

The Researching and Teaching Communication Series

**Politics, Civil Society and Participation:**  
Media and Communications in a Transforming Environment

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POLITICS, CIVIL SOCIETY AND PARTICIPATION.  
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS IN A TRANSFORMING ENVIRONMENT

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# Introduction: Researching the transforming environment of media and communications

*Leif Kramp, Nico Carpentier and Andreas Hepp*

## 1 About the book

How do societies and cultures change with the media that are used broadly and intensely by their members? How do individuals, collectives and organisations address, meet or cope with challenges that emerge from these transformations? How do politicians and policies regulate, react to or shape media communications? And how do media, their contents, forms and functions change? How do they stay the same? What role does civil society and the apparently increasing opportunities to participate via digital information and communication technologies have in these processes? Communication and media research is at the forefront of the scholarly attempts to explore how a wide variety of social and cultural processes provide an environment that is deeply intertwined with media and communications. Changes to the latter challenge political systems and policies, but also civil society in its many dimensions and actor constellations. And they concern the changing roles of media production and the audiences that are provided with ever more tools and opportunities to shape media communications by participatory processes, even if they often are more minimalist. This book focuses on the many forms that media communications take while interacting with their environments.

The chapters in this edited volume offer a rare, since versatile, view of these questions as they come from a broad variety of academic cultures that together form and shape European media and communication research. This book can be understood as a distillate of a broad commitment to excellence in research on media and communication, generated in affiliation with the annual European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School, and organised, promoted and invigorated by both junior and senior researchers from all over Europe and beyond. Nevertheless, the book is much more than a reflection.

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Kramp, L./Carpentier, N./Hepp, A. (2016) 'Introduction: Researching the transforming environment of media and communications', pp. 9-19 in L. Kramp/N. Carpentier/A. Hepp/R. Kilborn/R. Kunelius/H. Nieminen/T. Olsson/P. Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt/I. Tomanić Trivundža/S. Tosoni (Eds.) *Politics, Civil Society and Participation: Media and Communications in a Transforming Environment*. Bremen: edition lumière.

tion of the intellectual outcome of a summer school and certainly cannot be reduced to conference proceedings: most of the chapters reach significantly beyond the work presented at the Summer School. The book picks up on the underlying idea of promoting the pluralism of theoretical and methodological approaches for the study of contemporary (mediated and mediatized) communication and establishing transnational dialogue(s) with these diverse and often still culturally enclosed approaches. As part of the Researching and Teaching Communication Series, this edited volume occupies a liminal position in the field of academic books as it presents both conceptual insights into ongoing research as well as the results of completed research. “Politics, Civil Society and Participation. Media and Communications in a Transforming Environment” is a thoroughly peer-reviewed book, a result of the collective endeavour of its many editors, who paid particular attention to supporting the six chapters provided by the emerging scholars Sahika Erkonan, Jockum Hildén, Herminde Kaur, Christina Sanko, Eirik Vatnoy and Julia Velkova, all of whom were Summer School participants in 2015.

This edited volume also showcases an innovation within the Researching and Teaching Communication Series, as, for the very first time, chapters authored by Summer School alumni (who attended the Summer School in 2014 or earlier) have been included. This expresses our commitment to connect our more senior alumni more closely to the Summer School. In this particular case, three chapters, authored by Summer School alumni, who submitted their original chapters through a Call for Papers, have been included. These chapters by Sigrid Kannengießer, Julia Roll and Joanna Kędra, Anne Laajalahti, Mélodine Sommer and Panu Uotila show how versatile academic careers and research focuses develop after a Summer School experience.

The first part of the book is structured into four main thematic sections – “Policies and politics of communication”, “Civil participation in and through media”, “Media representations and usages” and “On methods” – however, most of the chapters published in this volume cut across the disciplines, and consequently reveal not only the richness of contemporary perspectives on media and communication, but at the same time also highlight the growing need for a more thorough theoretical understanding of the analyzed phenomena and clear definitions of theoretical frameworks and concepts.

The six chapters of the first section focus on different perspectives of policies and politics of communication. **Nick Couldry** (LSE) explores future directions for audience studies and asks what particular aspects of the media ‘sensorium’ are most pressing to investigate right now. **Hannu Nieminen** (U Helsinki) scrutinizes recent issues in European media and communication policy against the principles of citizens’ information and communication rights. **Risto Kunelius** (U Tampere) assumes that the notion of hybridity has become an increasingly influential part of the way we think about our societies and asks

what the consequences and lessons are of this ascending “social imaginary” for our debates about free speech. **Jockum Hildén** (U Helsinki) analyzes three paradoxes that are associated with legislative attempts to overcome privacy issues that are connected to data processing activities and the traceability of digital communications. **Herminder Kaur** (Loughborough U) reflects on the struggle of a small cohort of young physically disabled teenagers to resist surveillance of their use of the internet in a special needs school. And **Nico Carpentier** (U Uppsala and Vrije U Brussel) explores the trinity of decidedness, undecidedness and undecidability as important concepts for policing media and communications.

The second section presents seven chapters that centre on the forms and potentials of civil participation in and through the media. **Joanna Kędra**, **Anne Laajalahti**, **Mélodine Sommer** and **Panu Uotila** (all U Jyväskylä) propose a palette of competence areas that are relevant for participation in public media and communications, which would include intercultural communication, interpersonal communication and a basic knowledge of ethics, visual literacy, and source criticism abilities. **Andreas Hepp** (U Bremen) and **Ronald Hitzler** (TU Dortmund) approach the problem to understand how collectivities change through media by considering the way in which the concepts of ‘mediatization’ and ‘individualization’ relate to shifts in collectivities, relating this to conceptions of post-traditional communitizations and communities. **Eirik Vatnoy** (U Bergen) argues that a rhetorical approach can give way to a better understanding of the nature of political discourse in the arenas of social media. **Leif Kramp** (U Bremen) introduces a socio-geographical concept of metropolitan journalism, taking into account political, economic and cultural factors and discusses empirical examples from journalism practice in Germany to identify certain patterns of structure-building, news production, news mediation and audience engagement. **Julia Velkova** (Södertörn U) explores the ways in which visual media creators negotiate the choices between multiple technological alternatives offered by software, and the ways in which these negotiations relate to the degree of creative autonomy experienced by cultural producers in their media practice. **Sigrid Kannengießner** (U Bremen) offers a conceptualization of the phenomenon ‘consumption-critical media practices’ by analyzing examples on the levels of media production, appropriation and content, and by discussing consumption-critical media practices as political participation since they are aimed at shaping and changing society. And **Christina Sanko** (U Bremen) examines the complex relations of communication processes, generations and cultural memory in the socio-cultural setting of North Vietnam by reviewing theoretical concepts of generational and cultural memory, and presents an exemplary case study of a family in Hanoi to describe these relations in terms of memory-related communication repertoires.

