying. If an informant begins to hesitate or look uncomfortable, this could lead the interviewer to challenge them on this point. If on the other hand an informant gives every impression of being supremely self-confident, this does not necessarily mean they have nothing to hide. To illustrate this point one of the students present cited the case of an interview where the journalist he was interviewing seemed to be deliberately constructing an identity for himself (presumably in the attempt to prevent the researcher getting too close to any uncomfortable truths).

- Interviews, because they represent an act of interpersonal communication, also allow the interviewer to capitalise on various strategies that would typically be employed in such an exchange. The interviewer can thus, with some legitimacy, ask the informant to clarify or amplify certain statements. This can be especially useful in those situations where the interviewee is possibly being a little economical with the truth or where it is felt that more probing is necessary to uncover facts or information that had hitherto remained hidden from view. Participants in the workshop were of the opinion that it was these supplementary probes, judiciously inserted in the course of a natural-seeming conversation, that often elicited the most revealing responses.

- What also emerged out of student group work discussion was an acknowledgment that interviews were productive because they had built-in *flexibility*. Questionnaires were, by contrast, relatively inflexible, in that they required those responding to work their way through a particular series of questions. Also, quite often in questionnaires respondents were not entirely clear what researchers were looking for or else they felt that the very way in which the questions were framed did not allow them sufficient scope to reply in ways they would have deemed appropriate. Interviews, on the other hand, because they are 'semi-structured events', will normally encourage the informant to choose their own language and terminology in framing their response. Thus, what might appear at first sight to be somewhat deviant responses can on occasion prove to be very illuminating. It can even lead to a recognition on the

interviewer's part that there are alternative perspectives from which the whole research topic can be viewed.

- Whilst the value of interviews is to be measured primarily in terms of what the *researcher* is able to extract from the respondent, it was also felt that interviews had an additional value in that they gave the interviewee an opportunity to reflect critically on certain aspects of their own professional practice. This could sometimes result in them coming up with genuinely insightful remarks on the organisation they belonged to.

- The final point to come out of this part of the discussion related to the value of interviews in terms of the documentary evidence they provided. Once again there was an acknowledgment that interviews could be beneficial in helping fill some of the gaps left by other types of research inquiry. One student suggested that an interview in which the person was allowed to critically reflect on the actual workings of the organisation they belonged to (as opposed to the glossy upbeat version put out by the company's PR department) could act as an important corrective in an age dominated by promotional culture and image manipulation.

## 3. WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS OF INTERVIEWING?

Having identified a number of potentially very positive aspects of interviewing, it was now time to inquire about possible limitations. Whilst none of the limitations listed below is sufficient in itself to seriously detract from those positive outcomes, it was felt that they were all items or issues that the budding interviewer would do well to reflect on before venturing into the field. Most of the issues referred to below relate to the particular situation in which an interview takes pace. An interview is, namely, a dialogic transaction, but one in which each party has made a number of calculations about the desired outcome. The actual interview may therefore bear a certain resemblance to a conversational exchange, but as with any communicative act there are a number of factors which have to be taken into account when interpreting or analysing the respective inputs of the interview participants. Students were particularly aware that in the case of a PhD research project there could be problems when a relatively youthful academic researcher attempted to interview a seasoned, if not wily media professional well-versed in the art of keeping potentially incriminating information under wraps.

These then are some of the points which students felt would need to be taken into account when assessing interview material:

- An interview is an essentially structured, purposive or directed conversation in which one party (the interviewer) uses a number of strategies to uncover information about the informant or the organisation they represent. The conversation is purposive in so far as the interviewer will normally seek to keep a low profile and will frequently appear – by persistent tell-me-more nodding gestures – to be agreeing with most of what the interviewee is saying.

- Even though the interviewer may come well prepared and have a list of pertinent questions, this may in itself not be sufficient to guarantee a successful interview outcome. The relatively inexperienced interviewer – with endearing modesty and diffidence – can easily find him/herself being steamrollered by the supremely confident, if not downright arrogant media professional.

- A related problem is that many interviewees – in spite of the best attempts of the interviewer to prevent this – will come into the interview with a clear agenda as to what they want to say. If allowed to go unchallenged, interviewees who seize the initiative in this way will simply deliver the kind of performance that may meet with the approval of the company's PR department but will be of limited value to the researcher. One workshop participant reminded the group that an increasing number of company executives will undergone special media training and will have received detailed instructions on how to fend off or deflect difficult questions from interviewers.

- Still on the subject of interviewer-respondent relations, consideration was also given to the fact that interviewees may well experience *split loyalties* when responding to an interviewer's questions. As a member of a company, they may feel an institutional loyalty. On the other hand they may well recognise that the interviewer is requiring them to produce some critical reflections on the workings of the organisation. There is no easy way of resolving this conflict. All the more reason, therefore, for the interviewer to make clear from the outset the rules of engagement according to which the interview will be conducted. If the informant wishes their name not be disclosed in any report, the guarantee of anonymity has to be given.

- Another potential limitation identified by students was that some informants might not be at all accustomed to being interviewed. They may struggle to give adequate responses to the questions put.

This might in turn lead to the interviewer having to interview more frequently than s/he might have wished. It could result in heightened frustration on the part of interviewees, as they begin to recognise that their responses lack the necessary coherence. (One student made the point that this may also be related to the informant's feeling of uncertainty as to how much they should actually divulge.)

▪ The final point also has to do with power relationships. Generally in an interview situation the odds are always stacked in favour of the interviewer. It is they who effectively set the agenda and have a controlling influence on how the interview develops. In the case of interviews where the informant holds a relatively high position in the company or is otherwise operating in a senior capacity, the interviewee may experience a little discomfort at having to adopt the unaccustomed role of respondent. In the majority of cases this does not constitute a serious limitation, but it may on occasion lead to the interviewee taking up an unduly patronising stance towards the researcher.

## 4. DO'S AND DON'TS OF INTERVIEWING

The final session of the workshop was devoted to exploring a number of 'nuts and bolts' issues relating to the conduct of interviews. What are the vital prerequisites of a successful interview? And, conversely, what should the interviewer attempt to avoid at all costs?

In discussing these issues students recognised that much of the advice they would offer under the heading of 'Do's and don'ts of interviewing' would be the result of experiences gained in the field, especially where the interview had not gone as well as the interviewer had hoped.

Here are few of the points that students made:

▪ Spare no pains in preparing for the interview. There is nothing worse for the interviewee than to confront an interviewer who is woefully under-informed about the topic to be discussed or the organisation to which the informant belongs.

▪ Always make it clear to the interviewee for what purpose the interview is being conducted. Where necessary, obtain the written consent of the interviewee.

▪ Check with the interviewee at the outset whether they mind the interview being recorded. Nowadays people will generally have

no objection to this, but it is nevertheless imperative that you formally gain their approval.

▪ Since the interview is going to involve a face-to-face encounter, you need to give some thought to issues such as dress code. One student also made the helpful suggestion: 'Please ensure that you've brushed your teeth'!

▪ Always remember that an interview should, ideally, resemble a serious conversation. Avoid therefore any tendency to turn it into a form of interrogation. The interviewee must never get the impression that you are attempting to squeeze information out of them.

▪ Get fully 'au fait' with the technology. There is nothing worse than discovering ten minutes into the interview that your batteries have failed or that you have not switched your recorder into 'record' mode. And remember to choose a recording location where the interviewee feels at ease. It is often a good idea to get informants away from their work environment, though always ensure that the location you choose does not have too much background noise.

▪ The interviewee will need to know about the broad intentions of the interview so that they can mentally prepare themselves. Wherever possible, however, avoid letting them have sight of your list of questions prior to the interview. By all means have a warm-up conversation so that your informant feels at ease in your presence, but do not attempt a full dress rehearsal before switching on the recorder. The advice is: Keep your powder dry!

▪ Learn the art of being a good listener. Interviews may require you to suppress your enthusiasm to participate as you might do in other types of conversation. Keep a relatively low profile and learn to coax responses out your respondent, using the standard conversational ploys ('Tell me a little more about…') Remember, above all, that interviews are managed or purposive conversation and that in being an interviewer you are also performing a designated role. Your interviewee will not hold it against you for appearing to be a 'shrinking violet'.

## 5. PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Having become aware in the first part of the workshop that there is undoubtedly more to interviewing than they might have imagined, students were now invited to put into practice what they had learned.

Having been divided into pairs – using a random selection procedure – they took it in turns to be interviewer and interviewee in the following simulation exercise.

**Figure 1:** An interviewing exercise

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**INTERVIEW TASK**

*Imagine you are a member of a small research group investigating patterns of media consumption amongst members of different generations. Your task is to interview a group of young adults (in the age range 20–30) about their earliest memories of watching television. Interviewees will need to respond to a series of questions that seek to establish, among other things:*

- *The names of the programmes that have left the greatest impression on them*
- *The conditions (e.g. where in the house) in which the viewing took place*
- *Whether they discussed what they watched with their parents or with other children.*

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As is frequently the case with role-playing tasks of this type, students found this exercise to be a little more challenging than they had anticipated. In particular some of them experienced difficulty in adhering to their allotted roles. Some also found the role of interviewer – one in which they consciously had to direct the course of events – more difficult than they had imagined. All were agreed, however, that what they had learned in the course of this interview test-drive would hopefully stand them in good stead when they came to do interviews for real.

# Networks in action.
# What social network analysis can do for political economy of search engines?

Gregor Petrič

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the 1970's several authors in the social sciences (e.g. Lorrain and White, 1971) anticipated that social network analysis would trigger an exceptional paradigm shift, a revolutionary turn, one comparable to the invention of Euclidean space in physics with all its generalisations and implications. The vast expansion of research work in the field of social network analysis that followed (Freeman, 2004) might be a signal that those ambitious words have materialised, yet some caution is needed in order not to be biased by the enthusiasm of the novelty. On one hand, it is plausible to believe in the success of network logic since the structural properties of late/post modern society (Giddens, 1991; Bauman, 2000) go hand in hand with the conceptual properties that are often accompanied by social network analysis. Dynamics, openness, flexibility, ephemerality, individualisation, convergence are often concepts more suitable for the 'new' network paradigm in comparison to 'old', variable, static-oriented perspectives. On the other hand, observers warn that the social network analysis is primarily a tool for analysing empirical data, while network logic is a perspective of understanding the social world, sometimes even an ideology. However, the network analysis hype spread like a virus through the natural and social sciences, not excluding communication studies. Further, it seems that social network analysis is ideally suited to communication studies which, as Monge (1987) claimed, is primarily interested in relations between actors and not in their characteristics, which is just one of the basic methodological assumptions of social network analysis.

In the chapter I shall briefly touch upon the controversies regarding the paradigmatic status of social network analysis, while the chapter's primary aim is to present and discuss social network analysis as a convenient tool to analyse research problems within communication science. The basic prerequisites for social network analysis will thus be presented and problematised. I will try to provide instructions for detecting the suitability of network analysis for investigating a specified research problem. Some general questions which can be well illuminated with network analysis will be discussed along with warnings concerning shortcomings, which can quickly make a network analysis more a burden than a useful method.

Although social network analysis seems to be an intuitive notion, given that we are constantly experiencing networks physically in everyday life (highways, computer networks, power lines, the internet...), its background lies strongly in the graph theory within mathematical sciences (Wasserman and Faust, 1984). This chapter will not comprehensively discuss the logic of methods or tools for network analysis, but will instead provide an example of how network analysis can be informative in a case of investigating the political economy of search engines. Social network analysis can provide an informative insight into the structural relations between different social actors on the web, which is an important question concerning their position in the '*fight for the audience*' (Oblak and Petrič, 2005) on the web. When considering this example, several necessary steps of using network analysis will be discussed along with shortcomings, difficulties and some relevant methods of analysis.

## 2. NETWORKS AS A NEW PARADIGM?

In the 1970's, the dissatisfaction with the linear, mechanistic speaker-receiver model started to appear in communication studies (Rogers and Kincaid, 1981), which resulted in calls for a more relational approach. Rogers and Kincaid (1981) proposed an interesting integration of systems theory with the approach of social network analysis, which had just started to expand exponentially at that time. Social network analysis, finding its sociological roots in Simmel's web affiliations (1955) and the sociometrics of Moreno (1960) was very attractive for Rogers and Kincaid (1981: 71) who coined the term of '*communication network analysis*', as '*... a method of research for identifying the structure in a system, in which relational data about communication flows are analysed by using some type of interpersonal relationships as the units of analysis*'. They argued that net-

work analysis is not only a method, but also a methodology, if not even a paradigm when complemented with the convergent model of communications which had developed within the cybernetic perspective of systems theory. Although Rogers and Kincaid's exposition was not flawless, their model did not attract as much attention as would be expected in the context of the hype surrounding network analysis. At that time the germs of the network paradigm had started to develop within the social sciences in general with some well-known studies (Burt, 1982; Granovetter, 1973), providing new concepts which were able to explain some of the social dynamics that were before only vaguely understood. This development went together with advance in computer technology, which gave a boost to network analysis in its demands for a lot of computational power. In the 1990's, the idea of 'paradigm change' received a more fundamental basis as the social sciences started to operate more broadly with the 'network' concepts, mostly promoted by Castells' epic *The Rise of the Network Society* (2000). The structural changes of late/post modernity that contemporary societies started to experience as an intensification of individualisation, globalisation and reflexivity (Giddens, 1991), which express themselves on the individual level in the form of networked sociality (Wittel, 2001) seem to be opening up a space for a new conceptual apparatus which might be better suited for explaining the social processes we are witnessing today. In communication studies several concepts like networked individualism (Wellman et al., 2001) or networked public sphere (Friedland et al., 2006) emerged, reflecting the general tendencies toward introducing concepts from network analysis and integrating them with existing approaches. All of these developments along with the recent 'social' innovations, especially the so-called social networking software (Myspace, Facebook, Friendster...) truly demanded a rethinking of the existing approaches.

However, caution is needed when applying network analysis to social science research problems. The field of social network analysis with its primary reference authors (Waserman and Faust, 1984), should primarily be understood as a set of techniques for analysing specific empirical data and not a perspective or even a paradigm with a distinctive understanding of society, relevant questions and methodologies for its research. The uncritical reception of network analysis can result in an ideological position, whereby the 'old' concepts (like social groups) are simply forgotten and substituted by new ones more akin to network analysis. In this chapter this discussion will not go into any further details and I will just continue on the premise that network analysis is a suitable tool for analysis of certain research problems (including social groups), while the prob-

lem of the network paradigm will probably not be resolved in the near future.

## 3. SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS AS A METHOD

Social network analysis is basically a set of quantitative analytical methods with its mathematical origins in graph theory (Wasserman and Faust, 1984). At the level of its mathematical roots and at the level of its logic and method, it is quite different to 'classical' statistical analysis. While statistical analysis takes individual actors as its units – who are independent of and thus isolated from each other – network analysis takes as it unit the relations among the units of a system (Wasserman and Faust, 1984). From the structural point of view, it is thus not interested in how super-individual structures are expressed through an actor's actions, behaviours, attitudes, opinions or any other characteristic attributed to individual units, but instead it takes the structure of relationships as the object of its study. In other words, network analysis takes as its unit of analysis individual actors (also called nodes or vertices) together with the relations between them (also termed arcs or links).

### 3.1. Relevant units of analysis and the relations between them

Networks can be found anywhere, even if they do not exist as such. In other words, the object of network analysis does not need to be a phenomenon that ontologically exists as a 'network'; any kind of social terrain where some valid units and meaningful relations between them can be determined, is suitable. In communication studies various objects can be identified, which could be suitable for network analysis. On the one hand, there are phenomena which can be intuitively termed as 'networks'. Communication, information flow networks, media networks, internet networks seem to be obvious objects of network analysis since at the empirical level the network is quite transparent and unambiguous: units of analysis are members of some subsystem (individuals in a group, media corporations in a country, web sites ...) and the relations between them are a focused, observable entity involving the relation of one actor to another (frequency of discussion between members of a group, shares of one corporation in another, hyperlinks ...) in a certain time span. On the other hand, a phenomenon can exist without intuitively having any association with networks, although closer scruteny might prove that there are actors of interest which have implicit relations. For instance, in

researching articles in a daily newspaper one might be interested in the study of a network composed of social actors appearing in the articles, and the relations between them that are defined when two actors are mentioned in the same article.

For network analysis, it is thus not so important which kind of reality we want to study on the condition that the units and relations between them can be clearly defined. An unambiguous definition of a unit of analysis is of the utmost importance for the validity of results produced by any kind of analysis. While this step is often unproblematic in 'classical' statistical analysis, in network analysis in proves to be quite the contrary (Wasserman and Faust, 1984). This problem stems from the bare fact that a relation between units is a much more 'slippery' category than the actors who are connected by it. If we take for instance a relatively closed social group, then its members are usually easy to define. But if we want to investigate some kind of social relation between them (let us say influence), then we encounter several problems. For one, we would have to consider the dynamics and complexity of the process which relates to the notion of influence which further complicates the step of conceptualising and operationalising the relation we want to observe (and measure).

## 3.2. Types of networks

On the methodological level two types of networks may be distinguished: (a) personal or ego-centric networks and (b) complete (also whole or total) networks. The difference between them is at the level of collected data, analytical techniques and also research problems that we want to investigate. While a personal network is composed of relations of single actor ('ego') with other actors, a complete network refers to the relations between all elements of a system under investigation. The social network analysis notion is usually reserved for the analysis of complete networks, as this allows for the use of a set of distinct analytical techniques, whereas the analysis of personal networks is usually approached using classical statistical procedures (Coromina et al., 2004). This chapter thus focuses on the analysis of a complete network, and the several different types of networks that can be distinguished within this area (de Nooy et al., 2005):

  a/ Ordinary networks: a complete network with a set of actors, and a single, unambiguous type of relation among them, which is directed (asymmetrical) or undirected (symmetrical);

  b/ Multi-relational networks: an ordinary network with more than one type of relation between the actors;

c/ Affiliation networks: networks with two types of actors, where level-one actors are related to level-2 actors while same-level relations are non-existent. They can be transformed into ordinary networks so that two actors of the same level are connected if they are in a relation with the same actor on the second level;

d/ Dynamic networks: ordinary networks on more than one point in time.

Since the systems or structures of relationships that we are interested in are usually not static and are charatirised by a complexity of relationships, we would expect that the common object of network analysis would be a multi-relational dynamic network. This is, however, not the case as the procedures for data collection in multi-relational dynamic networks are demanding in terms of costs and time.