In the third section, seven chapters investigate how various forms of media representations and usages can be taken into account when discussing the transforming environments of media and communications: **Julia Roll** (U Weimar) shows how an integration of different disciplines enables new insights into changes in everyday media practices, combining guided interviews, media diaries and sketches of everyday life practices of media users. **Ilija Tomanić Trivundža** (U Ljubljana) analyzes the symbolic meaning of a photographic motif that shows citizens on the barricades in order to differentiate the overall established protest paradigm in social movement literature. **Sahika Erkonan** (Ankara U) argues that the constitutive role of photography within family life and for family memory can be apprehended effectively with the help of ethnographic research techniques, using in-depth interviewing, participant observation and informal conversations, during the very act of looking at photographs. **Tobias Olsson** (Lund U) and **Dino Viscovi** (Linnaeus U) focus on contemporary patterns of access to, and use of, digital applications, analyzing different patterns of ICT access and use among Swedish senior citizens in order to show which services are used during everyday life and with what purpose. **Maria Gutiérrez** (Autonomous U Barcelona) examines the methodological tools designed to investigate the issue of declining younger radio audiences. **Irena Reifová** (Charles U Prague) analyzes how the viewers of the communist-governed Czechoslovak television understood the propagandist television serials during the last two decades of the communist party rule after the Prague Spring in order to show the peculiarities of the research of television viewers' capabilities to remember the meanings and details of events which took place in the past, and thus demonstrates their hermeneutic agency. And **Winfried Pauleit** and **Rasmus Greiner** (both U Bremen) are concerned with the discussion of a political aesthetics of the sound track of film and its ability to shape our understanding of history.

Section Four presents reflections and tangible advice on methods. Taking the perspective of audience research, **Kim Christian Schröder** (Roskilde U) traces the gradual methodological rapprochement of once hostile methodological paradigms: quantitatively oriented uses-and-gratifications research and qualitatively anchored reception research. Focusing on media ethnography, **Simone Tosoni** (U Sacred Heart Milan) and **Fredrik Stiernstedt** (U Jönköping) present and discuss a practical exercise, based on taking pictures of media practices, texts and technologies in public spaces. Following a practical approach, **Bertrand Cabedoche** (U Stendhal-Grenoble 3) discusses overarching questions of academic communication at international conferences, addressing several stages, from submitting a proposal, the actual presentation, coping with questions, networking and eventually, the successful publication of the presented research work.

The second part of the book contains the abstracts of the doctoral projects of all 40 students that participated in the 2015 Summer School. Throughout the book, a series of photographs taken during the programme are also included. Our special thanks goes to François Heinderyckx and Leif Kramp for the photographic material.

## 2 The background of the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School

The Summer School was established in the early 1990s by a consortium of ten (Western) European universities, initiated by the Universities of Stendhal-Grenoble 3 (Grenoble, France) and Westminster (UK). From then on, these participating universities have organised annual summer schools for PhD students in the field of media and communication studies, lasting for one or two weeks, and taking place in a wide range of locations, including Grenoble, Lund, Barcelona, London Helsinki, Tartu and Ljubljana. In 2013, the Summer School moved for the first time to the ZeMKI, Centre for Media, Communication and Information Research at the University of Bremen, Germany. In 2015, it took place from 2 to 15 August.

Including the University of Bremen, 22 universities participate in the consortium: Autonomous University of Barcelona (ES), Charles University in Prague (CZ), Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) (HU), Jönköping University (SE), London School of Economics & Political Science (UK), Lund University (SE), University of Ankara (TR), University of Bergen (NO), University of Ljubljana (SI), University of Erfurt (DE), University of Roskilde (DK), University of Sacred Heart Milan (IT), University of Stirling (UK), University of Tampere (FI), University of Tartu (EE), University of Westminster (UK), University on Helsinki (FI), University Stendhal-Grenoble 3 (FR), Vrije Universiteit Brussel (BE), Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) (LT), and Loughborough University (UK). In 2015, the affiliated partner of the programme was again the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA). The Summer School received financial support from the Graduate Center of the University of Bremen and the “Communicative Figurations” research network.

The central goals of the Summer School are:

- a. to provide innovative mutual support for doctoral studies in the field of media and communication, with additional support of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA),
- b. to stimulate bilateral and multilateral cooperation between consortium partner universities in the areas of doctoral studies, teaching and research,

- c. to provide a forum for critical dialogue between academics on the cultural and technological challenges posed by media globalization and convergence, focusing on socio-political as well as the cultural implications of these challenges,
- d. to promote a respectful but critical dialogue between academic researchers and representatives of civilian society, the media industry and government institutions.

The Summer School follows a number of principles, of which student-orientation is the most important one. The PhD projects of the participating students are at the centre of the Summer School, and its main aim is to enhance the academic quality of each individual project. In contrast to many other summer schools, the main task of the instructional staff is not to lecture, but to provide support to the participants in their PhD trajectories.

The Summer School provides this support through structured, high-quality and multi-voiced feedback on the work of each individual PhD student, combined with numerous opportunities for informal dialogues. The feedback consists of a series of extensively elaborated analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of the PhD projects, which allow PhD students to structurally improve the quality of their academic work. Although the feedback is provided by experts in the field of media and communication studies, these authoritative voices never become authoritarian, and the autonomy of the participants is never ignored. Moreover, feedback is always multi-voiced: different lecturers and participants contribute to the analysis of each individual PhD project, enhancing the richness of the feedback and allowing a diversity of perspectives to become articulated.

The Summer School combines a constructive-supportive nature with a critical perspective. During the feedback sessions, the evaluation consists of a balanced overview of the qualities and problems of a doctoral research and publication project, in combination with the options that can be used to overcome these problems. Moreover, the workshops and the lectures are aimed to support the future academic careers of the participants by allowing them to acquire very necessary academic and self-management skills. The atmosphere of the Summer School is fundamentally non-competitive, as the talents of all participants will be acknowledged, and participants and lecturers act as peers, cherishing academic collegiality and collaborative work.

The Summer School also expresses the utmost respect for academic diversity. We recognize the existence of a plurality of schools, approaches, theories, paradigms, methods, and cultures in academia, which makes the Summer School predestined for conversation and dialogue, and not for conversion and conflict. Its commitment to diversity in approaches can only be made possible through an equally strong commitment to academic rigour, thoroughness, responsibility, honesty and quality.

Finally, the Summer School aims to stimulate connectedness. First of all, the Summer School is aimed at the building of long-term academic networks, enabling future collaborations at the international/European level. We recognize the necessary nature of intellectual exchange for academia and the importance of transcending frontiers. But the Summer School also wants to remain respectful towards the localized context in which it operates, at the urban and national level of the hosting city, avoiding disconnections with civilian society, business and the State.

In order to achieve these principles, the fourteen-day 2015 Summer School was based on a combination of lectures, training workshops, student-workshops and working visits. The core format of the Summer School is based on the so-called feedback-workshops, which are oriented towards providing the doctoral students with the structured, high-quality and multi-voiced feedback mentioned above. For this purpose, the following specific procedure was used: After their application is approved, the participating doctoral students upload their 10-page papers onto the intranet of the Summer School website. On the basis of the papers, the doctoral students are then divided into three groups ('flows'), and each student is attributed a lecturer-respondent and a fellow participant-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 feedback-workshop flows for the entire duration of the Summer School.

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

In addition, the training workshops are a crucial pedagogical tool for the Summer School. These workshops provide the doctoral students with practical training on issues related to making posters, publishing, abstract-writing, comparative research, literature review, oral presentation skills, communication of scientific topics to lay audiences, interactive teaching to larger groups, interrogating sources, and creative online writing. They are combined with a number of lectures which aim to deal with specific content, focussing on specific theories or concepts. Finally, the field excursions give the participants more insights into Germany's media structures, politics, cultures and histories.

### 3 The scholars involved in the Summer School

In 2015, 40 doctoral students participated in the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School, originating from 22 countries: Australia (1), Belgium (2), Croatia (1), Czech Republic (1), Denmark (1), Estonia (1), Finland (2), France (2), Germany (3), Italy (2), Ireland (1), the Netherlands (1), Cyprus (1), Norway (2), Portugal (2), Singapore (1), Slovakia (1), Slovenia (1), Spain (1), Sweden (6), Turkey (1), and the United Kingdom (6). All of their abstracts, and a selection of six chapters based on their work, are included in this book.

The blue flow consisted of Mostafa Abdel Salam, Tania Lucia Cobos, Sanchari De, Karel Deneckere, Jockum Hildén, Marju Himma-Kadakas, Eirik Nymark Esperås, Magdalena Ploch, Patrick Readshaw, Eirik Vatnøy, Milica Vuckovic, Dawn Wheatley and Abdulsamad Zangana.

The yellow flow was joined by Johanna Arnesson, Stefan Baack, Raul Ferrer Conill, Barbara Dupont, Martin Durko, Sahika Erkonan, Ashwini Falnkar, Guylaine Gueraud-Pinet, Susanna de Guio, Herminder Kaur, Fatma Nazlı Köksal, Tereza Krobava, Gusav Persson and Simona Venditti.

The green flow grouped Shuhan Chen, Susana de Salazar Casanova, Milda Cellesiute, Juliet Fox, Eline Huiberts, Nur Ishak, Yi Liu, Rita Mourão, Banafsheh Ranji, Christina Sanko, Julia Velkova, Dina Vozab and Shijin Zhao.

The Summer School hosted 20 permanent lecturers from the partner universities from all over Europe: Bertrand Cabedoche, Nick Couldry, Nico Carpentier, Maria Gutiérrez, François Heinderyckx, Maria Heller, Andreas Hepp, Richard Kilborn, Risto Kunelius, Anthony McNicholas, Ole Mjös, Hannu Nieminen, Irena Reifová, Tobias Olsson, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Kim Christian Schröder, Fredrik Stiernstedt, Burcu Sümer, Ilija Tomanić Trivunđza, and Simone Tosoni. Furthermore, Winfried Pauleit and Rasmus Greiner from the University of Bremen contributed an additional lecture.

In addition to the activities of the Summer School lecturers, the programme included a study field trip to the headquarter of ARD Aktuell, the news organisation behind the leading German TV newscasts “Tagesschau” and “Tagesthemen” and several other public news programmes in Hamburg. The focus of the visit was on the current challenges for mass media institutions that need to adapt to the transforming media environment, and are thus confronted with increased media criticism by audiences. The conceptual idea of this initiative was also to build a bridge between doctoral research and media practice.

Once again this year, Andreas Hepp was the local director of the Summer School, and Leif Kramp the local organiser. Both were supported by the international director Nico Carpentier. In addition, François Heinderyckx acted

as the ECREA liaison. Hannu Nieminen, Nico Carpentier, Richard Kilborn, Risto Kunelius, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, and Tobias Olsson acted as the Summer School's flow-managers.

#### 4 Assessment and perspectives

The evaluation was conducted in the form of a workshop including a half-standardized, anonymous survey. All participants completed an evaluation form to rate, and comment on, the lectures and workshops held during the two weeks of the Summer School. Additionally, the participants formed four evaluation groups and discussed feedback on: lectures, workshops and student-workshops; individual discussions with lecturers, discussions and networking opportunities with other students; the scheduling of the programme, composition of the programme; accommodation, food and coffee (during breaks); visits in Bremen, social activities; website, pre-summer school communication, the Summer School book; and the flow-managers / Summer School staff.

The evaluation generated – as in the years before – very positive feedback and constructive suggestions for further improving some of the conceptual and scheduling aspects for future summer schools: The reputation, experience and teaching qualities of the lecturers present at the Summer School 2015 as well as their approachability was graded by the participants on nearly the same levels as in the two previous years. The average ratings for the lectures and workshops (1 = poor to 5 = very good) were very similar to the year before, with an improvement for the workshops (3.59 points for lectures, compared to 3.6 in 2013 and 3.77 in 2014; 4.12 points for workshops, compared to 3.8 in 2013 and 4.03 in 2014). Also, the Summer School management was given high marks. It was further highly appreciated that the lectures were prepared especially for the Summer School. In the view of the participants, the mixture of workshops and lectures in the Summer School programme was very well-balanced. The interactivity and extended length of workshops (2 hours instead of 1 hour in earlier Summer Schools) was appreciated. In addition, the scholarship programme was also much appreciated. The Summer School will try to continue offering scholarships to cover the travel costs of some participants, thus enabling young researchers to participate in the Summer School who otherwise would not be able to afford it.

The overall positive and encouraging feedback was complemented by numerous comments on the social network platforms that were used together with the Summer School website as complementary discussion and networking instruments. After the Summer School, many participants left positive comments on the website of the Summer School Facebook group, e.g.:

“We all won!” (18.08.2015)

“First of all: Greetings to all!!! I believe we’ve all enjoyed our community in Bremen. But the PhD is a very lonely project... How many of you would like to form something like a PhD working .. motivation group?” (23.08.2015)

“Dear all, I really like it that we have the means to stay in touch with each other like this.” (23.08.2015)

“coming back home and spending two hours on SuSo page on facebook... nostalgia of youuuu!” (23.08.2015)

Comments also included information on local follow-up meetings, invitations for research stays at some of the partner universities as well as many plans for joint gatherings at various conferences throughout Europe and beyond.

## 5 Final acknowledgments

The Summer School is supported by a wide range of individuals and institutions. The consortium partners and the ECREA all provided invaluable support to this long-standing initiative. Over the past years, lecturers and flow managers have invested a lot of energy in lecturing and providing support. The doctoral students themselves have shown a tremendous eagerness, which can only be admired and applauded. The organisers also wish to thank Heide Pawlik from the secretariat of the ZeMKI, Centre for Media, Communication and Information Research, Dr. Diana Ebersberger from the Graduate Centre and Barbara Hasenmüller from the International Office of the University of Bremen, for their strategic and operational support. Additional thanks goes to the “Communicative Figurations” research network. We are also grateful for the smooth cooperation with ARD Aktuell/NDR, especially to Kai Gniffke, editor-in-chief, and Christian Radler, Team Strategy and Innovation.

With its diverse sections and chapters this edited volume shows that politics, civil society and participation offer exiting and promising perspectives for communication and media research: With a – in many aspects – profoundly changing social and cultural environment, media and communications are confronted with unforeseen challenges and demands by the public. We will have to continue to combine efforts to analyze these transformations and gain a deeper understanding of what is ahead of us in its variety and entirety. This is what the Summer School proves year after year: strong European media and communication research is about diversity and creativeness, and about cooperation and networking, especially among young scholars who contribute fresh inquiries to the research discourse. This is what makes the Summer School a unique learning and networking experience, bringing together the less experienced

and the more experienced from all over Europe to promote a constructive dialogue by which new research horizons emerge. To all participants (in many of the Summer School languages): Best wishes! Najbolje želje! Beste wensen! Všechno nejlepši! Parimate soovidega! Toivottaen! Meilleurs vœux! Alles Gute! Auguri! En iyi dileklerimle! Tahniah! Všetko najlepšie! Vse najboljše! ¡Los mejores deseos! Med vänliga hälsningar!