## 3.3. THE PERILS OF NETWORK ANALYSIS

Network analysis can be a very attractive technique, especially when its results are accompanied with a visual presentation of the structure under investigation. However, network analysis can also produce a very distorted description of reality, if some requirements are not met (or not at least reflected). If research aims to generate a relatively unbiased description of reality, then the following requirements are probably crucial: a) the boundaries of the network; b) missing values of the network; and c) the unambiguity of the relation under scrutiny. The boundary problem is a key problem in social network analysis (Lauman et al., 1983) as it is often difficult or invalid to arbitrarily define the membership criteria in a network and to set a clear boundary between selected and unselected units. However, Wasserman and Faust (1994) clearly stated that setting the boundaries of the network is a critical element in defining the object under study. If the boundaries are vague then the resulting network structure and its characteristics are very dependent on subjective decisions. This problem is closely connected to the issue of missing values. While the problem of missing values in classical statistical analysis is inevitable but not critical (low response rates usually do not cause systematic bias), they should be avoided in network analysis at any cost. Each missing actor in a network brings with it a set of missing relationships with other members of the network, where the number of possible relationships ranges from zero to the maximum number of actors in the

network. So, even the exclusion of a single actor can result in the whole network having significantly different structure.

The problem of defining a relation under scrutiny has at least two dimensions: a) a relation should be unambiguously defined so that its operationalisation is as valid and reliable as possible. Usually single questions/observations are used to collect data on the relation between actors, which is quite a shortcoming, since the reliability and empirical validity of the measure cannot be estimated; and b) relations are much more dynamic objects to study than the actors. One should take care when dealing with cross-sectional data in a very dynamic network. To solve this problem, points for collecting network data should be chosen on at least several occasions.

## 3.4. Typical empirical research questions

Considering the vastness and variety of applications of network analysis in different fields, I believe that the tools of network analysis can be informative for studying any kind of reality within communication studies and the social sciences in general. Taking into account the fact that society is not an aggregate of isolated actors on any kind of societal level, it should always be relevant to study the relations between actors. Putting aside the problem of collecting data and guaranteeing a valid network, several typical research questions can be answered by the tools of network analysis:

a/ The position and role of actors in a social system/structure. Network analysis offers various methods to compute measures of centrality, importance and prestige. Blockmodelling procedures (Doreian et al., 2005) can be used to identify roles in a network. As each method in social network analysis has its background in graph theory, the results of various methods should be interpreted only in relation to knowledge of the method on the mathematical level.

b/ The structure of relationships between actors. Different characteristics of the relationships can be investigated on different levels in a network. The notions of reciprocity, symmetry, and transitivity are terms from graph theory which need to be interpreted in the context of the content of the relations in a network. Metrics like distance, neighbours or balance can be computed for relationships.

c/ The identification of characteristically related sub-groups. A typical use of network analysis is to identify and analyse subsystems in which actors interact with each member more frequently/

intensively than with other members of the system. Different techniques are used to capture a variety of sub-groups like cliques, cores, islands, components and triads.

d/ Investigating the properties of the emergent structure. Network analysis provides tools to characterise different aspects of the totality of a relationship in a network with different measures. Most common are indices of network connectedness, density, (de)centralisation or degrees of separation. These are probably the most interesting products of network analysis as they refer to super-individual structures, which cannot be obtained through an analysis of individuals without taking the relations with others into account.

e/ Explaining network characteristics. The results of network analysis (usually the characteristics/roles of individual actors in a network) can be used as dependant or independent variables in classical statistical analysis.

## 4. AN EXAMPLE: WHO IS WINNING THE FIGHT FOR THE AUDIENCE ON THE WEB?

To shed light on the power of social network analysis in communication studies, I will briefly present research I was recently working on (Petrič, 2004). The research problem in general refers to the political economy of search engines on the web, but one of its dimensions – the fight for the audience (Boyd-Barret, 1995) – is specifically approached by using network analysis. Let me briefly introduce the background of the study.

The metaphors of the web as a media (Oblak and Petrič, 2005) are today positioned between two poles: one is represented with Castells' (2000) utopian vision of the web as a democratic media space of free production, where anybody can have their voice heard. The other reflects Mosco's (2000) disutopian position that the web is becoming a global shopping centre, where an oligarchy of powerful social actors are winning the fight for the audience on the web. In any case, it is probably indisputable that the contemporary web represents the majority of society's segments, from governments, individuals and civil society, to companies, institutions and organisations. A more relevant question is whether all these societal segments have an equal opportunity to be heard in the vast space of the web, thus touching upon the relation between participation and equality. Network analysis can give some

empirical insights into this question, but first we need some explanation of the importance of search engines in this context.

## 4.1. Search engines and the fight for the audience

Search engines are the primary gatekeepers of the information-communication experience of the web (Oblak and Petrič, 2005). National and international internet use data indicate that most of the web users regard search engines as the primary step into the world of the web. However, users are often unaware of the editorial function of search engines, which sets the web agenda and promotes certain content producers. Search engines impose an order in the information chaos of the web which is not without important economic, cultural and social dimensions. The 'editorial politics' – or who will be presented on top of the list of searched for items – of search engines are determined by technicist criteria – the query match and ranking based on the position in the network of hyperlinks. To simplify, those web sites that are pointed to by many hyperlinks from important web sites will be ranked higher. In the background there is an assumption that a hyperlink is an indicator of credibility or authority (Machill, 2002), but in reality the meaning of a hyperlink can vary significantly (Pajares-Tosca, 2001). Given the importance for the position in search engine results and consequently for audience exposure, they have become a commodity (Oblak and Petrič, 2005). This gives more relevance to the thesis of web commercialisation, since big corporations are intensively investing how to optimise their performance for search engines (Van Couvering, 2004), while small players cannot compete with their resources. Furthermore, the most popular search engines in use today are mostly financed by advertising revenues.

A premise of the research was that the structure of the network of hyperlinks between websites should give some insight into the agenda-setting potential of various social actors as producers of web sites. The following question then arises: what is the relation between the participation and equality of different social actors that are content producers on the web.

## 4.2. The web as a network of social actors

The first step to answer the research question with network analysis was the definition of a relevant network. A unit of analysis is any kind of published web site, which is a collection of individual web pages that reside on a web server of some owner (which corresponds to some social

actor). A relation (which is directed) is then defined as the number of all hyperlinks from a web site of one social actor pointing to a web site of another social actor. Hyperlinks can have various meanings, but in the context of our research problem its meaning is defined in relation to the agenda-setting function of search engines: it is a relation of 'providing audience exposure'.

The data for the network was collected in the following way. On the basis of a set of addresses (URLs) of Slovenian web pages (provided by the largest search engine in Slovenia) an aggregation was made on the level of web sites, which assumingly correspond to a certain social actor, an owner of a web site. The data were collected in two points of time and we thus arrived at two networks with the following basic characteristics. All computations were performed with Pajek, a software tool for the analysis of social networks.

**Table 1:** Characteristics of the Slovenian web network in 2002 and 2003

|            | 2002    | 2003    | df(%) |
|------------|---------|---------|-------|
| Web sites  | 30083   | 35934   | 19,5  |
| Links      | 130631  | 167553  | 28,3  |
| Bi-Links   | 7365    | 12041   | 63,5  |
| Isolates   | 4990    | 5725    | 14,7  |
| Isolates (%) | 16,3  | 15,9    | –4,2  |
| Density    | 0,00016 | 0,00015 | –7,5  |

In 2003 there were 35934 different web sites on the web with 167553 hyperlinks between them. Of those, only 12041 were reciprocal, while 5725 web sites were isolates – they did not link to any other web site and were not linked by any other web site. In the context of the research problem it is relevant to inspect the position of web sites in the whole network. This can be done by computing in-degrees, which is simply the number of links pointing to a web site (the recognition of a web site by other web sites).

**Figure 1:** Distribution of in-degrees on the Slovenian web network (2003)

Slovenian WWW
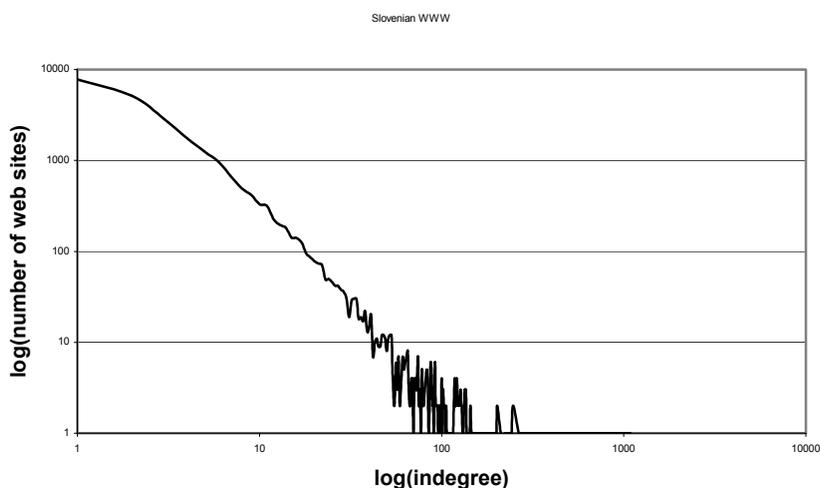


The message of Figure 1 is unambiguous: there is minority of web sites, which contain the majority of links from other web sites and thus present an oligarchy of important actors, while the majority of web sites are on the periphery with only a few links pointing to them. Among the first 100 most pointed-to-by web sites are following types of web sites: companies (36%), governmental web sites (23%), research and educational organisations (18%), traditional mass media on the web (8%), web portals (8%), public service web sites (5%) and only 2% of civil society associations and individuals.

## 4.3. Network of societal segments on the web

To arrive at a holistic perspective on the relationship of participation and equality of different societal segments (social subsystems or a set of similar actors which have in common their institutional organisation and (or) societal function), a further step, transforming the data, had to be undertaken. Each web site was categorised into one of the possible categories of societal segments (government, public service, company, research institution, educational organisation, civil society association, individual, mass media, web portals) and then a new, aggregated network was generated: the units of analysis correspond to the nine distinct categories and the relations between them are the sum of all hyperlinks from one set of web sites to another[1]. The relevant characteristics of such generated network are rendered in Table 2 and Figure 2.

**Table 2:** Distribution of societal segments on the web

|  | 2002 | 2003 | Authority weight 2002 | Authority weight 2003 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| web portals | 13% | 12% | 0,18 | 0,30 |
| government | 5% | 9% | 0,34 | 0,28 |
| mass media | 9% | 12% | 0,22 | 0,36 |
| research org | 8% | 7% | 0,21 | 0,22 |
| public services | 13% | 15% | 0,05 | 0,31 |
| civil society | 10% | 6% | 0,18 | 0,21 |
| companies | 33% | 31% | 0,74 | 0,57 |
| educational org. | 8% | 7% | 0,13 | 0,20 |
| blogs, pws | 1% | 1% | 0,00 | 0,00 |
| network centralisation index | 0,37 | 0,31 |  |  |

**Figure 2:** Network of social segments in 2002 and 2003
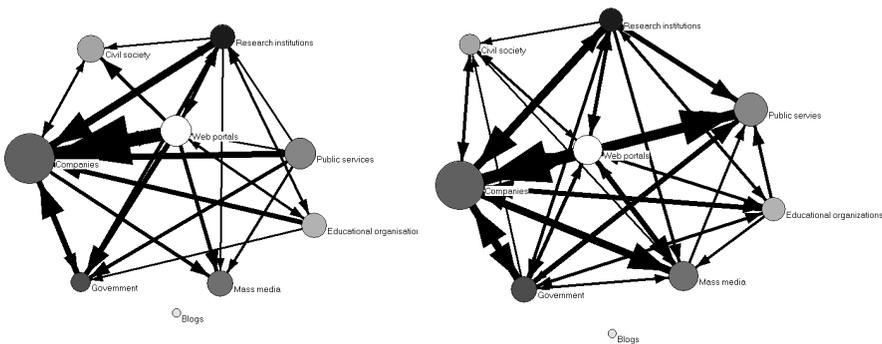


Figure 2 is an informative example of how a visual presentation of the network complements the network metrics in the context of our research problem. The sheer distribution of societal segments on the web yields insufficient and inadequate information: companies are obviously dominating the web, but this does not tell much about their agenda-setting potential nor about their relation to other societal segments. The authority weight is a metrics that is close to the metrics used by common search engines to rank their web sites and this is probably the most valid metrics in relation to the question of the fight for the audience. Companies have the highest authority rank and thus enjoy the highest audience exposure, but the other segments are not so much behind as the distribu-

tion of their participation implies. Further, the change in authority weights suggests we are witnessing a democratisation process since some players on the periphery gained power in the fight for the audience. A change in the direction of democratisation is confirmed with the visualisation of the networks. While companies in 2002 were very self-sufficient and dominant on the web (mostly receiving in-links) and civil society was on the margins, the structure is more democratic in 2003: companies show some reciprocity and civil society associations are gaining some more audience exposure. However, the absolute numbers clearly indicate that the powerful social actors are also powerful on the terrain of the web. The data of course do not allow any conclusive remarks since a) we only have a limited set of web sites; and b) two points in time are insufficient to recognise any trends.

## 5. CONCLUSION

With the preceding example I wanted to illuminate both the powers and perils of network analysis. Network analysis performs best when we want to achieve a holistic perspective of some reality. The web offers a plethora of experiences from the perspective of the individual observer – as a medium, a social service, a fun device – but network analysis allows an insight into the totality of the web space. In the context of our research problem this is crucial since we were interested in the structural positions of social actors in the web, which is an important dimension of the agenda-setting function (along with many other dimensions which were not mentioned here). However, one has to be aware of the many assumptions that were made during the network production and analysis. One is certainly the boundary problem, as the web is a terrain where national borders seem to be artificially imposed. The other is the problem of excluding a large part of network, when analysing its important parts. Last but not least, the network of hyperlinks is only one perspective on the problem, which needs to be complemented with other methods, both quantitative and qualitative.

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## NOTE

[1]   Aggregation was made only for 300 most 'important' web sites in the network, thus the results should be regarded with caution.

# Section seven:
# Learning and being



Poster by Ilija T. Tomanic

# The development of interpersonal communication competence at work

Anne Laajalahti

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many researchers emphasise the importance of interpersonal communication competence in learning, in working life, and in society in general (Daly, 1998; Morreale, Osborn and Pearson, 2000). Changes in the working life (e.g., globalisation, the development of information and communication technology, the increase in abstract, conceptual, and knowledge-intensive work, and the increase in collaborative interaction) have established new challenges to interpersonal communication competence and enhanced the essential role of communication and interaction at work (FinnSight 2015 foresight project, 2006; Huotari, Hurme and Valkonen, 2005; Kostiainen, 2003). Several studies have attempted to define the interpersonal communication competence needed in current working life in general or in specific professions, but many of these efforts remain just fragmented lists of requirements or challenges which individuals may face and should thereby be prepared (Kostiainen, 2003: 111). All in all, there is no wide-ranging consensus regarding the definition of interpersonal communication competence (Segrin and Givertz, 2003: 136). What kind of phenomenon is interpersonal communication competence and how should it be approached? What does it mean, after all, to be competent in the area of communication and social interaction at work? How can one specify when communication and interaction are competent and when they are not?

Although it seems to be obvious that interpersonal communication competence is a core competence in current working life, little research has had its primary focus on examining how interpersonal communication competence actually develops and how it is learned at work. As a matter of fact, there is much research on the development of language

and other communication skills in infancy and childhood but a lack of theories and models of the acquisition of adults' interpersonal communication competence (Greene, 2003: 57). How do people learn to communicate and interact at work? How does interpersonal communication competence develop in working life? What kinds of learning experiences are significant in the development of interpersonal communication competence, and furthermore, what can actually be learned?

The aim of this chapter is to explore the concept of interpersonal communication competence and the development of interpersonal communication competence at work. Special attention is given to the need to study individuals' experiences and perceptions of their own interpersonal communication competence and its development at work. Firstly, the research tradition of interpersonal communication competence is briefly introduced and some of the most ambiguous issues on the topic are discussed. Secondly, light is shed on the scientific discussion concerning learning at work by examining its informal, social, and experiential nature. In conclusion, some prospects for future research on the topic are offered.

## 2. WHAT IS INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE?

There has been a vast research interest in interpersonal communication competence, and many scholars in communication and other fields (e.g., psychology, socio-linguistics, education, and management) have studied interpersonal communication competence within various relational, institutional, and cultural life contexts (Valkonen, 2003: 26–27; Wilson and Sabee, 2003: 3). The range of existing theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches is thereby wide and, by the same token, very diverse. Interpersonal communication competence has been examined, for instance, from the approaches of individual's traits and situation-specific communication behaviour, the relational level of communication and interaction, the interrelationship between individual and society, and the ethics of communication and interaction (Valkonen, 2003: 27).

The concept of interpersonal communication competence is widely in use, and the meaning of it varies from field to field and from situation to situation. In addition, a phenomenon of interpersonal communication competence has been referred to with many concepts as *communication competence*, *social competence*, and *relational competence*. In many cases the concept of *skills* has also been used in place of competence (Segrin and Givertz, 2003: 136; Spitzberg and Dillard, 2002: 89; Valkonen, 2003: 25–

28). While different concepts are often used synonymously and interchangeably to describe the area (Hargie and Dickson, 2004: 4), some disparities can also be perceived. For example, according to Valo (1995: 76), social skills (e.g., voting, standing in a line) can be thought to be more extensive than interpersonal communication skills, and, according to Valkonen (2003: 25–26), communication competence can be perceived as a wider concept than interpersonal communication competence and competence as a wider concept than skills. However, interrelationships between different concepts are not just that simple, and, as Hargie (1997: 13) has pointed out, it is also possible to argue that skills subsume competence.

Despite many insightful efforts, there is no wide-ranging consensus regarding the question what interpersonal communication competence is (Wilson and Sabee, 2003: 35). However, there are some issues most scholars in the field of speech communication agree on. For instance, many researchers, including Rubin (1990), Spitzberg (2006), and Wilson and Sabee (2003), suggest that interpersonal communication competence is composed of three broad sets of factors: *knowledge*, *skills*, and *motivation*. In other words, it is suggested that competence is composed of cognitive, behavioural, and affective dimensions. In addition, the majority of research has focused basically on two criteria, *effectiveness* and *appropriateness*, by which these three components of competence can be assessed (Segrin and Givertz, 2003: 136) and to which most other relevant evaluative criteria of competence can be presented as subordinate (Spitzberg, 2006: 6).

Consequently, interpersonal communication competence is quite often proposed to be a compound of knowledge about effective and appropriate communication and interaction (for instance related to communication and interaction strategies, processes, and norms), a repertoire of interpersonal communication skills that enable effective and appropriate communication and interaction (e.g., delivery and listening skills, presentation and group communication skills), and motivation to communicate and interact in ways that can be viewed as both effective and appropriate (see e.g., Rubin, 1990: 96). In addition, a meta-cognitive level of communication and interaction (required in planning, controlling, and analysing communication and interaction) and ethics of communication and interaction (including a capacity for moral responsibility and desire to respect interpersonal trust) can be subsumed to the definition of interpersonal communication competence (Valkonen, 2003: 26). Different dimensions of competence are inextricably linked and separable only at a theoretical level (Valkonen, 2003: 39). Yet, there

are numerous researches which have concentrated on defining and classifying merely communication and interaction skills (Almeida, 2004: 358; Spitzberg, 2000: 104).

Because same behaviours are evaluated differently by different interactants in different contexts, it can be argued that behaviours themselves are not competent or incompetent (Spitzberg and Brunner, 1991: 32). Following for instance Spitzberg (2000, 2006), interpersonal communication competence should therefore be considered as *an impression* which actors and co-actors form about effectiveness and appropriateness of their own and of their co-actors' communication and interaction, rather than an ability or a set of behaviours per se. In other words, it is suggested that competence should be perceived to be relative and subjective construct which is also affected by context (Spitzberg and Brunner, 1991; Spitzberg and Dillard, 2002: 92).

Naturally, the inference of competence depends on the source of assessment (e.g., actor, co-actor, third-party observer, assessment instrument, or researcher) (Spitzberg, 2000: 113; Wilson and Sabee, 2003: 15). Hence, one of the most interesting questions in the area is from whose perspective interpersonal communication competence should be approached. All the different perspectives are doubtless necessary, but how can one select the most appropriate point of view to fit a specific research need? What kind of understanding do these different perspectives produce from the phenomenon, and further, how do these kinds of different definitions reflect various cultural and individual values?

Other-report techniques of interpersonal communication competence have concentrated basically on skills, because skills are the most observable part of competence (Spitzberg, 2006: 6; Valkonen, 2003: 38). However, examining experiences, attributes, and self-perceptions of the actor's own interpersonal communication competence is highly important, because these accounts can be a rich source of information about feelings, intentions, beliefs, and judgments which may further have an influence on the actor's performance (Almeida, 2004: 363; Wilson and Sabee, 2003: 15). It has regularly been critically remarked that individuals are not the most reliable judges of their own competence and that their actual performance and self-perceptions do not necessarily coincide (e.g., Carrell and Willmington, 1996; Kruger and Dunning, 1999). Even then, examining personal experiences and self-perceived competence is warranted, because self-inferences of competence – and of incompetence as well – may impact on an individual's self-esteem and motivation to communicate and thereby affect the behavioural course of an individual's pursuits (e.g., Wilson and Sabee, 2003: 16). As Hewes (1995: 1) has

summarised it: *'How we see our world determines, in part, what we will think, how we will feel, and how we will act.'*

## 3. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT AT WORK

Learning and development are closely connected to current working life and to scientific and societal discussion about work. Generally speaking, competence requirements are increasingly demanding in actual constantly changing working life. Continuous learning is therefore required from all professionals, and learning can be seen as a natural aspect of working itself. All in all, learning at work is a very complex and multidimensional phenomenon and it has been studied from various perspectives (Collin, 2002; Paloniemi, 2006). Despite its eclectic nature, learning at work is next approached by concentrating merely on its informal, social, and experiential characteristics.

**– The informal aspects of learning at work.**
Many researchers have focused on formal education, and much is known about teaching and being taught. In contrast, there is relatively little research on informal learning and learning at work, even if many researchers have become interested in these forms of learning alongside with formal education during last two decades. Formal and informal learning are ambiguous concepts, and they are frequently used in literature without any clear definition (Livingstone, 2001). However, *formal learning at work* refers generally to intentionally constructed learning activities for example within the domain of human resource development. Instead, *informal learning at work* refers generally to unplanned, unorganised, and unintentional learning which simply occurs at the context of work. Informal learning plays an important role in developing professional expertise at work (Conlon, 2003: 283). Following Malcolm, Hodkinson, and Colley (2003), it could be appropriate to consider formal and informal learning as attributes of learning (formality and informality) present in all circumstances of learning, rather than polarised and discrete learning environments. Hence, it could also be reasonable to describe learning at work by focusing on its informal nature per se, not just by emphasizing the informal aspects of the learning context in question.

**– The social aspects of learning at work.**
The second central theme within the debate on learning at work is its social nature. Social participation within work communities can be seen as the key to learning at work. It has been argued that a notable part of learning at work occurs as a result of social interaction and that the meaning of colleagues and work relationships in learning at work cannot be overestimated. All in all, people learn much from others at work. They, for instance, ask for advice, negotiate and construct meanings together, consider issues in teams and at meetings, and collaboratively create new knowledge (Boud and Middleton, 2003; Collin, 2002; Wenger, 1998).

**– The experiential aspects of learning at work.**
Numerous theories on learning at work have underlined the importance of experiences as the main source of work competence (Paloniemi, 2006: 440), and it has been argued that all informal learning is predominantly experiential (Conlon, 2003). On the whole, there has been a wide-ranging interest in studying learning from experience over the centuries, and many well-known scholars, including John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, David Kolb, and David Boud, have been interested in the role of experiences in learning – either as a source or as a way of learning. All in all, the importance of experiences in learning has been greatly highlighted and it has been argued that experience is the central element of all learning (Boud, Cohen and Walker, 1993: 8).

Although examining learning and experiences has a long history, there is no consensual opinion regarding the relationship between these phenomena. One of the difficulties related to their connections is the notion that all experiences are potential learning experiences, but there is no formula that guarantees learning from experience (Boud, Cohen and Walker, 1993: 8–9). All in all, it seems to be axiomatic that individuals do not directly learn from experiences but from the meanings they give to their experiences (Seibert, 1996: 262). It also seems to be obvious that it is possible to explore nothing but these subjective interpretations of experiences, not experiences per se. Another difficulty in studying learning experiences relates to individuals' capability to remember and describe their experiences. It is often underlined that describing one's own competence used and needed at work as well one's own learning and development is not an easy task (Boud and Solomon, 2003: 326; Paloniemi, 2006: 442). However, studying self-perceptions of learning at work and of oneself as a learner is highly important, because these

perceptions may affect one's learning in future (Rauste-von Wright, von Wright and Soini, 2003: 137).

## 4. CONCLUSION: DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The importance of interpersonal communication competence in current working life is increasingly highlighted (FinnSight 2015 foresight project, 2006; Huotari, Hurme and Valkonen, 2005), and in many professions the bulk of the work is based on communication and interaction. Thus, interpersonal communication competence cannot be thought of as only a useful accessory tool, but it should be realised that communication and interaction are, by definition, typical ways of working. Interpersonal communication competence is all-important, for example, in the work of teachers, leaders, politicians, and researchers, but it is comprehensively needed to succeed virtually in any profession. Interpersonal communication competence relates to both verbal and nonverbal communication between two or more human beings. It is required for creating and sharing meanings in various work situations, including different kinds of dyads, groups and public speaking contexts. Next to the face-to-face situations people encounter at work, interpersonal communication competence is needed in the context of technologically mediated communication and interaction.

Although communication scholars disagree about how much interpersonal communication competence can change over time, the general idea that it can develop and be developed is widely accepted (Greene, 2003: 51; Hargie and Dickson, 2004: 7). Interpersonal communication competence can develop both formally and informally. Even if some parts of interpersonal communication competence needed in working life (e.g., problem solving, negotiation, and conflict management skills) may require formal communication education (Huotari, Hurme and Valkonen, 2005: 43), it can be argued that most of interpersonal communication competence is acquired informally across the lifespan (Segrin and Givertz, 2003: 137). Yet, research has concentrated on the development of interpersonal communication competence in formal education and in infancy and childhood. Thus far, there is a lack of theories and models of the development of interpersonal communication competence in adulthood (Greene, 2003: 57). Furthermore, little research has had its primary focus on examining how interpersonal communication competence develops particularly at work. Nevertheless, in the light of existing research and current changes in working life, it seems to be

obvious that there is a fundamental need for research on the development of interpersonal communication competence at work.

Researching the development of interpersonal communication competence by addressing to informal learning is highly important given that 1) a notable part of learning, arguably most of it, occurs outside the classroom, informally (e.g., Boud and Middleton, 2003: 194); 2) the overwhelming majority of significant learning experiences takes place in informal learning, not in formal education (Merriam and Clark, 1993: 133); 3) arguably the greatest share of interpersonal communication competence is acquired through informal learning (Segrin and Givertz, 2003: 137); and 4) informal learning environments seem to be appropriate and motivating, especially when it comes to learning interpersonal communication (Kostiainen, 2003: 202). Examining informal learning particularly at work is also important, because work is the most important learning environment for many adults (FinnSight 2015 foresight project, 2006: 61; Paloniemi, 2006: 447). Furthermore, exploring especially individuals' experiences and perceptions of their own interpersonal communication competence and its development at work is necessary, because, according to Paloniemi (2006), experiences are highly essential in competence and learning at work. In fact, it is frequently underlined that there is a need for future research on approaching the nature of informal learning at work from the perspective of individual experiences (e.g., Collin, 2002: 147; Livingstone, 2001).

Future research is needed to connect the distinct research traditions of interpersonal communication competence and learning at work. So far communication and interaction have been mentioned in the research area of learning at work mainly when highlighting the social aspects of learning. Although the role of communication and interaction in learning at work is unquestionably important and people are *communicating and interacting to learn*, research also needs to take account of *learning to communicate and interact at work*. Future research could also assist in analysing the phenomenon of learning at work and its informal, social, and experiential aspects from the perspective of speech communication and social interaction. Learning at work is increasingly important in modern society, and it could be instructive to explore it from the perspective in which communication and interaction are approached both as the subjects of learning and as the ways of learning. Further research is also needed in order to develop theoretical and empirical ways to explore the development of interpersonal communication competence at work.

This chapter is based on the author's PhD research, which still is under construction. The aim of the research is to describe and understand the development of interpersonal communication competence in the work of postdoctoral researchers working in the public sector. The research focuses on experiences and perceptions which researchers have related to the development of their own interpersonal communication competence at work. The theoretical value of the research is in improving the understanding of the nature of interpersonal communication competence in the work of researchers and of the human being as a learner of interpersonal communication competence. Although the research is based on the hermeneutical interest of knowledge as such, it is desired that research results could also be applied in developing working life (e.g., in recognizing and supporting informal learning while not formalizing it and in developing work environments and practices which enable informal learning). Because a more profound understanding of the acquisition of adults' interpersonal communication competence is needed in planning and implementing formal education, it is desired that research findings could also be applied in developing formal communication education. Nevertheless, this research is just a single attempt to understand the development of interpersonal communication competence at work and much more research from different perspectives and approaches is needed to deepen the understanding on the topic.

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# A snapshot from the European educational landscape

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The cannons roar as the celebration begins at Uppsala University. In
Amsterdam and Ljubljana, department staff prepares the venue for the
ensuing festivities. In Barcelona, the honoured students notify the restau-
rants one last time in preparation of the celebratory dinner that will soon
follow. In Brussels and in Grenoble, eager students make some last
minute preparations for each of their congratulatory parties. Throughout
Europe, similar celebrations are prepared for and take place in a variety
of forms in honour of those PhD students who have successfully com-
pleted their postgraduate studies at the third cycle of higher education
by defending their dissertations. These celebrations, along with a variety
of ceremonies, some more ritual than others, mark the transition of a
PhD student from one phase of his or her academic life to another – to
doctor, expert and scholar.

Even though the end result is the same, the paths leading to these
celebrations vary immensely throughout the European Union. From
financing, supervision and assessment, and the PhD programmes them-
selves, to the writing of the dissertation and PhD practices in general,
PhD students throughout the European Union travel different paths and
encounter different experiences along the way. In the United Kingdom
(Scotland and England), for example, this path tends to be more struc-
tured and guided institutionally, while in France and Germany, the no-
tion of 'academic freedom' and independence maps the way.

The development of a common European Higher Education Area
(EHEA) is a process promoted and stimulated by the European Union.
The importance of a shared educational system across Europe has

become increasingly important, and as such, much emphasis has been placed at governmental level and within academic communities in general on the means of achieving this goal. It was the signing of the Bologna agreement in 1999 by 29 European ministers of education, which really launched these developments. The Bologna process stresses the need for European national higher education systems to become more comparable and compatible, and more interlinked and interdependent, while at the same time more competitive at the international level; and plans to achieve these objectives by 2010. Most importantly and also perhaps most challenging, the Bologna process aims to promote and establish a '*more complete and far-reaching Europe*' characterised by '*the necessary European dimensions in higher education*' including not only formalisation of educational practices, but also cultural practices such as '*shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space*' (excerpted from *The Bologna Declaration* 1999)[1].

Like the graduation ceremonies, studies have shown that there is a rich diversity between higher educational systems within universities across Europe and that many nations engage the aims of the Bologna process in varied and culturally specific ways.[2] Without examining the complexities of the Bologna process at policy or administrative levels, we ask: what does the European educational landscape look like for doctoral students today?

In order to answer this question, we present a snapshot of the European doctoral landscape based on the reflections of 40 doctoral students gathered from throughout the European Union for the ECREA doctoral summer school. One of this school's main objectives is to '*generate a wide picture of the international landscape of communication and media research*' (ECREA Young Scholars Network, 2007) while providing a platform for doctoral students to participate within their field, connect to diverse academic cultures[3], and receive critical feedback on their individual work.

## 2. PHD PRACTICES: A SNAPSHOT FROM THE EUROPEAN DOCTORAL LANDSCAPE

During the summer school, Professor Kaarle Nordenstreng, from the University of Tampere, facilitated a workshop on the Bologna process and the European educational landscape. In this workshop, the present authors moderated focus groups with fellow PhD students. During these focus groups each student offered their perspectives on the practical, organisational and institutional aspects of what we have called 'doctoral

practices'. The focus groups concentrated on four major areas of doctoral practices: financing the doctoral studies, programme requirements, supervision and assessment, and the final stages of the dissertation.

The PhD practices explored during our focus groups revealed that mobility, diversity and formalisation characterise many European doctoral experiences. The focus groups showed, for example, a diverse array of PhD requirements rather than a standardised and comparable European educational system. In this sense, students did not refer to a 'European academic culture' as most are deeply socialised in their own academic cultures and do not know much about other academic environments abroad. Consequently, the student's own local academic culture still sets the dominant frame of reference, and there are many reasons for this, as the four sections below explain.

## 2.1. The financial dimension

There are many avenues to financing a PhD project within the European Union and the modes of financing varied considerably among the different participating countries in our focus groups. Apart from state funded allowances or bursaries (accredited by university departments or scientific organisations) and non-state funded private scholarships, students may also rely on personal funding, combining a full or part-time job with a PhD.

In the context of allowances provided by university departments, PhD students tend to have a staff position which includes (often but not always) both teaching and researching. Some universities provide pedagogical courses for PhD students. In many countries, teaching responsibilities are associated with a system of credits. In some countries, such as Sweden, there are systems in place that can extend students' research time based on how much extra teaching they undertake. Regarding the relationship between research and teaching activities, there are many differences between countries. The amount of time spent on teaching varies across countries, ranging from 15% in the Netherlands, to 70% in the UK. Regarding organisation and control of the balance between PhD student teaching and researching, there are differences in how these activities are formally regulated. In some countries, the official stipulated percentages are controlled (such as in the Anglo-American tradition, common in the Netherlands and Belgium), while in other countries the actual organisation of the relationship between teaching and research is more dependent on individual cases and is less formalised.

The focus groups also showed how the financial dimension tends to play a role in students' awareness of international educational contexts. Although students in many European countries may apply for extra allowances regarding travel, mobility and cultural exchange, such allowances are often granted by the university or state funded scientific organisations, which poses a problem for privately funded students. PhD students rely on personal funding in many countries, and in these cases, travelling is not a common or viable option. PhD students may have a job (or jobs) apart from his or her research activities and these kinds of socio-economic obligations may hinder students from major international activities.

Moreover, privately funded PhD students may have difficulties legitimising their research project in their home country in the first place. In Scandinavian countries, for example, PhD students relying on personal funding are likely to have difficulties getting accepted to a university department and/or finding a supervisor. On a more general level, during the process of a PhD, students are learning how to interact with, and manoeuvre within, the specific dynamics and practices of the institutional and social context within their own academic cultures. Generally, finding financial support for one's research activities is still a local, institutional issue, which is not often approached in relation to broader educational, international systems of support.

Mobility and knowledge exchange are valuable 'connecting practices' between students and across academic cultures, yet here again, the financial dimension plays a significant role. Although students in many European countries may apply for extra allowances for mobility and cultural exchange such as funding for travel expenses to and from conferences, in the majority of countries these allowances come with strings attached. First, location plays a role in students' capacity to acquire travel funding. For example, travel refunds are very often granted on a continental basis and 'intercontinental' travel is exceptional. Second, university budgets are often very limited and PhDs in 'hard sciences' tend to benefit more from these extra allowances, when compared with the humanities or social sciences.

## 2.2. Starting the PhD: Entrance requirements

As with financing, exploring European PhD entrance requirements reveals some coherence across countries with some similarities emerging between universities. At first glance, it seems possible to regulate the entrance requirements of doctoral programmes at a European level.

However, our focus groups portrayed a diverse array of PhD requirements rather than a standardised and comparable European educational system. The Bologna Process is still in process and under construction, and obviously a much longer period of time is needed for its realisation and completion.