## 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://yecrea.eu/>

The ZeMKI, Centre for Media, Communication and Information Research  
<http://www.zemki.uni-bremen.de>

The ‘Communicative Figurations’ research network  
<http://www.communicative-figurations.org>



# Research



Photo: François Heinderyckx



# Section One



Photo: François Heinderyckx



# Life with the media manifold: Between freedom and subjection

*Nick Couldry*

## Abstract

This chapter explores future directions for audience studies a decade after the practice turn and in particular asks what particular aspects of the media ‘sensorium’ are most pressing to investigate right now. After the introduction of the term ‘media manifold’ to capture the many-layered complexity of our uses of media in the digital era, my broader argument is that at a time of fast change in media platforms and the increasing supersaturation in at least rich countries of people’s lives with media, ethical and normative issues are becoming increasingly salient in media and communications research. The work of Sherry Turkle from psychology, Julie Cohen from legal theory, and Robin Mansell from political economy is, in particular, discussed.

*Keywords:* media practice; media manifold; ethics; sensorium; infrastructure

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## 1 Introduction

In this chapter I want to think about the gradual broadening of audience studies (my field), the expansion, as it were, of its thought-space that has been going on for the past 10-15 years. As a result, in the era of digital media, the domain of ‘media’ research, its broad object of study, is hardly recognizable from 15 years ago. This is clearly exciting, but it is not enough to get lost in exciting particulars. The purpose of my review is to consider some broader challenges to how we respond to the current stage of this broadening research agenda, challenges both analytical and ethical.

The first aspect of this transformation of media research is nothing directly to do with the digital, but rather with the decisive, shift towards theorizing media as practice. My 2004 article on that topic (Couldry, 2004, whose influence frankly took me by surprise) was only a way of expressing concretely a shift that was *already* under way in the late 1990s and early 2000s in some form in both media studies and media anthropology. The basic question (‘what [do] people do with media’) was originally asked by Elihu Katz in the 1950s, but the Uses and Gratifications approach that followed from that question focussed on *individual usage* of bounded objects called ‘media’. The practice approach to media discussed today differs in its *social* emphasis, and in its emphasis on relations *not limited* to the use of discrete technologies. However, this broader approach was *itself* foreshadowed in media research of the 1980s and 1990s. Early audience research emphasized that consumption is a ‘determinate moment’ in the production of meaning through media texts. Absolutely, but over time, researchers moved *beyond* the specific contexts of media consumption: so, for example, Ien Ang asked: ‘what [does] it mean [...] to live in a media-saturated world?’ (1996, pp. 70, 72), my own early research explored ‘what it means to live in a society dominated by large-scale media institutions’ (Couldry, 2000), and the so-called ‘third generation’ of audience research aimed to look at the broader patterns of ‘media culture’ (Alasuutaari, 1999).

Meanwhile in anthropology, by the early 1990s, Faye Ginsburg had already defined a distinctively anthropological approach to ‘mass media’ in terms that read like a prediction of where the whole field of media research was now heading. Here’s a quote:

Our work is marked by the centrality of people and their social relations – as opposed to media texts or technology – to the empirical and theoretical questions being posed in the analysis of media as a social form. (Ginsburg, 1994, p. 13)

A decade later, an anthropologist specializing in media, Liz Bird, wrote that ‘we cannot really isolate the role of media in culture, because the media are firmly anchored into the web of culture, although articulated by individuals in different ways [...] [because] The “audience” is everywhere and nowhere.’

(Bird, 2003, pp. 2-3) The boundaries around the act of ‘audiencing’ were already becoming less important. And this was all *before* the massive expansion in the possibilities for producing online content outside mainstream media institutions that came with the huge expansion in many countries of routine fast internet access: from the early 2000s, via desktop and laptop computers and then in the later 2000s, increasingly from mobile phones and most recently tablets or minicomputers.

Let’s leave aside the debate sparked by Jay Rosen about whether the audience had literally disappeared, which I think was rather unhelpful. We must see the reconfiguration of the boundaries between what still counts as ‘production’ in some sense and still counts as ‘reception’ (or audiencing, John Fiske’s term) – and those boundaries clearly *still* exist, it is just that their line has become more complicated – we must see that complex reconfiguration within a *longer history* in which the boundaries between ‘audiencing’ and other forms of activity were already *not the main point* about what was going on in media and everyday culture. That longer history saw a decentering of the field we thought we were studying in ‘media research’ that derived *already* from the early 2000s from a broadening and deepening of media’s embedding in the textures of everyday life *and* in the interconnectedness of media considered as an environment.

As a result, looking back now from the age of social media platforms, the shift towards theorizing media as practice seems thoroughly *overdetermined*. But the practice approach was at most a general move, signalling a need to radically broaden the frame in which we think about the domain of our work as media researchers: a shift to acknowledge what people ‘do in relation to media’ as hugely more varied than the old production-distribution-reception triad of media studies allowed. The practice approach did not, however, yet specifically open in detail the material practices through which people *select from* media, although this point was alluded to in my original essay (where I noted Hoover Clark and Alters’ important work: Couldry, 2004, p. 120). But as the scale and complexity of the domain we call ‘media’ expanded from a mere ‘world’ to a virtual ‘universe’ (over a decade), this question of selecting out – deeply neglected in the first 30 years of media studies – has become ever more essential, both analytically and practically, for each of us as users of media. Indeed a whole new sector of the media industries has opened up – first general platforms and portals, and increasingly the reified portals we call ‘apps’ lodged in our devices – whose goal, ostensibly at least, is to help us *select from* an impossibly large ‘mass’ of media content and informational resource.

Because this *selecting out* seems to us now such an obvious focus of attention, it is worth reflecting a little more on the history of its emergence. I remember when I first joined the LSE in 2000, I said to someone (who taught sociology, not media there) that I was interested in people who *didn’t* use media,

and she said, why on earth would that be interesting? As if a biologist were to say to you that she is mainly interested in parts of the solar system where there is no life. What was missing at that time was a broader framing of our relations to media that could include our practices of orienting ourselves away from particular contents (and so perhaps, for periods, *away from* all media content).

I had sensed, however, from when I first started getting interested in media, that traditional media studies (that gave such emphasis to our relations with *mainstream* media outputs) was grasping only a small part of its topic – the part that was lit up on centre stage as it were – and was ignoring the much wider set of possible relations we have to media in everyday life. In *Inside Culture chapter 3*, I tried to open out the rather narrow view of the text in media and cultural studies and raise the question of how individuals' trajectories through a much larger textual universe vary from those of other individuals (2000b, pp. 77-78): in other words to foreground, as an analytic object, people's ways of selecting particular contents *together*.

Implicitly, this must of course involve *not* selecting, and so, in some sense, already selecting *out*, other contents. Put another way, media studies' original conceptualization of the 'choices' we make in relation to the media environment was much too simple, partly because, as already mentioned, it ignored the vastness of the set of possible choices and partly, because it ignored the way, in practice, we connect *up* different micro-choices, how we watch this after that; how we read this, in the middle of listening to that, while also having chosen not to listen to that other thing. The sheer complexity – and inevitably trans-individual diversity – of the choices we make in relation to the vast media environment remains, in my view, relatively neglected, partly because it is hard work to research. We tried to get at it for a political context in the Public Connection project I ran with Sonia Livingstone and Tim Markham at LSE in the mid 2000s (Couldry/Livingstone/Markham, 2007). It has also been taken up brilliantly in the work of Jonathan Gray in the US and, in sociology, see Bernard Lahire's work in France on individual taste trajectories, but it remains neglected.

Of course, this interest in how we select *out* – from a much larger universe of possible media contents and uses – does not contradict, but simply extends and develops, the original idea of theorizing media as practice: indeed my original formation, which was to focus on practices related to media was designed precisely to allow for our practices that are *related to* media but involve *turning away* from them. As we start to think about how those choices themselves become embedded in particular organisations of non-media resources, for example, in the home space or the institutional work space, then a new topic opens up, which is the materialization of lifeworlds through media-rela-

ted practices. There are clearly sharp differences between how media feels in different places and this is something that, in my work with Andreas Hepp, I have approached via the still vague notion of ‘media culture’.

A very helpful study here is Charles Hirschkind’s study of cassette sermons in the media culture and public spaces of the Muslim Middle East. Hirschkind also foregrounds practice, via philosopher Alisdair MacIntyre’s concept of embodied practice, and, critically, also goes back to Walter Benjamin’s account of a cross-media, cross-sense concretization of our possibilities for grasping the world from a particular place and position, summed up in Benjamin’s brilliant term “sensorium”). As Hirschkind argues, unless we broaden out the framing of what we do with media sufficiently to take into account these multi-sense relations, we simply miss a whole dimension of the political of everyday life in the Middle East – and no doubt many other places too. But the notion of the “sensorium” is relevant also to the apparently much less sensual world of software that underlies our media environment today, as Matt Fuller pointed out in a prophetic essay back in 2003: ‘software constructs sensoriums, [...] each piece of software constructs ways of seeing, knowing and doing in the world that [...] contain a model of that part of the world it ostensibly pertains to’ (Fuller, 2003, p. 19). This is a theme that can be traced into the structured flow of media and sense contents across social networks, shaped by platform software that Gerlitz and Helmond trace in their well-known 2014 essay on ‘the like economy’ (Gerlitz/Helmond, 2014). Already this question of a sensorium or environment structured for commercial ends points towards larger political questions.

## 2 Further conceptualizations

Before I come back to that question of the politics of our relations with a multi-dimensional media environment, let’s stay for a few minutes with the question of how today we should conceptualize our basic relations with media. The idea of theorizing media as practice at least freed us up and allowed us to broaden the frame of media studies. But as already suggested, it did not offer a substantive conceptualization of the actual configurations which our relations to media take. Can we conceptualize those relations more sharply? I want to argue we can, through the notion of “media manifold”.

Certainly, there is good reason to try and sharpen our conceptualization: our relations to media obviously today go far beyond relations to a single object (watching TV, listening to the radio, playing a music track). Even the simplest act of media-making or media-consuming today is very often wrapped round with actions across media and across social media platforms that link us with a number of other people doing things with media. Many of us, through

routine uses of everyday devices, now are familiar with having the ability to access and redistribute media flows through those devices – sending a link here, adding a comment to this image before circulating it, and so on. The selective mechanisms of apps help us do all this in a focussed way within a bewilderingly wide flow of media reception and use. But these are all details, *micro* instantiations of the universe of action-possibilities that many of us now treat as ordinary, as just there, to be taken and used. Meanwhile, on a different scale, a new version of media's institutional power has been emerging that is precisely predicated *upon* this universe of possibilities, and its potential to generate economic value.

John Ellis (2000), some years ago, helpfully marked the shift, in relation to television, from an era of media scarcity to an era of media plenty. But at stake now is something more. The 'plenty' operates on multiple dimensions, which in turn are connected up to each other, in concrete ways that we can actualize through simple actions (commenting on that picture we just took, before we send it out, potentially, to thousands of people). And this connecting up depends on a vast, software-based infrastructure. And our relations, not just to media but to this infrastructure, can or even need to be managed, of course. A huge number of economic wagers are based on the idea that there is money to be made out of managing those relations for us. We have, almost without noticing it, entered an era in which our relations to what we might still call 'media institutions' are based not on receiving scarce contents from a particular centre, or even on being helped singly to choose from a defined set of plentiful contents, but rather on being supported across what we might call a '*managed continuity*'; operating on many dimensions and involving platforms, sources, action-possibilities, and contents. That managed continuity enables us, it seems, to live reasonably comfortably in the world of media and information, resources and people. On the basis of that promise of comfort, the management of that continuity can be sold to us in some packaged form. I say in 'some packaged form' because, as we all know, the selling is rarely direct: the particular form which the fast evolution of *multi-dimensional media plenty* took was to offer almost everything apparently for free, so that the price for reliance on the managed continuity increasingly has to be paid through the background transfer of the data that one's interactions with it can generate, and from which value can elsewhere be generated.

Let's step back from this a second. The domain of 'media' relations which we are being helped somehow to manage is not a single medium, or even an easily enumerable list of single media; nor, is it an easily describable array of single media possibilities from which people choose in regular ways (that was the idea of polymedia in Miller and Madianou. However, as a concept this gave us little hold on the interrelations going on here, and their structured complexity.). Rather, it is better described through the notion of media manifold.

I introduced the term media manifold tentatively in 2011 in an essay in Virginia Nightingale's *Handbook of Media Audiences*, to capture the linked plurality of the media as we now encounter it, what I called there 'a complex web of delivery platforms' (Couldry, 2011, p. 220). Following my earlier interest in the variation of practice, I was interested in 'how we access and use that media manifold' and stressed the likely variety in people's practices of access and use. But I still left vague the nature of our relations with that plurality of media, a problem that I have already noted in the term 'polymedia'.

Now, and here I am drawing on ideas that I am developing with Andreas Hepp for our coming book *The Mediated Construction of Reality*, we need to do more work in conceptualizing how we relate to the obvious plurality of media today. It is interesting to think more specifically about the history of the term 'manifold' which comes from mathematics, specifically topology, where it refers to a topological space in many dimensions that can be adequately described by a shape in a lesser-dimensional (for example, Euclidian) space. Thus, the earth is a three dimensional shape which can, with reasonable fidelity, be reduced to a set of two-dimensional maps of parts of its surface. Deleuze put this notion to use to emphasize the open-ended complexity of the world but his emphasis was rather on how that order escapes any simply reduction to a model (Manuel DeLanda's [2009] book on Deleuze is helpful in clarifying what Deleuze means by his usage). The Deleuzian usage seems to lose touch with the *two-level* aspect of the manifold concept which, we would argue, is most useful in grasping how we are now with media; in other words, the relation between a many-dimensional object and the approximation to that object in an object with fewer dimensions.