In order to be admitted into a PhD programme, students are generally required in every country to successfully complete a Master's or a corresponding degree. Additionally, students must have a relevant project that is proposed in writing to the appropriate department and/or supervisor, where it is subject to approval. However, there are exceptions when it comes to the formalisation of entrance requirements. In Slovenia, for example, two systems exist. Students can apply during their Masters (thereby avoiding its completion) or they can apply after their Masters degree; where they are also required to write a proposal. Regarding their proposal, the Slovenian students spoke of not only writing a proposal but also of presenting it publicly to a jury. In certain countries, a number of valid credits (France, Germany and Norway) must be completed before students are eligible to begin their doctoral studies. Moreover in England, Slovenia, Poland and Scotland, there are English language requirements (the TOEFL examination or equivalent). Sometimes, the submission of a CV is necessary (Slovenia and UK) and sometimes an interview is required (UK and Netherlands) before students can be accepted into a doctoral programme. In Spain, students must submit a CV, a PhD project proposal, and successfully pass an interview. In Germany, the process is more informal as students only need to apply to doctoral programmes with a proposal accompanied by a supervisor's statement of support.

Finally, many differences appear where we do not expect them; indeed differences seem to be more prevalent between universities than between countries. Yet, this diversity appears to be a major element of the research landscape where particularities have to be shared. Nevertheless, to provide a clearer snapshot, it is important to include, not only entrance requirements, but also requirements during the PhD process, such as supervision and completion of the PhD.

## 2.3. *During the PhD: Supervision and assessment*

As was with both financing and entrance requirements, formal PhD supervision and assessment requirements varied considerably among the different participating countries in our focus groups. That being said, broad patterns between groups of countries did emerge. Based on stu-

dents' responses, we were able to group countries based on their level of formal supervision and assessment requirements into three groups ranging from low to high[4]. Formal requirements during the PhD process here, in terms of supervision and assessment, refer to three areas of the PhD process: supervision and progress reports; papers and presentations; and classes, seminars, and workshops.

The first group consisted of those countries with low levels of formal, institutional supervision and assessment requirements, which included: Germany, Finland, France and Norway. In terms of supervision and progress reports, some students spoke of formal and informal contracts. These contracts were usually between student, supervisor and department, and they laid out what was to be expected from all parties during the 3–5 year PhD process. Additionally, most students spoke of annual or biannual progress reports and mandatory monthly supervision meetings. When it comes to classes, seminars, and workshops, a few students spoke of courses and exams, and most spoke of having the option of participating in seminars and workshops when offered. However, for the most part, these were recommended rather than required.

The second group consisted of those countries with medium levels of formal, institutional supervision and assessment requirements, which included: Belgium, Estonia, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. Regarding supervision and progress report requirements, most students stressed annual or biannual progress reports and mandatory monthly supervision meetings. Additionally, students from the Netherlands spoke of a final year detailed schedule and progress report to be submitted to the department. In reference to papers and presentations, most were supposed to submit an extended proposal or article on their research after or close to the completion of their first year. Some students, i.e. from Sweden, spoke of having a 'mini-defence' or handing in a 'midterm dissertation', while a few spoke of being required to write yearly papers on their research. Interestingly, all students noted that they were encouraged, and some even required, by their supervisor and/or department to submit articles for publication. Finally, unlike the countries in the first group, some students spoke of being required to attend courses or seminars with accompanying exams/papers, while all students stated that they were encouraged to participate in workshops when offered. For example, in certain countries, it is necessary to earn credits through courses and seminars, such as in South Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain.

The third and final group consisted of those countries with quite formal and institutionalised system of supervision and assessment, which

only included the United Kingdom (Scotland and England). Though the requirements varied slightly from university to university, universities in the UK tended to maintain high levels of formal, institutional supervision and assessment requirements. Regarding supervision and progress reports, students spoke of bi- and tri-annual progress reports, a specified number of monthly or yearly supervision hours, and logbooks to track those hours. Finally, most students spoke of being required to attend and participate in classes, seminars and workshops, which usually were accompanied by exams and/or papers, during their first two years.

Overall, it is interesting to note here that there appears to be a shift taking place. Students from Germany and Slovenia, for example, stressed that they have noticed slow institutional changes in the direction of higher levels of formal supervision and assessment requirements within their respective universities. There seems to be a shift away from a more independent and informal approach to doctoral supervision and assessment, towards a system that is highly monitored and formally regulated.

## 2.4. The final stages: Completing the PhD

Like the other dimensions of doctoral practices, there is considerable variation across countries regarding the dissertation However, there are three points of comparison that are commonly found in the final stages of completing a doctorate in Europe. These include the doctoral work (the dissertation or the compilation of published peer reviewed articles), the committee or jury that assesses the student's final work, and finally, the way in which the student defends their final work, most often by way of a final oral exam.

Most students from our focus groups are required to produce a thesis or dissertation, based on original empirical and/or theoretical research that is 300 pages or more in length, with some exceptions. Although the traditional monograph still represents the norm, it is also possible to submit 2 – 5 peer reviewed published articles in lieu of a monograph in the Netherlands, Scandinavia, the Baltic countries and in some institutions in the UK. Slovenia also stands out because students who have entered the doctoral programme from their undergraduate programmes are required to publish 2 – 4 peer reviewed articles, rather than a dissertation, in order to get their doctoral degrees. In many ways, this marks an emerging trend as more and more departments and institutions are encouraging students to get their doctorate degrees 'by publication' or what students from the Netherlands call 'by compilation' instead of through a single, lengthy monograph. Spain is in some ways an exception here, as the

Autonomous University of Barcelona has just introduced an additional system to the traditional norm of the dissertation. In the newer system, doctoral candidates are part of a larger research group and their final dissertation is submitted as part of a series developed by students' research groups, rather than as an independent submission.

Another point of commonality across European universities, with the exception of some German universities, is that all doctoral candidates must have their PhD dissertations examined in some kind of formal defence or oral examination. This relates to the final two stages of completing a doctoral degree: first, the selection of the thesis committee or jury and second, the final defence.

For the first stage, European institutions generally create an expert committee or jury to examine the doctoral student work, although there is great variation in the ways that committees are organised, and how these committees examine the student work. In all countries, excluding Slovenia where students' thesis committees are appointed at the beginning of their PhDs, a special committee is formed specifically for the doctoral student's final defence. These committees or juries are composed of at least one internal examiner (from within the student's department or university) and at least one external examiner (from outside of the student's department or university). Often these committees include the student's supervisor with the exception of France, the Netherlands and the UK, where the supervisor attends but is generally not permitted to speak.

There is also a great deal of variation in how the final doctoral defence is organised, yet consistently, these defences are open to the public, with the exception of the UK and those universities in Germany where there is no final defence. In France, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and some parts of Germany, the defence is largely ritualistic and by virtue of successfully reaching the final stage, doctoral candidates are generally confident that they will pass the defence. In Slovenia, the most important examination occurs during the second doctoral seminar, rather than the final defence. If students pass this stage, it is extremely likely that they will also pass the final doctoral seminar. However, this is not the case everywhere, because in Latvia, Estonia, the UK and Spain, the outcome of the final defence is mostly unknown until they are notified by their thesis committee at some point during the final oral exam.

## 3. CONCLUSION

Obviously we are looking at doctoral programmes from specific institutions and specific member countries from the perspective of specific doctoral students. Thus we do not suggest that this is the whole and representative picture. Nevertheless, all our testimonies revealed that mobility, diversity and formalisation characterise European doctoral experiences.

Our snapshot highlighted a great deal of cultural and professional diversity and strong differences in research and teaching traditions. Our snapshot also showed how differences in doctoral practices seem to be more prevalent between universities than between countries. Moreover, there were some significant changes highlighted by our focus groups. When it comes to supervision and assessment requirements, there is a shift away from a more flexible and open-ended PhD process towards a more institutionally formal and structured Anglo-Saxon approach. Another trend is that mobility is starting to become 'part of the doctoral agenda'. For example, students are aware of the possibility of teaching abroad, the expansion of joint study programmes and international organisations or initiatives that promote and stimulate mobility of research and researchers between universities and/or between different countries. Despite this awareness, however, students indicate that although mobility is important to them, their experiences of an 'international' dimension or sense of 'European' connectedness is still rather marginal.

If a discrepancy seems to exist between theory and practice, it is because the Bologna process is still largely a formal process undergoing construction and has yet to be fully realised. The Bologna process is about building a stronger European dimension within higher education while preserving diversities at the same time. Although international cooperation is growing and there are many efforts to improve the quality of education, student mobility and the recognition of qualifications, there is still work to be done to achieve the Bologna's main aims: to develop *European* educational practices, systems and curricula by 2010. Thus, in answer to our opening question, the focus groups highlighted trends around mobility and formalisation that are in line with the Bologna process; yet the diversity of doctoral experiences and lack of connectedness to 'Europe' suggest that our snapshot of the 'educational landscape' may be taken in Europe but does not fully reflect a *European* dimension within that landscape.

In closing, we argue that the summer school itself is a successful example of not only bridging differences and diversity across Europe, but also of developing a European doctoral landscape. It is successful because by bringing European researchers together and sharing the institutional, departmental and disciplinary differences within participants' own academic cultures, we were able to create at least a sense of broader European academic culture, within which we were all a part.

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*The Bologna Declaration* (1999) Downloaded on 6 September 2007 from http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/990719BOLOGNA_DECLARATION.PDF.

## NOTES

[1] The full text of the Bologna Declaration and other relevant materials are available on the official Bologna process site for 2007–2009 at http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/.

[2] For current reports on the Bologna process, see for example ESIB (2007); Reichart and Tauch (2003); and the *Future of European Universities* website (http://www.europaeum.org/content/view/58/65/).

[3] Students participating in the Summer School focus groups came from a wide range of countries, institutions and departments. For simplicity, this article will refer to students' reflections, based on the country they are studying in rather than their origins.

[4] It should be noted that in some countries, notably France and Germany, there were considerable differences between universities.

# The academic identity crisis of the European communication researcher

François Heinderyckx

Gathering communication scholars for a conference, a workshop or a publication is inevitably gathering diversity to a high degree. Not only do they come from different disciplinary backgrounds, mobilising different theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches, they also work on a variety of objects that are not necessarily seen as communication-related, but that are approached in such a way that makes the research relevant to communication. Communication researchers or scholars active in communication research belong to a muddled community that represents a surprisingly clear category of researchers and a relatively well-identified body of research. But just what brings us together? Why are we interested in each other's work? How do we (more or less) understand each other? What is the glue that holds us together in spite of the multi-layered diversity that characterises us?

Within the mosaic of profiles, methods and objects, a large proportion of scholars are rooted into a solid, focused and articulate background in one specific discipline and will see and present themselves within that category: they are historians, sociologists, political scientists, philosophers, economists, linguists, psychologists, etc. However, a growing number of scholars did not 'come to' communication, but were initially trained in 'communication departments' and hold 'communication degrees'. In the process of earning these degrees, they were generally exposed, initiated and even trained to a variety of disciplines that they have learned to combine and adapt to serve their specific objectives and research questions. I will refer to these as 'communication-natives' as opposed to the 'communication-migrants' who were trained in a particular discipline and came to be interested in communication issues in the course of their work and personal trajectory.

I believe that communication-native scholars are faced with an acute identity crisis. The problem can be summarised in the form of a simple

question: just what are they? Or – as I belong to that category – who are *we*? No suitable substantive exists to designate our particular breed of researchers; no specific professional or intellectual category is recognised to brand us beyond the general categories of scholar or researcher or university professor. We are not sociologists, nor are we historians or semiologists or philosophers. We are the mere incarnation of some creative hybrid disciplinary combination seeded during the years of undergraduate and graduate studies, then grown to maturity as an ad-hoc blend tailored for the purpose of our successive research endeavours. Being a 'communication scientist' does not (yet) correspond to a recognised category. Meritorious attempts at promoting notions of, for example, 'mediologist' to identify scholars working on media have so far been doomed to failure.

Communication-natives must content with being characterised, at best, as a heterogeneous, multidisciplinary lot working on a range of objects and issues related to communication phenomena. Our most remarkable distinctive mark is that we are *doing* communication research. Defining who we are by the nature of our research objects and the diversity of our disciplinary backgrounds does not provide a very strong basis for defining our identity. It gives the impression that what we share is at best a range of objects to study.

To contemplate the multi-dimensional diversity of communication research and researchers is to question the nature of communication research and to revive the old but never settled debate about whether communication should be seen as a fully-fledged discipline or a just a mere collection of objects that are studied by a combination of existing disciplines (sociology, political science, history, philosophy, linguistics, psychology, etc.).

Supporting *communication as a discipline* amounts to seeing existing communication scholarly work like so many steps towards establishing a coherent and distinctive body of methods, theories and epistemological references that will eventually be recognised as constitutive of a true and distinct discipline alongside more clearly and institutionally established ones. Communication studies would be today like sociology at the time when Quételet, Durkheim, Weber and others were struggling to lend credibility to the study of the social. If indeed we feel that communication research is a discipline in gestation and approaching maturity, then the community must join forces to snatch recognition from academia and from institutions, underlining that our body of research is important and specific enough to be considered at the level of a discipline. This will require that we agree on a clearly defined, strong and distinctive set of

epistemological standards and an elaborate methodological toolbox that can be acknowledged as specific to communication research while meeting the level of scientific standards associated with traditionally recognised academic research traditions. This would then lead us to protect these founding principles as 'ours' and to normatively promote them as the best combination available to tackle communication problematics.

But the struggle for disciplinary recognition might not be the only avenue. In fact, communication may not be a discipline in the classic institutional sense of the word, not even in the making. And maybe that is the essence of who we are and of what we do. Maybe communication research as we practice it is consubstantial with multi- and trans-disciplinarity, with the juxtaposition, the combination and sometimes the confrontation of diverse disciplinary and paradigmatic perspectives and angles. Maybe that is the secret of our remarkable capacity to innovate, to renew research and to keep pace with the rapid evolution of our objects. Communication would be cross-sectional to social science and humanities if not to all sciences, including a number of the natural sciences. Communication studies could then be seen as holding a status not dissimilar to that of mathematics: although present in one form or another in many scientific disciplines, mathematics require and maintain a strong core of dedicated specialists providing the larger frame and refining the tools and body of interpretation for all. Likewise, communication studies would require acute specialists trained, labelled and seen as such, developing a sophisticated set of theories, epistemological considerations and empirical methods made available to the larger scientific community to call up as needed.

Personally, I would be inclined to support this second, cross-sectional option over that of communication as a true discipline in the making. Yet, even such a radical choice does not settle the question and still leaves us very exposed. For one thing, claiming to be everywhere (cross-disciplinarity) is risking belonging nowhere. In most countries, we are suffering from this condition. We do not really exist as a discipline, therefore we do not fit into the institutional boxes. We are an appendix to social science, to political science, to humanities. So when it comes to searching for funding, we are too often left aside. Interdisciplinarity is encouraged in principle, but when the time comes to select a limited number of projects to be supported and funded, evaluators and decision-makers usually fold back into the old ways of their disciplinary territories. As a result, classic discipline-centred projects prevail. And the fact that, too often, the funding of education as well as of research is locked inside a closed envelope does not help: what is given to interdisciplinary

projects has to be taken away from disciplinary budgets. Even finding a stable academic territory within universities tends to be problematic. We face the same sceptical reluctance from our fellow scholars from well-established disciplines as, say, cultural studies in the 1960's. Management science and business schools think they should handle organisational communication; political science considers it should be dealing with political communication (or at least the 'serious' aspects thereof), linguistics sees its monopoly on discourse analysis as self-evident, etc.

An aggravating factor to the identity crisis of the communication-natives is the likely risk to suffer division, to appear as a shapeless mosaic. Not only are we divided along the lines of the larger paradigmatic rifts dividing social sciences, topped by methodological and epistemological dividing lines (if only quantitative versus qualitative), we even suffer fundamental disagreements on the legitimacy or the relevance of research questions (e.g. the controversial issues surrounding media effects research).

This raises the question of the limits, the perimeter of communication research. Where do we draw the line between what is and what is not communication research? Should we even try to draw such a line? It would be tempting not to. Leave the field open and make this openness one of its attributes. But I fear it would weaken communication research's legitimacy, for it would amount to acknowledging our incapacity to define ourselves. At present, being a 'communication researcher' is the result of a self-affiliation process: those who apply to communication learned societies (national or international) or to communication summer schools or attend communication conferences or publish in communication journals must be seen as showing an interest in communication and as considering themselves, to a certain degree, as being communication researchers. The communication research community is an open club.

Identity in general – and academic identity is no exception – is a multi-layered notion. 'Communication-migrant' scholars can see themselves as historians *and* communication researchers. One does not have to choose camp, to renounce one academic identity to pledge allegiance to another. Yet, this reduces communication research to a set of issues. In the case of 'communication-native' scholars, one can be a communication researcher borrowing and applying methods and approaches typical of one or several disciplines, thus conquering some of the attributes of identity associated with those disciplines, attend their conferences, publish in the corresponding journals, etc.

But it is also the case that within the realm of communication research, there are a number of clearly identified domains (I was tempted to say sub-domains, but I do not think we should), with very clear boundaries, very strong distinctive identities, with their own history, founding theories, empirical methods and traditions. Examples include audience research, interpersonal communication, organisational communication, political communication, journalism studies or media education. The vitality of these communication-based research domains may be an indication that communication research could be seen as an umbrella, a front-window for a cluster of well-defined domains. But then, that would only account for parts of the field.

'Communication-native' researchers face an additional difficulty when we are so often driven into multi-disciplinarity, convinced that communication research must combine any number of disciplines, thus causing real difficulties in elaborating appropriate methodologies, adequately embedded in a hybrid theoretical framework. Again, I believe this is a fantastic opportunity, but it requires theoretical and methodological borrowing, which inevitably makes us reach beyond our initial field and scope of competence. Who, for example, can possibly aspire to study any communication phenomenon involving information and communication technologies without some serious notions about technology, telecom, computers, etc.? Who would undertake complex textual discourse analysis without resorting heavily to linguistics or semiotics or some other twist? Who could touch on the legality of certain practices without a serious study of legal frameworks and judicial precedents?

When this is happening within the process of doctoral research, it will often require that the evaluation of the dissertation be made by a sometimes improbable jury mixing members from several disciplinary areas, resulting in various or even conflicting expectations and requirements, with a real possibility to cause the student and the supervisor some serious intellectual discomfort.

Another by-product of the cross-sectional nature of communication relates to the dispersion of relevant work and dissemination channels: conferences, journals, books, workshops, study papers and doctoral theses featuring ideas and input relevant to our own research are so difficult to track that we can only suspect that we are missing a great deal of important material. Recent developments in sophisticated bibliographical research tools (including online databases) have opened-up new horizons for communication researchers who discover unsuspected sources of relevant information and research found in publications academically situated far beyond the core circle of communication circles.