Our suggestion is that this double concept well captures the *doubleness* of our embedding in today's extremely complex media universe. The broader set of media and information possibilities on which each of us can draw is almost infinite, and certainly organised on very many dimensions. In everyday practice, we choose, from moment to moment, from a reduced set of possibilities which actualizes, for daily usage, a pragmatic selection from that many-dimensional media universe. What we do with media, moment to moment, actualizes those further choices. There are therefore three levels. Yet, as we try to understand our relations as choosing actors to the wider universe of media, it is the first two levels (and their interrelations) which most concern us. The necessary relations between the first two levels are summed up by characterizing our relations with media in a two-level way, as relations with a 'media manifold'.

### 3 Consequences

If this is a useful way of conceptualizing our relations to media today – a way of grasping the basic shape that our embedding as reflexive agents in a many-dimensional universe of possibilities *has to take* – then we can now turn back to the question of consequences. And in the second section of my talk I want to consider two fundamental challenges which this profound reconfiguration of the media environment generates – challenges that are posed for us at this conference for sure but also for each of us more generally in everyday life; challenges that are firstly analytical and secondly ethical (or if you like, in a broad sense political. I will return to the question of politics in both narrow and broad senses in what follows.).

First, the analytical challenge: How then do we track what people do with media, by which we now mean: what they do within the sets of relations that are inherent to life with the media manifold? This tracking is cross-media from the start, but much of what we do is banal, it is not hermeneutically very rich: pressing “like”, checking a platform for updates. And yet, however banal what we do is, it is *registered*: the action-space of the media-manifold requires this, because if it wasn’t registered, our actions, or rather their traces, wouldn’t be *there* for others to interact with. But the economic models that underlie the infrastructure require this registration to be *long-term*, that is, permanently retrievable, because that (or rather its re-circulation) is the basis for value generation. And that means, apparently, that the traces of those banal actions are there for us as researchers to research, aren’t they? (Let’s leave aside some problem cases such as Twitter’s relations to researchers).

As a result, as researchers disposed and empowered to ‘read’ the world, we face a potential trap, and this is the first and analytical challenge that I mentioned. As researchers so disposed, we are inclined to foreground processes that provide us with *readable* evidence, without focussing enough on the social production of our preexisting disposition, as researchers, to read such evidence as the signs of a broader social transformation. And yet, in any such reading, competing versions of the ‘universal’ are at stake, as Pierre Bourdieu noted in his reflections on the ‘scholastic fallacy’. In other words, we read the world as if it really is the way we are already disposed to read it to be.

Today we face a deeply commercial version of this fallacy: our interpretative practices as researchers easily get entangled with the commercial drive of digital networks and social networking platforms (Van Dijck, 2013) to *sell* readable data about the processes they host as *privileged access* to ‘the social’ (in the form of targeted consumers: Turow, 2011). As a result, we face, not a general scholastic fallacy, but what I would call an ‘inscription fallacy’. There is no question of denying that digital networks are significant, or that social networking platforms have important political uses, especially in mobilizing

disparate and previously unconnected groups of people. But the debate so far has tended to focus on just a small subset of the reasons why digital networks and social networking sites might matter over the longer-term, and to whom. Through that narrow focus we risk falling into the *inscription fallacy*. I touch on this in a recent article called ‘The Myth of Us’ (Couldry, 2014), and it is noted too in an article from last year by Clemencia Rodriguez and colleagues (2014) on the dangers of misinterpreting alternative media through its online traces and ignoring ethnographic data. But there is much more to do to unpack the consequences of this fallacy.

We are back here to Benjamin and his essay on the storyteller’s demise in the face of a world driven only to supply decontextualized information (Benjamin, 1968). But this time the problem is right *within the sensorium that we take for granted as researchers!* Benjamin’s emphasis in that essay merely on the growth of information seems to fall short of the complexity of today’s challenges when at the same time – it seems like a shared ‘time’ even if it isn’t – new forms of instant presence are possible through platforms like YouTube that accelerate distant presence to others: would-be make up artists sitting in their bedrooms, or preaching executioners. But there is no inconsistency here. Both the impossible flood of mere information and the shocking presence to us of those people or things that were once distant, both abide by the same underlying condition that Benjamin grasped, which is the privilege, the non-negotiable privilege, in our sensorium, now given to what we might call the “understandable in itself”, a deep re-weighting of what counts as value hermeneutically in favour of the already just there.

Clearly this has great political potential. There is no question that the fabric of protest has been changed by the ability of those on the street to collect and quickly disseminate on a mass scale evidence of what is going on: the picture of a bloodied protester from a Tehran street in 2009, the video of a US policeman shooting an unarmed black man in North Charleston in April 2015. Digital media now are not exactly weapons of the weak, because they can be plugged straight into a large-scale distribution system. But with this new facility there are also problems for activism that stem from the automatic possibility of surveillance through media platforms. Christian Fuchs’ survey study of Occupy activists’ indicates their awareness of the contradiction between the additional tool that social media gives them, and the acute risks of surveillance by the state. Veronica Barassi from an ethnographic perspective brings out the costs for everyday political activism - the need constantly to keep up with the task of social media *production*, that is, the cost of constantly being ‘connected’.

This takes us toward the ethical challenge that arises from our life with the media manifold. An important guide here is Sherry Turkle’s celebrated book *Alone Together* (Turkle, 2013). Turkle’s concern is not with the specifics

of what we do with this or that medium, but with the whole gestalt – the *quality* of the overall life-process that intensive and continuous exposure to multi-dimensional communication through digital platforms *gets us into*. We (certainly younger people, but implicitly all of us) are now involved, she suggests in a new way of communicating through digital interfaces which is, in some key respects, problematic. And Turkle's views are particularly significant since in her earlier books she was the leading celebrator of our lines online. As just a small reminder of her argument, let's take some examples.

21 year old college student: 'I don't use my phone for calls any more. I don't have the time to just go on and on'. 16 year old school pupil who prefers texts to calls 'because in a call 'there is a lot less boundness to the person,' although "later in life" she concedes 'I'm going to need to talk to people on the phone' (2011, pp. 15, 146, 160)

Now you might want to dismiss these as symptomatic of the stresses of adolescent life, which are now just mediated through a different assemblage of technologies and habits. But we have to take seriously the amount of evidence which Turkle accumulates in favour of her thesis and also, sometimes, the depth of the concerns which she picks up from those she interviews. The most vivid example for me was the urgent question asked in front of Turkle – to himself, and not really to her – by Sanjay, aged 16: 'How long do I have to continue doing this?' (2011, p. 168). He is referring to his pain at noticing that while he had his phone switched off during a 30 minute interview he has accumulated 100 text messages with which he must now deal.

And this obvious pain in Sanjay's voice and his question prompts in Turkle a pained and broader question: 'Technology reshapes the landscape of our emotional lives, but is it offering us *the lives we want to lead*?' (Turkle, 2011, p. 17). ('it' here must = our whole life with media taken together). Are we living the lives we want to lead? When I read this, I took notice because this is the classic question of *ethics*: is my life, your life, the sort of life that it is good for me, you to lead? And I realized that this was a new voice entering media and communications – a voice of ethical questioning – that had been absent, almost entirely, for many decades. And that was when I realized that something strikingly new was going on. The way *forward* for major commentators like Turkle is going to be to ask ethical questions: questions framed by and arising from, individual experience with media and communications interfaces. So 'the media manifold' is not just an analytical matter, it is, implicitly, an ethical challenge, and so potentially a civic and political challenge.