This entire discussion may loose some of its relevance in the light of an overwhelming trend that sweeps along a large portion of academic research. Academic institutions as well as individual scholars are under increasing pressure to be engaged and active in applied research, with short-term concrete applications and implications, and beyond that to behave more and more as *experts* and less and less as scholars. Communication research is no exception and we, too, are dragged into a 'productivist' spiral driven by short-term benefit delivery, independently of the disciplines, of theoretical and methodological frameworks, which are seen as of subordinate importance.

What is the conclusion of all this? I have no solution to offer to the identity crisis of the communication researcher. And frankly, I am not even sure there is a problem. But I do believe that we need to pay close attention to our academic identity, at the individual level, but also at the collective level. We must consider taking initiatives and deliberate actions to enhance and promote what we share and the pride of who we are and of what we do.

# PART THREE – STUDENT ABSTRACTS

Visit to the Kumu – © Ilija T. Tomanic

# IS REMOTE ADMINISTRATION POSSIBLE WITH E-GOVERNANCE? CAN ISTANBUL HAVE A FINNISH MAYOR IN FUTURE?

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This research project is about the future of e-governance. It is a multidisciplinary research in the intersection of three disciplines: communication studies, political sciences and urban studies. I am trying to answer a question based on the observation of several parallel developments in the current global information society. These developments are: a/ More and more people are becoming e-citizens by using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in their communication with other citizens and representatives, and in fulfilling their rights and duties; b/ E-citizens are likely to replace their national identities with other types such as occupational identities. Nation-states are losing ground in relation to supra-national organisations and multinational corporations, through processes of increased mobility, the globalisation of labour, the presence of multinational staff of multinational corporations, and the existence of global cities. The role of the internet as public and private space, and its support for online communities, might appear reasons why e-citizens might feel less attached to their national identities; c/ Cities are gaining more political power with the rise of global networks and/or multi-stakeholder partnerships in local governance/city management models. More and more cities are using ICTs in their administration and in their communication with citizens and other stakeholders; d/ Two out of three main governance actors, namely the private and the civil sector have already globalised and denationalised. In the context of all these developments I will research whether the third actor, the public sector, might also 'lose' its national embeddedness (and identity) and if remote forms of administration would be possible in future. In my research I will be using concepts like e-government, e-governance, e-citizenship, global city, online communities, and communication, national identity and theories (critical) of neo-liberalism.

I will be using qualitative research methods such as a/ interviews with (e-)citizens, (e-)governors, executives of private and civil sectors that have been through the globalisation processes; b/ web pages analy-

ses of local authorities of Istanbul and Helsinki, and of global private and civil sector actors; c/ an online experiment among young online citizens (a city management game to see if there are any changes in their preferences and expectations towards the governors, their attachment/detachment to/from their national identity before and after playing it). The research project will help to see if a city can be governed/managed by someone from another nationality and from another city in the future. It will contribute to academic discussions on e-government, e-citizenship, and e-governance.

## ASSESSING ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION AS A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AND ITS APPLICABILITY FOR CHILDREN AS A SPECIAL AUDIENCE

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One of society's major focuses and hence one of the evolving research interests in communication studies is the field of health communication. Industrialised countries like the US or Germany are facing growing health hazards, which are posing threats to the individual's well-being but also to the economies of these countries. The often called 'obesity epidemic' is one of these threats. After many (unsuccessful) years of information campaigning and interventions of different kinds, the scholarly focus has shifted to tapping into the potential of entertainment media as a means not only to change knowledge but even more so to change attitudes and behaviour. The Entertainment-Education strategy conceptualises the potential of enhancing knowledge, changing attitudes and behaviour by watching, listening to or reading entertaining narratives which explicitly and intentionally (though not intrusively) convey storylines where characters pursue behavioural change while facing the obstacles and problems that evolve from this task. As a strategy rather than a theory, EE incorporates various theoretical approaches. The basic concept is Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), arguing for the idea of a vicarious learning experience by imitating role models. In addition to real life role models like parents or peers, entertaining media – and especially television – provide their viewers with role models whose behaviour is very likely to be adapted. This likelihood is derived from the concept of

the persuasive impact of entertaining narratives. The concept of narratives allows the viewer to indulge into a positive entertained mood while engaging with the twists and turns of a story and identifying with the characters. This perception mode and set-up diminishes the potential of counter-arguing, provides a comprehensive and in-depth examination of complex behaviour and the difficulties that come along with it, and thus raises the possibility of attitude and behaviour change. Entertainment-Education proved successful regarding various health-related topics with adult or adolescent audiences. Few EE-interventions are known targeting children and even less research is done with this theoretically and methodologically challenging group of media users. This thesis aims at conceptualising Entertainment-Education for children adapting the mechanisms of the strategy to the developmental prerequisites of that age group. Expanding EE research on a methodological level, the thesis furthermore employs a multifaceted prolonged experimental study. The children's Entertainment-Education format (LazyTown), one of the most successful children's TV shows worldwide, serves as the basis for this work.

## USER'S MOTIVATIONS IN THE USE OF INTERACTIVE ADVERTISING APPLICATIONS FOR TELEVISION

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Although the consumer's motivation to interact with commercials is a key variable in comprehending the effects of this kind of marketing communication (Stewart, 2004), little research has directly investigated interactive advertising processing and how its comprehension might be different from traditional mass media (Macias, 2003).

The purpose of my investigation is to look at how and why people use interactive advertising applications to provide a basis for a useful and politically correct development of interactive TV advertising. The project is divided in two main parts: the Interactive Advertising Applications description project, and the user's motivations in using these applications. The first part contains a typology of the main interactive advertising applications developed in the current TV market. This classification is mainly developed based on the situation on the English

market, one of the leaders of the sector. The main objective for this part is to get a solid description and a classification of the main interactive advertising TV formats. The provided classification assists in developing the second part of the project.

Although the main objective is to describe these interactive advertising applications, the project also deals with a wide range of topics. First of all it discusses interactivity, trying to clarify this concept that has become a buzzword in the television field. It then defines interactive television and produces a description of the main interactive applications in the TV market. After this, the project focuses on the advertisements in television and internet, explaining the main formats in each platform, and provides a short historical perspective on interactive television and interactive advertising. Then its main object is analysed: interactive advertising applications. A classification and a description of the different applications (DAL, mini-DAL, micro-site, and impulse response) are provided, and many examples of real cases are studied. Finally, I report on the current situation of interactive advertising applications development.

The second part of the project analyses the relation between user motivations and the use of iTV advertising applications. It re-analyses the different iTV advertising formats described in the first part of the project in order to clarify which are the most suitable ones and why the users show greater interest in them.

## TURKISH TV-STATIONS IN GERMANY

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Today, more than 250 TV stations exist in Turkey. Like other worldwide media systems, the Turkish media are also affected by processes of intensive transnationalisation. At present, the 2,5 million of Turkish migrants in Germany are able to receive more than 70 Turkish television channels via satellite. One of the reasons why Turkish migrants resort to watching and reading Turkish media is attributed to the fact that public German broadcasting companies do not fulfil the information and entertainment needs of the Turkish population. Another reason for the use of Turkish

media is the generally negative representation of migrants and the lack of journalists of Turkish origin in German media.

Research objective and research questions

In my research project I will analyse the content of five television stations which are frequently consumed and which produce special programmes for the Turkish population in Germany. These five TV stations are two German-Turkish TV channels (TD1 and TGRT EU), the conservative Islamic television Kanal7, a national TV station TRT Int and the most popular entertainment channel Kanal D. I will limit the research project to three program types: 1. news/political magazines 2. Series 3. Programmes for German Turks. I have chosen these three programme types because they play a crucial role regarding the transfer of values and because they are frequently watched by this target group. The focus of the work is on the different political profiles and on the different values which are transmitted in these programmes.

In my research project I will investigate the following questions:

1/ What are the consequences of the transformation of worldwide media systems on the development of Turkish TV stations since the mid-eighties?

2/ What kind of values are disseminated by these five TV stations?

Research method

The research method comprises firstly, a biographical and statistical analysis of the TV consumption in Turkey and in Germany. But the focus of my project is on an analysis of content. In this context, programme politics, the interposition of moral and traditional values, the official German-Turkish relations, the relation between the European Union and Turkey, and the image of German-Turks will be analysed. This is combined with 15–20 semi-structured expert interviews. Among the interviewed partners, there are TV executives in Turkey and in Germany, ethno-marketing institutes such as Arbo Media, the media regulators in Germany and in Turkey as well as media researchers.

# THE SO-CALLED DIVISION BETWEEN JOURNALISM AND ADVERTISING, TO WHAT EXTENT DOES IT EXIST?

Richard Baerug

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The objective of my PhD project is to identify the current state of the so-called division between journalism and advertising in a set number of media companies in some selected countries in Europe, by analysing a series of indicators. In my PhD project I will analyse the production process (the implementation of editorial principles) and products produced (the content of texts) by certain niche magazines as well as by general dailies in 8 European countries. In this analysis I aim to see what type of discourse is represented in these niche magazines and general dailies. Do these niche magazines and dailies represent (and to what extent do they represent) a traditional journalism discourse or an advertising discourse? Are there grounds to speak about a new and specific mixed discourse – what we can call the advertising-driven discourse?

Although this research is mainly based on the analysis of niche magazines, similar hybrid discourses are present in other media sectors. Therefore the nature of advertising-driven journalism will be discussed from the point of view of the producers and editors as well as the text. A first analysis of the answers given by the people dealing with advertising issues in some niche magazines to potential buyers of advertising frequently identifies a practice where journalism is based upon and linked to advertising, as well as a situation with considerable discrepancies between professional journalistic norms and actual media behaviour. The application of text analysis on a representative selection of texts in this genre had (so far) confirmed the correlations between the answers given and texts produced. It shows how discursive elements of advertising are integrated in the journalism discourse. Examples of these identified discursive elements are the presence of promotional topics, the lack of critical perspectives, implications or sources, the presence of positive headlines and the domination of favourable words. The analysis of more niche magazines and general dailies is still to be carried out, as well as field observations, questionnaires and interviews with journalists, editors, advertisers, media consumers and media experts as well as a study of legislative changes.

# TOWARDS THE EUROPEANISATION OF PUBLIC OPINION? LOCAL INFLUENCE

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On 15 February 2003, at the same hour, millions rallied to oppose war in Iraq in the streets of Barcelona, Paris, London, Rome, Berlin and many other cities across Europe. '*The simultaneity of these overwhelming demonstrations — the largest since the end of the Second World War — may well, in hindsight, go down in history as a sign of the birth of a European public sphere*', Jürgen Habermas said. However, a European public sphere has never existed. There is a problem of distance between the EU and its citizens since the first steps of the European integration process. But that did not matter at all until the 'non' and 'nee' were spoken against the Treaty that aimed to establish a Constitution for Europe in mid-2005. French and Dutch rejections to the European Constitution made European institutions react and produce an effort to reduce the gap with the European citizens. One of the initiatives, launched by the European Commission, was the Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate, also known as Three-D Plan, which main objective is '*to stimulate a wider debate between the European Union's democratic institutions and citizens*'. The Committee of the Regions, the European organism representative at regional and local levels, claimed the necessity to update the strategy and 'go local'. Thus, another 'D' was added to Plan-D: 'Decentralisation'. The White paper on a European Communication Policy by the European Commission on February 2006 suggested that '*the EU institutions and bodies participating in the Inter-institutional Group on Information should help decentralise EU communication –"going local"– and encourage Member States to be more active in informing citizens about EU affairs*'. The report on this document presented by the European Parliament confirmed the point of departure of my thesis by saying that '*there is no consolidated European public sphere at present but very lively national public spheres*'. As obviously Habermas' first definition on the public sphere could not be applied to a transnational and ongoing process, with different levels of integration (which is the case for the EU); he contributed himself by talking about 'network of public spheres'.

This thesis focuses on the fourth 'D' of the Plan-D and how the existing European integration councillorships in some Catalan municipalities work as a network of public spheres and promote citizens voting in

European elections. By comparing elections results, this research will demonstrate that, despite turnout trends at European elections shows the decreasing participation tendency, in those municipalities with European Integration councillorships, participation is higher than the Catalan average.

Combining theories on public sphere with political science theory on Europeanisation – usually applied to the effects of the EU on Member States – it will be claimed that we are evolving towards the Europeanisation of public opinion, which should be understood as the EU slowly becoming an issue about which people debate, because of the influence of the network of public spheres.


# TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY AND THE TECHNOLOGIES OF GENRE. A DISCURSIVE PERSPECTIVE ON THE CHANGING PRODUCTION CONTEXT OF THE GENRE OF SOCIAL DOCUMENTARY ON FLEMISH PUBLIC BROADCASTING TELEVISION

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One of the most frequently proclaimed aims of a documentary is that the genre plays a pivotal role in stimulating public debate and raising public awareness. Therefore, documentaries have always been a key genre in relation to public broadcasting. From the late 1980's, the North Belgian public broadcaster VRT faced the prospect of loosing a substantial share of its audience to commercial networks. In this context the working environment of documentary makers has changed and documentary genres have been popularised. The focus of this study is on how documentary makers deal with these changes, in particular, with the discourses, practices, and processes wherein their work is situated.

The first part of the research includes an analysis of how genre discourses within the production process of social documentaries have changed over time. A social constructionist perspective is used to define 'genre discourses' as arrays of norms and standardised practices that function as a professional ideology for media-workers. The discourse analysis focuses on different discursive formations, which include dis-

courses on format, audience, net identity, medium, and so forth. A discourse analysis of different governmental texts, originating from production practices, examines the changes within these discursive formations. Both strategic-managerial texts (program briefings, debriefings, and tests) and practice-based texts (production manuals) are used to research how genre discourses function within the hierarchically organised production process.

The second part of the research project examines how media-workers deal and interact with these different genre discourses. The project focuses on the dynamic processes of negotiation as media-workers actively take up positions within different and sometimes competing discourses. Foucault's (1978/1991) governmentality approach – complemented by interactionist theories, such as discursive psychology – is utilised. The subjectivity or identity of a media-worker is understood as a product of (self-)disciplinary mechanisms and power-knowledge strategies. Crucial to this view is the idea that not only top-down managerial practices discipline the subject, but also that the individual disciplines himself and herself in ways that secure recognition and confirmation of significant others.

On a production level I will scrutinise how media-workers internalise, reject or negotiate norms, values, and practices. On a commissioning process level, the analysis focuses on how program- and net-managers tactically interpret norms and definitions. An ethnography-orientated and triangulated methodological approach is used. This includes participant observation of daily interactions, document analysis, and interviews. This study aims at contributing to an understanding of the hegemonic rationality of operational discourses underlying contemporary television production.

## THE ELEMENTS AND EFFECTS OF THE AMOUR FOU TOPOS IN FILM

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Obsession and mad love have always been at the core of artistic discourse. Besides the scandals that films like *L'Âge d'or* (1930), *The Last Tango in Paris* (1972) or *Lolita* (1962 and 1997) provoked, amour fou (mad

love) stories are significant also from a different perspective: they can show us how society treats those who break taboos in order to live their passion. Protagonists of amour fou stories are excluded from the community, they are labelled 'insane' and turned into the 'others'. As Kracauer pointed out, film is not only an aesthetic object; it also serves as a mirror of society. Through analysing societal techniques such as distinguishing between the 'normal' and the 'perverted' subject in fiction, we can draw conclusions on societal behaviour.

The aim of my work is to describe the presentation of the amour fou topos in the filmic discourse. The main research question is: is the amour fou film a distinctive type of text? Are there 'family resemblances' among texts that treat obsessive crazy love in film? Or, in other words: is it possible to speak of a proper amour fou genre?

My work is based on a classical textual or content analysis. To find out if we can speak of a proper genre, the mood, the setting, cinematographic means and the format of this film type have to be analysed (Grodal, 2000; Schatz, 1994). This will be supplemented by an examination of how diverse cine-cultures display this subject in a different cultural context in order to determine if we can speak of a relatively stable or even fixed transcultural genre.

This first part is mainly based on structuralist film theory (Christian Metz and others) with a special focus on semiotics and narratology. But genre theory does not stop here. Many genres (thriller, comedy, horror) are identified by what the text provokes in the recipient (Carroll, 1999). Therefore, it is not sufficient to only look at what the text is and consists of but one also needs to focus on what the text does, or rather what it is likely to provoke. Consequently, the offers of identification and empathy that are found within the text have to be examined. These text-analytical outcomes (a model of the processes of emotional engagement in amour fou films) are supplemented by a research study with focus groups. These groups will be shown a selection of films that serve as case studies and are to be considered typical amour fou films. Qualitative interviews might show that amour fou films upset the audience and that a process of prior identification and empathy is systematically undermined in the second place. Withdrawal from the protagonist and distancing are keywords here, reactions that are triggered by the filmic text (such as display of violence, deviation, disgust, etc.).

Furthermore, the thesis will explore how these types of films are and were covered by the media. Analysing press cuttings and film reviews will show how those films were perceived by the public. This will also help to classify amour fou films building on the hypothesis that these

films are characterised by special receptions and treatments by the public (e.g. calls for censorship etc.).

A phenomenology of constitutive and facultative criteria that define the amour fou film is one of the expected outcomes of this work. In addition, I hope to show how textual 'offers of identification' can be understood from a deeper level. Moreover, such an analysis will help to clarify whether the amour fou film can be considered as a subgenre of drama and, perhaps, a very peculiar polygenre of romance, erotic film and thriller.

Finally, the purpose of my thesis is to connect this work to the social realities and to draw a link between society and aesthetical communication, something that addresses the question whether the amour fou film serves a particular societal function (such as catharsis).

## WEBLOGS – THE NEW COMMUNICATION PARADIGM

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Today, more and more people and organisations realise the potentials of the weblog format. What started out as a way to publish one's adventures and views on certain issues, has become since the beginning of the 21st century a widely-spread form of communication on the internet. My point is that weblogs are one of the most influential forms of communication, that already shape and will shape communication patterns in the future. For me this is a reason to call this 'the new paradigm'.

In general, this is an academic narration about social networking, but weblogs or blogs should receive particular attention in this field. What makes the difference in weblogs are the deliberative communication efforts of the participants – they are more preferential than MySpace or Friendster-like systems. In most social networking systems, the virtual personality and its profile is at the centre of communication, but in weblogs, the main way the author can promote himself or herself is by expressing their opinions, by providing content, not just presenting their profile.

There are many possible ways for writing a weblog and developing communication. A blog can be written in the form of a private journal, as a medium for narrow audiences about a specific topic, a platform for

independent ('citizen') of dependent (editorially managed) online journalism, as a public relations tool, and much more.

The key points of the new paradigm include:

1/ Changing audiences. New media have better abilities to know their audience, because such information can be easily gathered. Community-building is of a great importance here. Weblog communication also implies the convergence of private and public.

2/ Changing authors and readers. Traditional gate-keeping functions of the media collapse, and the ability to create a mass medium emerges, so the roles of the providers and the receivers of information blur.

3/ Changing creation of content. The weblog format shapes the way the information is being created and transferred. Typical blog posts tell us what communication on the internet is like: short, easy-to-read fragments of subjectivities.

4/ Changing presentation of content. Of relevance here is what the term 'news' should mean – should it preserve its traditional meaning or should a new sense be developed of what is relevant and what forms of information the audiences desire for? Blogs as a source of information seldom provide news in a traditional form (as unbiased and neutral journalistic text); rather the authors' personal view is weblogs' greatest value.

These characteristics differ from the traditional conception of (mass) communication, so my aim is to explore the new trends that will shape our understanding of communication in the future.

# DEALING WITH USER GENERATED CONTENT: ADJUSTING INFORMATION MANAGERS' SOURCE SELECTION AND INFORMATION QUALITY ASSESSMENT

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The development of online content creation tools and social software is not confined to private circles or leisure activities. Rather, we argue that it has a significant impact on corporate environment. For a long time, internet has been seen as a challenging workspace for Corporate Communication and Information Management purposes. It enables a growing number of people to publish, share and relay information (facts, opinions or contacts) on any subject they see fit. A number of authors have studied the way Information Managers face new opportunities and risks created by those new flows of information, especially regarding sources selection and information processing. The recent emergence of user-friendly content creation tools and networking facilities, consubstantial with web 2.0, has increased that phenomenon, opening the discussion to a new range of information sources: the ordinary users/clients/consumers.

This doctoral research aims to study the impact of new types of online information sources on the information quality evaluation methods and the source selection process within the information management activities. This study focuses specifically on corporate information management that we define as the 'individual or collective set of actions aiming at grasping information coming from its environment, in order to anticipate a given situation or a broader trend, at a given time, and to react to take benefits of it, after an appropriate processing and relay. Those actions are realised by information mediation (gathering, processing, distribution, etc.) and differ from their main goal: threats and opportunities detection, help on the decision-making process and influence actions'.

The first phase consists of a theoretical confrontation of traditional evaluation and selection methods with the evolution inducted by the internet. We argue that concepts and definitions usually related to information use and IM practices are challenged by the trend known as web 2.0 and its typical formats such as weblogs, wikis, podcasts, file sharing and social networks platforms (Kolbitsch and Maurer, 2006). The

theoretical part will try to re-evaluate the professionals' criteria when faced with those formats. This step aims to update the theoretical framework of IM, regarding source selection and information quality. The second phase will then take the form of an empirical confrontation of the newly-built framework. A field research will then test its actual relevance to IM professionals and will be adjusted to cope with the observed realities.

## FRENCH 'STAR CITIZEN BLOGGERS': A SIGNIFICANT NEW MEDIA ACTOR IN THE NATIONAL PUBLIC SPHERE?

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The aim of this research is to enlighten the recent increase of alternative information producers on the web in a context of the 'mutation' of and crisis in the mainstream media. The case of the French 'star' bloggers is of interest for being an essential figure of selfmedia tool use, reaching a wide audience on a daily basis, providing them with great visibility in the public sphere. More precisely, we will be focusing on the 'citizen blog' type, sharing the typology and definition provided by a previous academic study: 'a passionate non-professional information producer from everyday life'. The reason for this work was triggered by these authors' claim of a decentralised and democratic way of blogging, providing the closest approximation of the deliberative model and Habermas' original concept of the public sphere (Cardon and Delaunay-Teterel, 2006).

The main question then would be: regarding their advantageous positions in public sphere debates, are the French 'star citizen bloggers' providing some kind of influence in a delimited field?

The main idea is divided into three main questions: which position do the French 'citizen bloggers' have, compared to other information actors? What kind of discourses are they providing? Does their 'communicative action' have significant consequences in the French public sphere?

Regarding the position taken in this work, we borrow from the sociology of networks' theories and methods and we propose a *selfmedia*-adapted notion of 'influence' and 'audience', thus updating the old mass

media sociological concepts and criticising the trivial definitions used nowadays by the media or the bloggers themselves.

Concerning the discourses, guided by a previous academic study, stating that any kind of blog post always implies a political topic (Candel and Jeanne-Perrier, 2007), we would argue that they are also providing a 'technologified' vision of politics, constructing the symbolic idea that technology (ICTs) is to be considered the key point in the process of becoming an 'ideal citizen'.

On 'communicative action', we would like to argue that this kind of blogger manages a set of 'techno-scientific' skills (Pelissier, 2006) in order to make their blogs exist. The aesthetical choices for the blog's interface, the management of links, the quickness and regularity of the posts, the relationships and the deliberative model they provide with their 'audi-ence' are such tactics or strategies (Marchandise, 2007; De Certeau) that allow them to become a really interesting source of inspiration for mostly professional actors like politicians, academics, 'smaller bloggers', online versions of press and firms.

## COMMUNICATIVE CONNECTIVITIES: MEDIATED SOCIAL NETWORKS OF YOUNG RUSSIANS IN THE GERMAN DIASPORA

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The enduring changes caused by globalisation processes have become apparent on different levels in the every day lives of many people. Focussing on societal, medial and cultural changes (e.g. processes of migration, de-territorialisation and mediatisation), this dissertation investigates processes of connectivity through the use of digital media by young people with a Russian immigrant background living in Germany.
The everyday lives of many young people can – ever more than before – be described as personal media worlds in which a various number of communication technologies play an increasingly important role. They grow up in and with entire (digital) media environments within which the articulation and constitution of social relationships takes place.
Framed by a cultural studies perspective, my main interest lies in the analyses of (mobile) communication processes of young diaspora mem-

bers via mobile phone and internet appropriation. I primarily focus on questions about mobility and connectivity constituted via media communication which often take places on different levels in diasporic communities.

In general, migrants can be characterised by a certain biographic local mobility which is linked to a communicative connectivity constituted by media communication. This leads to many of them being characterised by an involvement in different social networks in a diversity of places: the local network consisting of family and friends at their place of living, and the translocal one constituted by connections with relatives and friends in the country of origin, which leads to a social multi-connectivity in their 'diasporic lives'. The interaction with these different networks takes place via mediated communication, mainly via the mobile phone and the internet. According to this, the following questions will be discussed in my PhD: What are the patterns which characterise young Russians' communication processes via digital media in the German diaspora? Which meanings do mobile phone and internet have for their social relations with regard to their multi-connected background? And what are the consequences of this mediated connectivity to their diasporic lives regarding their role/place in society?

Since my research project is a qualitative study, my empirical analysis is based on qualitative interviews. Additionally, media diaries and drawings of network maps are used. The analysis of the connectivity processes of diaspora members will be carried out from a communication and media studies perspective linked with cultural-theoretical aspects. Central to the project is the meaning of digital media for young Russians and their social networks with respect to the production and articulation of connectivity with different groups of people in different places, thus focussing on theoretical approaches such as translocality and place. The project is dealing with processes of translocal media-sales over the internet, as well as on locally-centralised interpersonal media communication in (local) youth groups. All together, on a broader level, the goal of the research project is to show what role (mobile) digital media play in the constitution of social communication networks in differently-shaped cultural contexts and what meaning media communication has in the contemporary processes of media and cultural change.

# FROM LAPDOGS TO WATCHDOGS: THE PRESS AND DEMOCRACY IN GHANA

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The study explores the contribution of newspapers to multiparty democracy in Ghana, especially in the post-1992 era. Its underlying energy is predicated on media's role in enhancing accountability, transparency and citizenship. It follows Bittner (1989) in perceiving newspapers as '*a major source of forming public opinion and affecting national and international efforts towards economic progress and global understanding*'. Essentially, the study provides for empirical insights into the qualitative dimensions of media and democracy, using qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. A comparative analysis approach is employed to investigate the role of the state-owned *Daily Graphic* and the privately-owned *Ghanaian Chronicle*. The focus is on political coverage before, during and after elections in terms of ownership, control and accountability. Emerging from some of these interviews is the changing face of Ghanaian media. The findings clearly illustrate the role of the media in ensuring that political power-wielders operate within the standards required for democracy to become crystallised. However, the effectiveness of the Ghanaian media in carrying out this task is circumscribed by factors that are internal and external to the media. The cleavage along partisan fault lines has created a simple but an almost indelible impression about the Ghana media, in binary terms, as being either for or against government. This bifurcated view of the media is subsumed in the private-state dichotomy and has antecedents in its immediate historical past. The vanguard role of the media vitiates when leaders and the general public have the perception that it acts as covers for political entrepreneurs. The topic is a significant closer look at the role of the newspaper media in the democratic process of a specific African country.

# INTRODUCING ICT IN EGYPTIAN NEWSROOMS: DEMOCRATISING MEDIA, DEMOCRATISING THE SOCIETY

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Information communication technologies, especially the internet, are believed to bring about changes in journalistic practices of production, to attract new audiences, and increase the media supply. One of the most debated changes is the increasing opportunity to communicate across the 'old' boundaries of time and place between journalists and citizens. These real or potential changes are significant as news is an important part of contemporary societies. As with journalism, which is not only about informing people about recent 'factual' events but also a profoundly cultural sense-making practice of modernity (Hartley, 1996), not only do ICTs provide stories on recent events, but through ritualised performance and consumption they also affect social life as well as the everyday life of the citizenry (Allan, 1999).

There is intense interest in the potential of ICTs to contribute to a new era of participatory democracy and a revitalisation of the journalistic profession in creation of an interactive public sphere (McChesney, 2002). A leading exponent of this notion is Howard Rheingold; an influential member of an early internet community called *The Well*, whose book *Virtual Communities* was published in 1993. Rheingold's main argument is that '*Journalists, meetings and facilitations of interactivity in virtual communities could help revitalise democracy, or they could be luring us into an attractively packaged substitute for democratic discourse*' (Rheingold, 1993: 276). Rheingold and others have promoted the utopian vision of the electronic agora, an '*Athens without slaves*'. He believes that the technology, '*if properly understood and defended by enough e-journalists, does have democratising potential* [within the framework of the society] *in the way that alphabets and printing presses had democratising potential*' (Rheingold, 1993: 279).

The underpinning argument is that if ICTs are well-introduced into society through 'proper' journalism, they will enhance the citizens' willingness and ability to participate, and the distance between the elite and citizens should become smaller. Likewise, both journalists and audiences would be closer to each other. Ideally, meaningful public discussions within the platform of journalism would be reinforced: today's rather elitist, conflict-centred news would be transformed into a source

of, and an arena for, vivid dialogue between citizens, authorities and politicians. Ultimately the news, for its own part, would revive and strengthen democracy. This line of thinking stems from the ideology of public journalism, where the task is not only to inform citizens but also to enhance meaningful public discussion and participation (Heikkilä and Kunelius, 1997; Rosen, 1991; Sirienni and Friedland, 2001).

## HIDDEN CONTEXT

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The paper (which is unrelated to my PhD project, which I have just started) will argue in favour of a re-positioning of the concept of interactivity by unravelling the context behind new media technologies and its users. The objective is to offer an up-to-date and therefore relevant definition of the new media user in order to highlight the challenges underlying the use of the technology.

The notion of Public Service Broadcasting or PSB, will act as a framework within which the specificities of the codes at the heart of both production and reception of new media material can be uncovered.

By applying the key principles of PSB to the area of new media technology as a whole, I intend to outline the precarious nature of the democratic debate within the new media sphere. Simon Cottle (2001) once talked of an interpretative vacuum when looking at different formats of news on offer to the public. The present paper will introduce the concept of interactive vacuum and thereby lay out the ground principles of an informed interactivity which in turn, will guarantee the future of the technology-driven medium as both an initiator and a recipient of democracy.

# WHAT'S BIG BROTHER GOT TO DO WITH IT? TALKING POLITICS ONLINE

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Literature and research on political deliberation has grown expeditiously over the past ten years, in particular, net-public sphere research has gained much interest. Talking politics online has been studied in a variety of ways. However, most net-public sphere studies have focused solely on political discussion forums, such as Usenet newsgroups, news-media discussion forums, and government-sponsored forums, and have neglected an array of other forum genres. If net-public sphere research is to move 'beyond the first phase', it must begin to widen its scope of analysis by taking a more inclusive approach in selecting the discursive spaces it analyses.

This study takes a step in that direction by analysing and comparing how participants talk politics in political and non-political spaces, in particular, within the *Big Brother*, *Wife Swap*, and *Guardian* online discussion forums. Drawing from Habermas' theory of communicative action in particular and deliberative democratic theory and deliberation literature in general, a set of normative conditions of the process of deliberation was constructed. A coding scheme was created and a content analysis was conducted. The coding scheme was developed as a means of operationalising the various variables of deliberation with the unit and context unit of analysis representing both a single post and the thread in which it's situated. Thus, the focus was placed on the participants' comments, as they are externalised in or can be externalised from the postings. The aim of the scheme, then, is two-fold: to analyse and assess the deliberativeness of the discussion threads; and to identify how the political emerges in non-political spaces. Regarding the latter, particular attention was paid to the postings surrounding a political exchange as to identify the factors and/or conditions that contributed to the emergence or departure of the political. Approximately 9796 postings within 418 threads – taken from a period of one month – were coded and analysed for this study.

# JOURNALISTIC CONTROL AND IDENTITY IN THE PROCESSING OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT IN FINNISH AND AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS

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The internet is reconfiguring the previous practices of journalism, causing the traditional gate-keeping approach to news production to evolve continuously. News organisations are increasingly processing and publishing material – such as photos and personal accounts – from users. By participating in chat forums and blogs or by creating user-generated content, members of the news audience can play a more active role in news production. At the same time newspapers are struggling with the extent to which professional journalistic standards should be applied to the material contributed by the readers. The main objective of my research project is to analyse the journalistic processing of user-generated web content (UGC) in newspapers. I will analyse, how this kind of content is selected, organised and presented in print and online papers. What are the control mechanisms and journalistic criteria that are applied in these processes, and how do journalists (re)formulate their role and identity? Is the role of journalists shifting from gate-keeping to guiding or collaborating, and what kind of consequences might this shift have for the ideas about the role of the press in society? Through the methods of action research, I will examine journalistic processing of user-generated content from two conceptual perspectives: 1) the journalistic identity, and 2) the macro-level control mechanisms in the media organisations. I hope to be able to analyse the emergence and cultivation of trust in the journalist-reader interaction during the processing of UGC. I will collect my data from newspapers in Finland and in the US.

# THE IRAQ CRISIS AND THEORIES OF PRESS-STATE RELATIONS – PRESS COVERAGE OF IRAQ AND NATIONAL FOREIGN POLICIES IN FINLAND, IRELAND AND THE UK

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From the beginning, it was clear that Iraq posed more of a public relations than a military challenge to the US-led coalition. While the US struggled to mobilise support for military action, European governments were forced to determine their positions. The dissensus over Iraq on both international and national levels offers a rich setting for cross-national research. The aim is to investigate whether US-originated theories of media-state relations have explanatory power in democracies in more general terms. This study focuses on three European states, Finland (anti-war), Ireland (neutral) and the UK (pro-war), which adopted different policies with regard to Iraq and in which the national Iraq policies created controversy. The study employs both qualitative and quantitative content analysis in order to determine the range of sources, the topic selection and the tone of the press coverage of the Iraq crisis and the national Iraq policies. The data consist mainly of two daily quality papers from each country from different ends of the political spectrum. The main periods of analysis cover four weeks at critical phases of the crisis between February and May 2003.

# THE MYTH OF A PEOPLE. THE CONSTRUCTION OF ORDINARY PEOPLE AS POLITICAL SUBJECTS THROUGH THE RECEPTION OF AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION IN CONTEMPORARY MAINSTREAM AUDIO-VISUAL MASS MEDIA

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This PhD project departs from a poststructuralist and constructivist viewpoint, stressing the contingent and constructed character of meaning and social structures, in case the identity of ordinary people as political subjects. The meaning attributed to identities is considered to be variable and arbitrary, constructed through a complex process of interaction between subjects, subject positions and discourse.

The key question of this project focuses on the audience reception of the representation and participation of ordinary people as political subjects in mainstream audio-visual mass media. The theoretical framework will be based on democratic theory (e.g. Held, 2006) and on Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory (1985). The methodology consists of the use of sensitising concepts (Blumer, 1969) and a range of qualitative and quantitative methods. The notions of antagonistic subject positions (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) and the AIP-model of access, interaction and participation (Carpentier, 2002) will function as sensitising concepts to guide and direct the research project. The media offer specific constructions of the political role of ordinary people through particular forms of access, modes of interaction and types of participation, addressing, defining and constructing ordinary people as political subjects in an antagonistic relation with other subject positions. The research is based on the use of different methods, focusing on the production sphere by conducting interviews with media professionals; on the produced media content, through qualitative and quantitative content analyses of audio-visual programmes and broadcasters' websites; and on the reception sphere, by conducting web surveys and focus groups with members of the audience(s). The analyses will then be placed in the larger socio-political context.

Eight case studies are selected; all in the area of audience participation and in relation to political themes. This concerns radio and television programmes as well as web sites. Whereas academic researchers

have paid much attention to the production and texts of these participatory media formats, especially during the last ten to fifteen years (Priest, 1995; Livingstone and Lunt, 1996; Carpentier, 2001; Thornborrow, 2001; Giles, 2002; McNair et al., 2003; Ytreberg, 2004), analyses aimed at their reception remain extremely rare. In short: this project has the ambition to contribute to debates about the democratic potential of participatory media formats by way of analysing how audiences deal with them.


## CHANGES IN THE PROFESSIONAL CULTURE OF THE 21ST-CENTURY CULTURAL JOURNALISM

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It has been claimed that literary criticism, as well as criticism dealing with other forms of arts, is in crisis these days. Newspapers are decreasing the number and length of published critiques in favour of glossy interviews, impressive reportages and artists' portraits in a human-interest style. Criticism is massively produced but, at the same time, its judgmental basis has receded – as a result, it is also massively ignored.