Some scholars argue that this new, intensely mediated, environment that we take for granted is good for us. A key advocate of this position is Mark Deuze in his book *Media Life* (2012). There he writes of the value of 'becoming media' (xvii) in a 'media life'. Though his conclusions are the opposite of Turkle's, his way of framing the argument, however, fits exactly with the

normative turn in communications research. Thus, he starts out from an environmental assumption: ‘media [he means the continuous multimedia of the digital era, of course] provide the social fabric of everyday life’ (39); media values ‘structure the way we live our lives’ (227). He is not concerned with analysing the effects of particular media texts – indeed to him that no longer seems possible or even relevant – but with thinking about the effect, as he puts it, of our media-life. Deuze’s approach, although he sometimes appears to deny this, is also ethically committed: ‘at the heart of the project in this book is the question of what a good, passionate, beautiful and responsible media life looks like’ (32).

The normative turn is visible also in perspectives concerned with the overall *system* of information in which we are involved: A systems perspective on the design and outcomes of the ‘information system’ in which our lives are involved. An important linking figure here is a designer, the leading designer of virtual reality interfaces in the 1990s, Jaron Lanier, who more recently has become very critical of the consequences of our reliance on communication and information systems. In his book *You are not a Gadget!* (2011, p. 63) he comments on how our uses of digital systems are causing within us ‘a leaching of empathy and humanity’. Lanier’s writings are interesting as a symptom of the wider change under way – even amongst those who were once the strongest advocates of the switch to computer-mediated communications, but they are not the most elaborate version of the systems perspective that we can find.

More useful for us, is my LSE colleague Robin Mansell’s book *Imagining the Internet* (Mansell, 2012), which develops a critical approach to the design of what she calls ‘the information system’ that tries to bring together cultural/symbolic and economic/material dimensions of our lives with information. What Mansell tries to bring out from a number of different contexts and debates is a deep problem – that is, the divergence between *systems’* goals (efficiency, profitability, etc) and more typically *human* goals (openness, negotiability, transparency, trust – or, even more generally, matching what we would consider to be good things for human beings!). The divergence matters, because we don’t have the option of ignoring it, of pretending that we can live without information systems. So many aspects of our lives are now practically dependent on the background work of information systems: we cannot, any more, even pretend to stand outside this; our daily lives *start out* from the necessity of some automation of information systems if we are to do the basic things we need to be able to do.

This makes even more problematic our difficulty of intervening in those systems in order to make them work in ways that are closer to our intentions and wishes. As she notes, it has become increasingly difficult for us as human beings to intervene in the running of the information systems on which our lives depend, indeed many designers of systems claim that it is essential for

humans not to directly intervene in the running of the system, as its success depends on the absence of human intervention. But if that is the case, how can we ever know that what the system ‘wants’ is what *we* want – and why should we trust this to be the case? We live in other words what Mansell calls the ‘paradox of complexity’: that information systems are now generally assumed to be too complex to allow for human – let alone political or civic or social – intervention.

There must then be at least a *preliminary normative issue* if the systems on which we depend for our everyday living resources and habits depend, *in turn*, for *their* effective operations on *not* being visible to us and on *not* being open to our ethical intervention, even if we did, somehow, get an understanding of what they are doing. Because that would mean saying that an increasingly large part of human life is not open to normative reflection (because it is invisible to our inspection) and effective normative intervention: it would amount to saying that large parts of our lives are beyond ethics. And that, in the long run, is unliveable.

There are some parallels to Mansell’s systems-based version of the normative turn in communications research: Ulises Mejias’s argument (2013) that we need to pay attention to the exclusions of network practice and design in his book *Off the Network*. He asks at the start of that book: ‘what does the digital network include in the process of forming an assemblage and, more important, what does it leave out?’

Julie Cohen in her pathbreaking book *Configuring the Networked Self* (2012) offers, in ways that are strongly parallel to Robin Mansell, a critical approach to information systems and their role in our lives that she calls ‘cultural environmentalism’: this approach seeks to challenge how we have come to value information exclusively in terms of system (indeed market system) logics. For unless we make this challenge, she argues, we are helpless to address a painful gap that we live out every day: ‘the gap between the rhetoric of liberty and the reality of [our] diminished individual control’ (2012, p. 4) over our lives within information systems. She too insists that we have become increasingly dependent on a communications system that is vital to us, yet absolutely not, in most situations, open to human intervention or even monitoring.

And this, Cohen insist, has *real political* implications: ‘the configuration of networked space is [...] increasingly opaque to its users’, yet it operates via ‘a system of governance that is authoritarian’ (Cohen, 2012, pp. 202, 188-189). As in Mansell’s argument, there is no way of responding to this except by building new types of normative argument from new starting-points, forged outside the values of information systems themselves. Cohen’s book contains a powerful defence of building critical values based on the everyday realities of our embodied lives with information systems, that take account of the cost we incur through working with systems, and seek to take account of the

consequences of information systems for our forms of cultural development and self-formation. Cohen, a legal theorist, matters to us at this conference, because her intervention is based on *cultural diagnosis*: she asks what are the cultural consequences of digital environments?

I don't have space here to go further into the normative resources that might help us address these challenges, but want instead to concentrate on the nature of the challenge. All the writers I have discussed from Turkle to Cohen register a sense that the phenomena, if you like the phenomenology, of our daily lives is changing through media, and in deeply disruptive ways that we can't yet handle.

There are parallels here to the origins of environmental consciousness, on which a philosopher Hans Jonas (1992) offers a useful commentary when he discusses the transformation of (human) ethics that came when we grasped that ethics was no longer just about the relations between three separate components – human beings, physical nature (or the environment), technology (or things), but about human actions, which through their polluting side-effects, could directly transform nature, and so damage the only environment in which human beings can live at all. As a consequence, an ethics of the co-constitutive relations between humans, technology and nature became essential.

Could the same be true of our relations to media and information systems? Could this explain the *paradoxical* ('alone together') and *urgent* ('off the network') nature of these normative interventions? That they register, suddenly, what philosopher Paul Ricoeur called a 'limit situation' (2007, pp. 35-36) in which our sense of the problems and contexts of human existence, because they have been challenged fundamentally, generate, out of necessity, new *domains* of ethical thinking. Could media, our lives with media, our relations with the media manifold, generate today, require even, a new domain of ethical thinking?

Some may be tempted to consider ethics in isolation from politics, that would be a mistake, as both Mansell and Cohen's work bring out: it would misunderstand the source of our troubling, which is an underlying corporate and commercial ambition to build system, a system with the capacity to be the system that preconditions our possibilities of interacting with the world. An ambition that goes beyond hegemony, that goes beyond interpretation, and is in the business of remaking the world, as a phenomenal possibility.