In order to understand what is going on, we have to turn to the professionals operating in the field. To a large extent the crisis discourse comes down to the tendency that the relation between the universalism of the traditional newspaper (the tradition of journalism) and specialist expertise (the tradition of criticism) is being re-defined. As the strict disciplinary bounds are crumbling and the boundaries between high and popular culture are eroding, the development towards 'democratisation' in culture holds no place for specialists.

My PhD project attempts to study the interplay between the so-called journalistic and criticistic tradition in terms of newspaper's cultural journalism. I will look at the changes in professional notions of journalists and critics writing for the newspaper's cultural departments. The two-sided professional culture is approached by questioning what kind of subject positions the contemporary writers in newspapers occupy in their texts, and what kind of positions are rooted and maintained in the organisational culture. Reconstructing a genealogy of these subject positions within a single organisational system makes the historicity of both paradigms visible. The object of my empirical phenomenographical

research is the cultural department of Helsingin Sanomat, the largest and the most influential newspaper in Finland.

In my PhD research I intend to discuss what the concept of journalism means in the context of 21st century cultural journalism and whether the conception of the so-called journalistic turn or journalistification is appropriate. In this context journalism tends to be termed as an ideological construction by both critics and artists. As my approach attempts to unify both the journalistic and the criticistic sides of cultural journalism, I call it an integrative approach. So far, cultural journalism has mainly been a task for literary or art historians, due to which only some of the strategies have been examined at a time. Moreover, the outcome has been limited. The integrative approach provides us with a more diversified sensitivity for the two paradigms that are both elements of the reception history or, in Gadamer's terminology, effective history of the arts and literature.

## CREATING THE MEDIA IMAGE OF THE PRESIDENT: THE ROLE OF OFFICIAL SOURCES IN FRAMING TELEVISION NEWS

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In the age of mass communication, the public image of a political actor is substantially shaped by the media, or more specifically, by the way media frame their messages. Media framing (as an important factor in the construction of social reality) fundamentally involves the selection of and emphasis on certain aspects of a perceived reality. As a consequence, events being presented in the news receive dominant/primary meanings. Embedded in the constructionist paradigm and symbolic interactionism, the PhD project draws upon ideas of framing theory, and primarily focuses on frame-building and frame-setting processes. It considers media frames as an independent variable that – among many factors – influences journalists whilst producing news.

Current research indicates that with the rise of the public relations profession, official sources (especially public relations and media relations professionals) increasingly build, set and frame considerable portions of the agenda for the media and the public. On the one hand, the official sources have adapted their way of thinking to journalistic

conventions in order to get their information into the media, whereas, on the other hand, the profit-driven market model of journalism encourages journalists to lean on official sources to produce complex political news. Moreover, due to their elite status and political power, official political sources have a relatively high media access thereby significantly influencing media workers at all stages of the news production process.

To examine the general thesis – that the official sources substantially influence journalists in the process of (re)framing television news, which impacts on (re)creation of the media image of a political actor – the PhD project focuses on the official sources related to the Slovene president and their influence on the television news in 2006. In that year, the media and the public witnessed a considerable image transformation or 'reframing' of president Drnovšek. From a conventional politician he became a 'new age' critical leader, who (according to the Slovene media) was striving to make the world a better place. The PhD project uses a mixed-methods approach and combines frame analysis of official messages and television news with qualitative interviews with journalists and presidential official sources. While the general thesis might seem trivial at first, preliminary research indicates that the presidential frames were on many occasions challenged by the governmental (elite) frames, who were strongly opposing the presidential frames. These opposing frames affected the image (re)creation of the president in the media and indicated that the news on the president was an outcome of a competitive 'frame game'.

# AN INTEGRATED PUBLIC SPHERE? COMPARING THE DEGREE OF INTEGRATION IN THE GERMAN AND THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE

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There is widespread agreement in the research literature that the European Union lacks an integrated or cohesive public sphere where the exchange of opinions and arguments between politicians from all member states and their citizens provides a source of legitimacy for political decisions. The national public spheres of the individual member states are in this context often referred to as the ideal that a European Public

Sphere needs to aspire to, but is not likely to ever achieve. However, this vision is backed up by little empirical knowledge on the actual degree of integration in national public spheres.

The thesis shall bridge this gap by adapting the normative and empirical criteria developed in the growing research field on the European public sphere to an inquiry into the integration of national public spheres. Based on the conceptualisation of the transnationalisation of public spheres developed by Hartmut Wessler et al. (2008), a four-dimensional model of the integration of the public sphere has been developed as a theoretical basis for this research. According to this model, the integration of the public sphere can occur on these four dimensions: monitoring governance, similarity of discourse, discursive integration and collective identification. The concrete degree of regional integration of the German public sphere shall then be ascertained using a large-scale content analysis combining quantitative and qualitative elements on both national and regional mass media. The case of the German national public sphere seems to be especially fruitful for developing a standard of comparison (for the European public sphere) because its federal political structure comes comparatively close to a multi-level governance structure such as the one of the EU. In Germany, regional structures and regional politics are more important than in many other European member states, so that a fragmentation of the national public sphere along regional lines is on the one hand more likely and on the other hand would be more hazardous to the cohesion of the national political community. The findings shall then be used to re-evaluate the normative and empirical standards often employed in the discussion of the European public sphere.

# THE WORLD YOUTH DAY 2005 AND ITS APPROPRIATION VIA MEDIA – A CASE STUDY ON RELIGIOUS INDIVIDUALISATION IN MEDIA CULTURES

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In our western pluralistic societies, religion has become an individual matter. The question if we believe or in who or what we believe, can be considered a personal choice which often depends on what we learn from the media. At the same time, the Christian Churches are no longer considered the epitome of an ultimate truth as there are numerous competing truths in the transcultural marketplaces constituted by the media.

However, religious media events like the funeral of Pope John Paul II, or the catholic World Youth Day in Germany 2005, as well as the media controversies about the Muhammad cartoons and Pope Benedict's critical statement on Islam, indicate that religion has not disappeared from the western media culture. Technological innovation and the liberalisation of media and telecommunication markets open up new spaces for religious communication and experiences – a development that challenges religious institutions like the Catholic Church to find new ways to communicate its specific offer of meaning.

In my thesis I will look at how religious individualisation is articulated in the appropriation of the World Youth Day 2005 as a media event. I will examine how young German and Italian Catholics experienced this hybrid religious media event and how they make sense of it within their everyday (religious) lives. Comparative analysis of data from Germany and Italy will allow for discussing the transcultural claim of Catholicism against the background of empirically grounded articulations of religious identity and community building in the wider context of individualisation, mediatisation and eventisation.

The research will be carried out from a cultural studies perspective focussing on processes of meaning making, taking their contextualisation within mediated discourses of religiosity and everyday patterns of religious practices into account. My analysis is based on qualitative interviews with young Catholics conducted immediately after the World Youth Day in Cologne and six month later addressing the following questions: How is the media event appropriated in relation to certain

forms of catholic identity and belonging? Which role is assigned to the Catholic Church and the Pope in this context? How does this correspond to different patterns of everyday (religious) media use?

This thesis is a follow-up study to a DFG funded research project on the mediatisation of the World Youth Day 2005 carried out at the University of Bremen, Germany between 2005 and 2007 (Forschungskonsortium WJT, 2007). My research aims at providing a better understanding of how – under the conditions of mediatisation – traditional patterns of religious orientation and meaning making are challenged on an everyday level and how this affects the way Catholicism is experienced as a transcultural belief community.


## THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF MEANING-BASED WORK

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Many researches emphasise the importance of interpersonal communication competences in learning, in working life, and in society in general (Daly, 1998, 2002; Morreale, Osborn and Pearson, 2000). Changes in the working life (e.g., globalisation, the development of information and communication technology, the increase in abstract, conceptual, and knowledge-intensive work, and the increase in collaborative interaction) have established new challenges to the interpersonal communication competence and enhanced the essential role of communication and interaction at work (FinnSight 2015 -foresight project, 2006; Huotari, Hurme and Valkonen, 2005; Kostiainen, 2003). Although it seems to be obvious that the interpersonal communication competence is a core competence in current meaning-based working life, little research has had its primary focus on examining how the interpersonal communication competence actually develops and how it is learned at work.

The aim of the research project is to describe and understand the development of the interpersonal communication competence in the context of meaning-based work. The research focuses on experiences and perceptions which professionals – working in the meaning-based work environments – have related to the development of their own interpersonal communication competence at work. Special attention is given to

experientially significant learning experiences which belong to the field of informal learning in working life.

Research data will be collected by means of interviewing and collecting open-ended responses to questions about one's experientially significant learning experiences. Participants will be postdoctoral researchers who work in national Centres of Excellence in Finland. The work of these researchers is mainly meaning-based, and a great deal of it is based on communication and interaction.

Research will answer the following research questions:

- What is the interpersonal communication competence in the work of researchers?
- How does the interpersonal communication competence develop informally in the work of researchers?
- What kinds of learning experiences are experientially significant in the development of the interpersonal communication competence in the work of researchers?

The theoretical value of the research project is in improving the understanding of the development of adults' interpersonal communication competence in the context of meaning-based work. Research findings can also assist in analysing the phenomena of experience-based learning, informal learning, and learning at work from the perspective of speech communication and human interaction. Although the research is based on the hermeneutical interest in knowledge as such, research results can be applied in many ways, for instance in developing working life and formal communication education.


## THE ROLE OF THE INTERNET IN POLITICISED ELITE DIASPORA: THE CASE OF UGANDA

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The research project explores the politics of deterritorialised identities in transnational landscapes through collaborative use of list groups. This study examines the deposition and flight of the elite Ugandan diaspora from denial of state power, domination and control. The study seeks to trace these dispersals of the Ugandan diaspora through waves of

internecine political conflicts. It then seeks to probe how Ugandan diaspora have settled in global cities in Scandinavia, North America and the UK, and how they appropriate the internet to recreate their severed socio-political bonds and weave on-offline transnational connections. The study seeks to establish how these networks of transnational connections construct a deliberative interface and establish re-connection with homeland politics. This research seeks to analyse this local-global dialectic through case studies of Acholinet and Acoliforum, which are key Ugandan diaspora e-mail discussion forums.

As products of layered and complex socio-political migration, the predominant discourses of the Ugandans in the diaspora are competing subnational voices, rooted in active socio-political nostalgia such as the ongoing war in northern Uganda and the search for a negotiated settlement. It is this complex disjunctive political relationship between Ugandans in the diaspora and the Uganda nation-state which this study seeks to investigate through an integrative understanding of mediated diasporic politics.

## COMMUNITY RADIO IN THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF A BRAZILIAN *FAVELA*

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The proposed PhD research project is a study of the everyday use of community radio by residents of one selected *favela* in Salvador, Brazil. Drawing from ethnographic data, this project aims at exploring residents' listening experiences of community radio, focusing on how they use and interpret community radio programmes, assessing to what extent these programmes represent a public (social, political or familial) resource for its audiences. My research objective is to identify potential linkages between listening to community radio and residents' sense of identity and esteem in the *favela*.

In order to draw an accurate picture, the fieldwork will be carried out in one single *favela*. The spotlight is on the community rather than on the radio stations, on the audiences rather than the producers. The project examines the private and public dimensions of community radio listening, observing its use as a public resource both in the home and on the

streets. In the context of *favelas*, community radio programming is widely aired through street loudspeakers, making an interesting case study of radio's use in public spaces and challenging the well-accepted perspective of the medium as essentially individual and domestic.

In addition, the study analyses community radio listening both for pleasure and as a space for debate. Do residents look at community radio programmes as a source of entertainment? Does community radio represent a forum in which *favelas* residents can discuss openly issues that are directly related to their living situation, such as racism, social injustice and violence?

I will examine issues of empowerment, identity and self-esteem, evaluating community radio's ability to address matters that the community identifies as important (e.g. improving their living conditions, health and education).

## COMMUNICATING ANTI-RACISM AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY TO SOCCER, URBAN AND SOAP AUDIENCES

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There has been very little research on the ways in which audiences make sense of communication campaigns for cultural diversity and anti-racism. This project will attempt to cater to this hiatus by focusing on these kinds of campaigns within various domains. The project consists of three parts in which different campaigns are taken as the focus of study: soccer, urban identities and mass media entertainment.

The third part of the project (the focus of my presentation at the Summer School) consists of the use of popular mass mediated entertainment for the stimulation of cultural tolerance. Drawing on a case study of the Dutch soap Westside, which was produced with the explicit objective to foster cultural tolerance, I will look at the ways in which mass mediated entertainment can play a role in contributing to the negotiation of cultural difference. Using both qualitative and quantitative data, I will answer both questions of meaning as well as actual 'effects' of this particular soap (with the help of an experiment).

# POLITICAL MARKETING IN THE MODELS OF COMMUNICATION – DOES AN EXEMPLARY STRATEGIC VIEW OF MARKETING EXIST?

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Information is one of the factors that influences the form of co-existence and cooperation of modern communities. Numerous experts describe modern communities as 'communities of information'. Therefore, it is crucial to manage information in order to efficiently influence the functioning of social systems, including political systems.

The management of information is widely questioned. It refers to the transmission of politically relevant information from one element to the remaining elements of a political system, followed by the circulation of this information between political and social systems. Relevant information of course also incorporates ideas, values and attitudes.

Mass media in general play an important role in the mechanisms of authority. The way in which media govern is based on symbolic authority that implies the ability to use symbolic forms, accepted as expressions that transfer information and symbolic content so as to intervene in and influence the course of actions and events. Sources that allow information and communication to become more public thus play a crucial role in the exercise of this authority.

A new form of political communication is political marketing. Political marketing is defined in two ways. One corresponds with the technical understanding of marketing. In this context, the main point is the functional aspect, connected with the voters' determination to vote for a particular candidate or a political party, by applying given methods, techniques and social activities. The second point of view defines political marketing as a social process which is continuous and dynamic, that controls social life, and takes place in a community.

The origin of political marketing can be traced back to the creation of the modern mass media. In the meantime, political marketing has become a way to improve the information transfer in communities that are said to be facing so-called 'avalanches of information', which allows reaching a particular 'voter'. The phenomenon of political marketing has become the focus of a substantial number of research projects. However,

these projects are limited to the tactical component of this subject, including mainly the analysis of election campaigns.

Political marketing is crucial to our political realities, and there is a need for more research on the question of the significance of political marketing at a strategic level. The necessary perspective that needs to be used (and accepted) to look at political marketing is that of social process, which will enable us to carry out a more comprehensive study of political marketing.

## NEWSPAPERS OF RECORD ONLINE AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE STATUS OF WRITING

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The constant evolving of the press that has significantly been revealed since being online is subject to large numbers of different kinds of reflections, both inside and outside academia. Already in an ongoing crisis for the last thirty years (due to numerous factors – including breaks in coverage, the ongoing decrease of readership often considered in correlation with the rise of other information and communication technologies), the press in so-called 'developed countries' has found itself facing a set of issues raised with the emergence of the internet and its potentialities.

When 'going online', newspapers did not land in a no man's land where everything was yet to build. Instead they have had to adapt to and to integrate into a space where many other news relaying voices are spoken.

In this context, newspapers of record raise our curiosity. Sometimes called the 'elite press', and occasionally known to make various 'peculiar' moves in their editing, the happy few have lately started facing 'modernity' at different paces, as their Golden Age seems to be further away every day. In the French case, it no longer suffices to rely on its model ('famous' for its explanatory virtues), as it had once proved to be when radio and then television became popular.

How are these 'prestigious' newspapers learning to share this common space with the many other voices? What are the evolutions that can be seen in the press of record in the French context? How does the concept of what is 'record' translate into the context provided by the inter-

net? Furthermore, is the press of record on the other side of the Atlantic undergoing similar evolutions? Could the French and Anglo-Saxon models for journalism of record be converging towards a comparable model, in a history that has often underlined diverging definitions of news coverage?

My PhD promotes an interdisciplinary approach of a work in progress situated in the French *Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication*. The need for knowledge of the French context and the traditions it holds are not to be underestimated here, as we look at the field from various perspectives: that of what news is considered to be; as well as what the profession means. Furthermore, more classical disciplines such as philosophy, as well as more recent transatlantic theories on alternative media will be invoked in an attempt to fully grasp what is at stake in culture of the Press of Record. I will try to question what is too often (and wrongly) considered 'untouchable'.

## AMATEUR IMAGES IN NEWS: INDICES OF POWER STRUGGLES IN THE FRAGMENTED PUBLIC SPACE

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For the last few years, with breaking news involving disasters, catastrophes, wars, attacks, amateur images have been seen in the news, used as ever before on TV and newspapers. These images are related to terrorist attacks in New York, and London, the Tsunami, the war in Iraq, public executions, Happy Slapping.

My research project concerns the images diffused on French TV and printed in French newspapers between 1991 (the first war in Iraq) and 2006 (Saddam Hussein's execution). This work places them in a production-diffusion-reception process that includes three different actors: the amateurs, the media, the receivers and in the background: the fragmented public space (a concept developed by Bernard Miège). In this perspective, Information and Communication Sciences (a French field of research) allows studying amateur images in news using an interdisciplinary approach. This allows including a long-term perspective as well as a mix of micro- and macro levels.

Studying a contemporary topic reduces the number of available (academic) sources. Consequently, we will lean on academic literature on images, media (and public space) and the 'social anchorage' of techniques. Additionally, my theoretical framework will be combined with fieldwork, which will be based on frame analysis, interviews with image professionals (to understand the evolution of images, and the related historical context ...), interviews with journalists, graphical editors, photo-reporters, interviews with receivers, and media observations to understand the construction/diffusion of amateur images, ... . The combination of the theoretical framework and my fieldwork will allow to construct (and to balance) the main thread of this research project: the presence of amateur images in the news (between actors' strategies, social and identity construction, and social logics) seem to be indicators of power struggles in a fragmented public space.

Also, this re-emergence (since amateur images are not new in themselves) will reveal power struggles of 'images trying to take over the text', of amateurs versus professional, of self-expression versus the expression of 'us', of media's objectivity versus amateurs' subjectivity, of manipulation versus information, of the 'centre' as a referent versus the 'periphery', of participatory journalism versus traditional journalism. As this is an undecided struggle, it is important to take an interest in the strategies, and to privilege nuance, distance, and articulation in this research project.

## THE MEANING OF THE MOBILE PHONE FOR ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS: CONTRIBUTING TO AN INVESTIGATION OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTIONS IN THE PROCESS OF SOCIALISATION WITH MEDIA

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Peer groups are the frame of action and reference in which adolescents form and experience new types of relationships. These relationships are characterised by shared meanings about personal identities and interaction patterns as well as expectations and modes of action. Within these communication processes, media play an important role to express one's individual identity with reference to friends, to exchange views and experiences and to form a communicative net of social relationships. As

an indispensable, personal and multifunctional medium, the mobile phone holds an important position within these media arrangements.

With regard to new forms of communication and interaction that are mirrored in the structures and dynamics of relationships, the PhD project aims at conceptualising adolescent relations as dynamic social networks of negotiated meanings that are intertwined in processes of mediated communication. The mobile phone is conceived as a personal medium and as an element of these communication processes. Considering developmental issues that are typical for young individuals, the project tries to shed light on questions that deal with the relational structures and meanings in which the mobile phone is used in (with an everyday life context), for which reasons and in which communication processes and social contexts. The negotiation of relationships by means of mobile communication is examined in line with communication processes carried out with other media technologies like internet chat, E-Mail or landline phone and in line with face-to-face communication. Referring to the mediatisation of society, the PhD project looks at the consequences that are materialised in changes of social networks and in the process of adolescent socialisation.

Against the background of the socio-cultural tradition and referring to the findings of symbolic interactionism, the theoretical framework of the PhD project comprises theories that deal with questions of socialisation, development and communication referring to relationships. The foundation is based on an interactionist view of socialisation that conceives individuals as active producers of their relationships. Social networks are defined as a dynamic, flexible and relatively open set of relationships which individuals imbue with meanings and use for personal and collective actions. Communication through media as the basic process is examined from the perspective of the individual and as a type of symbolic interaction.

Within this theoretical framework, the project aims to generate theoretical findings that are grounded in empirical data. Based on a qualitative, ethnographical multi-method design, the research project combines a longitudinal investigation of peer-groups, including in-depth interviews, observations and experiments.

# THE PRESS DURING THE SPANISH POLITICAL TRANSITION (1974–1984): PERMANENCE AND CHANGE IN THE REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

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This thesis examines the representation of social relations in the press during the Spanish Political Transition. My research project provides a novel contribution in this area by analysing in a comparative, systematic and longitudinal way the representations of social and political relationships communicated by the press. This study demonstrates that these representations of the public opinion in the Spanish Political Transition lead to the legitimisation of the hegemonic control of politicians, media elites and the upper class, reducing the citizenry to the limited and passive role of spectators.

# NEWS IN THE DIGITAL SWITCHOVER

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News production processes impacts on how the news market functions. In particular, the digital switchover – the process of moving news distribution from analogue to digital platforms – questions the continued validity of the social contract as the basic ideal of news production. The social contract ideal, which encompasses the theory of the 4th estate, journalistic idealism, legitimacy conventions and liberal theories of democracy and the press, is – in this digital context – in a state of flux. Consequently, the conventional rules of how news media legitimacy is attained and maintained may no longer apply. This project investigates the digital switchover and its consequences for legitimacy in the Norwegian news market, with particular emphasis on the strategies of the number two channel in the television market – the commercial public service channel TV 2.

The reality of the digital switchover creates market fluctuations that pose a particular challenge for broadcasters. As a commercial public ser-

vice broadcaster, TV 2 has certain obligations in terms of fulfilling a state-issued licensing agreement. At the same time, TV 2 is a business venture whose bottom line needs to satisfy shareholders. As such, developments in the news market indicate discrepancies in the relationship between reality and principle in terms of social contract theory and how the news market actually functions. In order to position itself in the digital television market, TV 2 has launched a number of niche channels – among which is the 24/7 news provider TV 2 News Channel. Strategies for gaining and maintaining legitimacy in the digital news market are examined through a comparative case study of TV 2 News Channel and the news production efforts of the state-owned public service broadcaster – the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK). The channels are subject to differential analysis through interviews and qualitative and quantitative content analyses.

In addition, the increasing number of specialist channels in the digital terrestrial transmission system indicates a dispersal of public service broadcasting ideals. This suggested consequence of the digital switchover is in need of international contextualisation. Public service broadcasting issues are central to European broadcasting, and a comparative perspective will enable the contextualisation of the destabilisation of the social contract ideal. My analysis of these issues is accompanied by the development of a theory of social contract that seeks to account for the role of journalism and professional ideology in the digital news market.

## THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE

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Habermas used the term Öffentlichkeit (later translated as public sphere) to describe the complex of institutions that evolved into a mediating structure between the state and civil society in eighteenth century Europe. It gathered different private opinions and, through the process of reasoned exchange, transformed them into public opinion, which the state was expected to take into consideration.

Today some authors (including Habermas) are talking about a strong and a weak public sphere or strong and weak publics. Networks (based

on specific interests) that are forming throughout the EU are thought to be the first building blocks of a European public sphere. The problem with this conceptualisation is that the critique, inherent in the idea of 'refeodalisation', has been lost – namely that specific interest groups have monopolised political participation whilst at the same time excluding the public. Here the argument goes that the problem is getting worse: the governing bodies of the EU are subject to less democratic control than national governments and are under a stronger influence of organised interests. Political parties are moving away from civil society and becoming part of an autopoetic political system, when in the 'golden age' of the public sphere they were one of the main mechanisms through which public opinion influenced the political system. Luhmann referred to this process as the operational closure of the political system and found nothing wrong with it. Rather he stoically noted that this is why we cannot distinguish one political program from the other in terms of its impact on society.

When talking about the media and their role in the public sphere, it is essential to keep this in mind. It is not sufficient that rational debate can develop and different voices (especially the marginal) can have equal access. When the media are implicitly equated with the public sphere a very important point is ignored, namely how opinion, formed in civil society, is transformed into the will of the political system. Seen in this way the public sphere is limited to subjects, not citizens. The distinction between a strong and a weak public sphere therefore obfuscates more than it reveals: instead of the demand that the state conforms to public opinion it is becoming its own little self-sufficient public sphere.

## TECHNOLOGIES OF CITIZENSHIP: POWER AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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Ultimately, this research is about power. It is not only about the power to include or exclude, but also about the power to enable or disable particular kinds of social action and cultural behaviours. Emerging technological initiatives, literatures and global practices are juxtaposing new technologies with citizenship, frequently suggesting that nations and

ethnicities no longer solely determine who are or can become citizens; indeed, new technologies are often causally linked with the emergence of 'new' political subjectivities, processes and cultures. In these ways, new technologies are implicitly and explicitly attributed with enabling 'new' and deepened ways of being a citizen and new or transformed frameworks of (and for) citizenship. My research addresses this relationship, challenging the causal relationship so often assumed between new technologies and citizenship, asking: what is the relationship between the two? Are new media constructed to enable new and open citizenship frameworks or participatory mechanisms, and if they are, how do they do this?

In order to answer such broad questions, I have developed a threefold project based on an extensive analysis of 'new' citizenship literatures (e.g. netizenship, cybercitizenship, e-citizenship etc.), a case study analysis of two UK based new media citizenship initiatives (BBC's Action Network and Proboscis' Urban Tapestries), and finally, a comparison of the literatures to the empirical data.

Bringing social and citizenship theories together (Marshall, Bourdieu, Habermas) with literatures on 'new' technologically mediated citizenship, shows that the role of new technologies are often justified and positioned through emerging civic practices based on three primary areas of influence: enabling more democratic and expanded membership systems; introducing new publics and social territories; and establishing new de-territorialised citizen rights and obligations. This research aims to uncover the discursive construction of technologically mediated inclusion and connectivity in two 'ideal' contexts.

Although still under analysis, my findings support arguments that new technologies are effective in 'connecting the connected' (Norris) and in deepening 'citizenship' for those whose communities of practice that already value community building, networking and more democratic political spheres. In my case studies, new technologies clearly enhance individualised forms of behaviour and a consumer-style of public interaction for users, yet for producers, the use of new technologies point to the construction of elite citizens and/or new media enabled kinds of citizenship. The question of the cultural importance of user generated public resources remains; its answer suggests that new technologies are a catalyst for shifting the locus of citizenship power from government to media institutions and elites.

# THE ETHOS OF A NATION: RHETORICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN ESTONIA'S COMMUNICATION WITH THE WESTERN WORLD

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By looking at the representation of Estonia in public speeches, and by analysing in what way the speakers' position their country in a changing Europe, my study can raise new questions about construction, presentation and reception of national identity. Ethos and identity are not to be seen as equal, instead the use of ethos as a rhetorical evidential force can add to the concept of identity. From the Aristotelian point of view, ethos is the speaker's character established through speech. Ethos is the trustworthiness that a speaker is supposed to awake in the audience and this makes it rhetorical evidence that can be analysed.

In what way is the Estonian ethos being constructed in speeches given by the Estonian president, politicians and academics on different occasions? How do they explicitly or implicitly talk about neighbouring countries and the relations with them? In what way do they use history? How are metaphors, tropes and figures used? What is taken for granted that the audience knows and what can this tell us about the doxa? These questions tell us something about how the speakers contextualise themselves and Estonia in different situations. The rhetorical situations differ, as do the subjects of the speeches and the communicative goals of the persons giving them. Audiences and the speakers' institutional roles, with the possibilities and constrains they include, also differ in these contexts. This leaves us with the question of what they have in common. They are all – up to some extent – representing Estonia and this is mediated through public speeches. Even if the main purpose of the communicative situation seems to be to welcome a royal guest or give a polite speech at an official visit, there is always an underlying agenda of representation, of adding information to the image the participants have of Estonia and its population. This might not be the speakers' plan, but the person giving the speech will still participate in constructing or reconstructing the nations' ethos. By combining classical rhetorical theory with more modern approaches, like critical discourse analysis, and theories of politeness, it is possible to study how Estonia is presented in different communicative situations. This project includes the analyses of

the historical and cultural context, rhetorical situations, texts, participants and the media where the speeches are presented and commented upon.

## PHOTOGRAPHY AND CONSTRUCTION OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES: CONSTRUCTION OF OTHER IN SLOVENE PRESS PHOTOGRAPHY

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My dissertation addresses the issue of photographic construction of collective identities in Slovene print and on-line media by focusing on the visual construction of Otherness.

The main thesis of the dissertation is that the photographic representations of people, customs and spaces of the countries of the 'imaginary Orient' in the Slovene media are framed into series of specific, pre-existent value-laden images. Thus instead of focusing on the information value of the story, photographs in the Slovene media serve to construct and reinforce the prevailing ideas about a particular type of Other, which resides not only in the loosely defined Islamic Arabic world of the Middle East, Near East and Northern Africa but also in certain parts of the Balkans.

The dissertation builds on the critique of Said's definition of Orientalism that acknowledges the historical and cultural specificity of various Orientalisms and analyses the particularities of the Slovene strand(s) of Orientalism, especially in relation to its function for the construction, consolidation and everyday articulation of Slovene national identity. While the critiques of Orientalism have mainly focused on the orientalising practices of former colonial powers or current superpowers, the dissertation exposes Orientalism as a potent vehicle for identity formation even for a small nation with no former or present colonial pretensions. As such, it is a highly valuable concept for understanding the strategies of collective Othering in the regions that do not self evidently belong to the 'us' position (the West), such as for example Slovenia or the countries of the Balkan region.

Slovene (photographic) Orientalism is therefore defined as an evaluative construction of cultural difference and a system of representation, a

particular type discourse of and on the difference between 'us' and 'them'. It serves the dual purpose of positioning Slovenia as an integral part of the West while simultaneously delineating it from the Balkans and the Orient.

As one of the key elements of media discourse, press photography plays an important role in the process of the social construction of reality by framing the interpretation of current and past events in news discourse through potent visualisations of cultural (stereo)types, which are then interlaced and reinforced by similar representations of other public discourses, namely political, educational or popular culture. The analysis of the material will not solely focus on the work of Slovene authors but rather on the published photographs regardless of their origin. Slovene visual Orientalism is not only the product of 'indigenous' image making but is mostly a result of active selection and gate-keeping decisions made by Slovene news workers.

## THE AUDIOVISUAL TEXT: ANALYSIS FROM A MEDIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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The purpose of this research is to analyse intertextuality in televisual narratives, specifically in drama series, aiming to identify thematic recurrences from an interdisciplinary perspective, which includes narratology, literature theory, mythology, semiotics, cultural studies and anthropology. This process could be named mediological intertextuality, as it is constantly related to previous texts. This doctoral work starts with an empirical analysis of five drama series: The West Wing (NBC: 1999–2006), CSI Las Vegas (CBS: 2000–), Lost (ABC: 2004–), Desperate Housewives (ABC: 2004–), and House (Fox: 2004–).

At the base of this work is the determination of features such as generic hybridisation, postmodernism and meta-television features in the shows mentioned, not only with a descriptive purpose, but also in order to demonstrate the main hypothesis. That is: thematic recurrence characterises quality television series, together with features inherent to the industrial television production (that determine the programs' output, as stated by Walter Benjamin, in relation to the mechanical

reproduction of the work of art). Based on this argument we can state that thematic recurrence is an inherent feature not only of audiovisual narrative, but also of any kind of cultural or artistic production.

The method includes an analysis of the audiovisual text, based on Ginzburg's and Dumézil's methodology, using both diachronic and generic perspectives, and synchronic and mythological perspectives. In order to demonstrate that thematic recurrence extends to televisual texts (and that it is not just inherent to an ethnographic tale), this research analyses:

1/ The features of each show, from the point of view of the production context, and the context of its reception (which is based on audience data);

2/ The invariable ingredients used in televisual texts (Calabrese, 1989; Villanueva, 1991) analysing them from a multidisciplinary perspective, by using mythological comparison (Lévi-Strauss, 1958; Ginzburg, 1989; Dumézil, 1970), Rastier's textual analysis and themathology (Brunel and Dabézies, 1992; Guillén, 1985, 1998), and myth in TV (Silverstone, 1981);

3/ The homological structural features by using semiotics, formalism (Eco, 1979; 1983, 1984; Calabrese, 1987; Greimas, 1979; Todorov and Propp, 1928) and narratology (Genette, 1982), in order to distinguish features that are inherent to audiovisual narratives from the thematic recurrence in cultural and artistic production;

4/ The distinct features inherent to audiovisual narratives such as autoreferentiality, generic hybridisation and multigenericity, by using academic televisual research (Creeber, 2001, 2004, 2006; Buonano, 1999, 2005; Berciano, 1999; Lacalle, 1999, 2001; Imbert, 2003; Cascajosa, 2005).

## TRANSFORMATION OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

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I start with an optimistic claim, that we are not necessarily witnessing the crisis of democracy due to the diminishing of peoples' participation. Some theorists in fact argue that citizens are not ignorant or apathetic – a critique which has often been used for labelling young people – but that

political participation shifted from official political channels, to other ways of expressing civic concerns and care for community. Terms such as subpolitics (Beck, 1994), lifestyle politics (Giddens, 1991), self-actualising citizenship (Bennett, 2003) have been coined to refer to new forms of political participation. The validity of traditional indicators of political participation is questioned, especially with the 'digital generation', who use the interactive potential of new communication technologies on a daily basis, not just for entertainment, but also for civic and political practices.

The main objective of my PhD project is to analyse new modes of democratic participation furnished through communication technologies – specifically web 2.0 applications – used in a large extent by younger generations: YouTube, Myspace, discussion forums, blogs and other, still emerging, online communication platforms. My aim is to build a wider conceptual and theoretical map of political participation, which would take the link between the broader social processes in the global society and communication technology, and its relation to political and economic systems into account.

I assert that two meta-processes – globalisation and individualisation – are transforming citizens' participation on two dimensions. These dimensions are political versus civic action, and coordinated versus individualised action. I claim that traditional indicators of political participation are measuring coordinated citizens' actions within the political system, when in fact participation has, due to processes of individualisation and globalisation (and also with the help of new communication technologies), shifted to individualised actions outside the political realm.

The question which needs to be answered empirically, while analysing different modes of citizens' participation on web 2.0 applications, is to which extent these actions are individualised and civic, but also what do these transformations mean when analysed and evaluated on the basis of criteria such as the collective good or empowerment.

# MEANINGS AND MEANS OF MALES' SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION: THE PROVISION OF COMFORTING MESSAGES TO SAME-SEX AND OPPOSITE-SEX FRIENDS

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This study scrutinises the process of supportive communication behaviour in Finland. Family violence, divorce and custody battles, unemployment, high demands of work life, poor health and depression are unfortunate but familiar hardships of modern (Finnish) society. Problems are often dealt with on one's own, and men particularly do not always turn to someone to be comforted (Virtanen, 2005). Men are also more reluctant to show emotions and acknowledge others' emotional states, especially those of other males (Jakupcak, Salters, Gratz and Roemer, 2003). Indisputably, support-seeking and -giving creates a challenge for one's self-image and gender identity.

This study aims to describe and understand the presence of different accounts in supportive interaction in a Finnish socio-cultural context. Supportive communication research is essential in detecting norms, values and behaviour related to emotionally upsetting issues in life. Research is also necessary for the development of training and education of effective comforting. Present-day research confirms that discussing the challenges of life, and similarly, receiving support in interaction with people that are close, increases the individuals' capability to cope with problems (Albrecht, Burleson, and Goldsmith, 1994; Cunningham and Barbee, 2000), enhances persons' positive self-image and life satisfaction (Sarason, Sarason and Pierce, 1994), and even improves their physical health (Burleson and MacGeorge, 2002). Lack of supportiveness, on the other hand, affects the creation and maintenance of relationships, which are essential to the emotional well-being of individuals.

The study focuses on emotionally distressful topics in Finland today, and it is conducted by both a qualitative method (semi-structured interviews (n = 20)), and a quantitative method (questionnaires (n = 500)). The study examines and compares males' provision of comforting messages to male and female friends. The focus is on the influence of gender norms, contextual factors such as target sex, and perceived target responsibility on the types of comforting messages provided by men. The participants measure the perceived target responsibility in various

distressing scenarios, and act as support providers to the distressed other. The variable used to increase the target responsibility is alcohol consumption.

The results will be used to support the theory development of supportive communication research, in educational and training purposes of counselling services and schooling, and in the creation of self-empowerment education through daily interaction and technology to enhance the well-being of Finnish people. In addition to the contribution to communication theory and training, the results will increase our understanding of the cultural perceptions of gender, emotions, cultural norms, social penetration, and alcohol discourse

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