## 4 Conclusion

Our bodily practices today – affective, cognitive, perceptive, orientational – are then being moulded within a new media-supersaturated environment which carries costs, costs that we are only gradually starting to grasp. And this is troubling people! And so, if I am right, we are at a paradoxical point in history – and the focus of this conference is on the cross-media points to a key line of change. On the one hand, we need, as researchers, to track the unparalleled complexity and inventiveness of our lives with the media manifold. And for this we need not only practice theory in general (of course, that was the larger door we had to open, if we were ever to find ourselves as researchers, analytically oriented to what is going on with us and with media) but also the concept of the media manifold which tries to hold in view the many-dimensional complexity of what it is we are ‘in’ with media, and the still complex *reductions* that our actions in relation to media necessarily involve. It is, of course, possible to read this vastness that analytically we must grasp as a space of freedom. But that is too simple!

For, on the other hand, our analytic must reach out also into *a politics*, a normative questioning of what it is we, as myriads of reflexive agents, have got ourselves into. That is the urgent challenge of Turkle’s and others’ work. It is reflected in the concerns of activists who must use some configuration of social media, yet know the costs in terms of surveillance. Put another way, no political economy of media can today do without a phenomenology of life with the media manifold. But equally, a phenomenology of media without a grounding in political economy is blind. It cannot see the wider political challenge being generated by the new economies of media that are *generating* the “phenomena” with which we are trying to live.

This tension– if you like between structure and agency, or freedom and subjection – was there at the start in the debates around practice theory. It emerged, for example, in the debate I had with an anthropologist, Mark Hobart, early on in the adaptation of practice theory (Couldry, 2010; Hobart, 2010). Hobart wanted to celebrate practice theory as a way of moving beyond any *centred* notion of power, which risked leaving contemporary forms of symbolic power completely neglected. But it is present in a much stronger form today, because of the astonishing ambition of the institutions we still call ‘media’, because that is how their power presents itself to us; as an interface with and through which we can act. Clearly therefore no turn to practice (indeed no methodological or analytic move) can resolve this tension, but at least the turn orients us to the key challenge for media research in our time: which is how adequately to grasp the politics – intellectual and practical – of a lifeworld in which media are every more deeply embedded and in which our possibilities for freedom are bought at the cost of a barely imaginable subjection.

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### Biography

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# Communication and information rights in European media policy

*Hannu Nieminen*

## Abstract

To make informed choices about matters of societal importance citizens must be informed. This requires universal access and availability of information. It also implies participation in information creation – i.e., being competent to participate in public debate in which political will is formed and expressed, and decision-making happens. This is where the media – together with other public institutions such as education and general public services – are of decisive importance. In this article some recent issues in European media and communication policy will be scrutinized against the principles of citizens' information and communication rights (ICRs).

*Keywords:* communication and information rights, media policy, media access, media competence, privacy

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## 1 Communication and information rights in European media policy

Communication rights are most often represented in ratified conventions and agreements (Padovani/Calabrese, 2014, pp. 1-13). Among the rights that are most often included in information and communication rights [ICRs] are principles that include freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of information, and right to education. Special emphasis is often given to the rights of minorities and subaltern groups, especially women, ethnic minorities and cultural groups, and people with disabilities. In the digital era, new rights such as the right to be forgotten are also being formalized.

The original understanding of communication rights was based on a range of what has been termed “*negative rights*”, meaning that the focus is on defence rather than a proactive understanding. That is characteristic for the freedom of speech, the press, and expression. The rationale protects rights owners (as citizens) from governmental interference, i.e. the misuse of political power. This understanding is the principle behind Article 19 of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The concept of a “*positive right*” to communication developed slowly. This idea implies that citizens should not only be guaranteed access but also have an inherent right to the means for executing these freedoms. This understanding is implicit to the concept of an active, informed citizenship, which has defined the European social contract since the end of World War Two.

To make informed choices about matters of societal importance citizens must be informed. This requires universal access and availability of information. It also implies participation in information creation – i.e., being competent to participate in public debate in which political will is formed and expressed, and decision-making happens. This is where the media – together with other public institutions such as education and general public services – are of decisive importance (for more, see Horowitz Aslama and Nieminen, 2016).

One useful schema for understanding the wider spectrum of communication rights is to study them through five distinct dimensions (see Horowitz Aslama and Nieminen, 2016; Splichal, 2012, 168-69):

1. *Access* is about citizens’ equal access to information, orientation, entertainment and other contents serving their rights.
2. *Availability* indicates that relevant contents (of information, orientation, entertainment and other) should be equally available for citizens.
3. *Competence* is about citizens being educated with the skills and abilities to use the means and information available according to their needs and desires.

4. *Dialogical* rights means availability of public spaces that allow citizens to publicly share information, experiences, views, and opinions on common matters.
5. *Privacy* indicates two things. First, that everyone's private life must be protected from unwanted publicity, unless such exposure is clearly in the public interest or if the person decides to expose it to the public. Second, protection of personal data means that all information gathered by authorities or businesses must be protected as confidential.

## 2 Information and communication rights

The actors in media policy subscribe to a principal understanding that the central aim of media policy is to enhance citizens' democratic rights. This ideal of an informed citizen means that all members of society should be able to make choices based on the best available knowledge. Perhaps the most important common document on this is the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in which the UN member states pledge to promote freedom of opinion and expression and the right of everyone "*to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers*" (UN, 1948).

However, the declaration and the numerous treaties founded on it are not binding on the UN member states: there are major differences how, for example, freedom of speech or openness of information is recognized. In order to make the treaties effective, some researchers and civic movements have launched the concept of citizens' information and communication rights (ICRs) (Padovani/Calabrese, 2014; Braman, 2009; Splichal, 2012). The aim is to have these rights as part of national and international legislation and thus make their full implementation globally compulsory.

In the following, the five dimensions of information and communication rights introduced above will be discussed in more detail. How are they met today in European media and communication policy?

1. By *access*, we mean that all citizens should have equal opportunities to enter information sources, regardless of the delivery forms and technology. In the European Union this aim is served primarily by the EU strategy "Digital Agenda for Europe: A Europe 2020 Initiative" (EU, 2016). Today in most, if not all, European countries, most citizens have relatively equal opportunity to have access to and a possibility to use the most important information networks. This is the case with the print media (newspapers and magazines), electronic media (radio and television) and basic telecommunication (fixed and mobile telephony). However, the problem is that communication has shifted increasingly to

the network environment; the Universal Service Obligation (USO)<sup>1</sup> that has been compulsory in traditional telecom services does not concern broadband online services. This is reflected in social and regional inequality in the availability of the broadband connection as well as in differences in the price setting. (see EU Broadband, 2015)

In many countries, telecom operators are today investing heavily in the most advanced 4G and even 5G mobile networks.<sup>2</sup> This policy has led to the traditional fixed-line telephony network being physically dismantled because of its high maintenance costs. The mobile services offered as replacement do not, however, guarantee the same quality and reliability. Furthermore, the more effective 4G (and even less the forthcoming 5G) networks are concentrated on the more profitable markets around big cities, leaving the rural area dependent on less-developed and slower connections (EU Digital Agenda, 2015).

2. By *availability*, we mean the plurality and diversity of information content. All citizens should have access with equal conditions to the best knowledge and expert opinions available, to culture and works of art and to high quality entertainment. Although this is a general problem concerning all groups of citizens, it touches certain minorities, in particular. Central issues for democratic citizenship are, among others, the availability of *factual information* and *orientative knowledge* as well as content enhancing *social and cultural cohesion*.

*Factual information*: In the European Union this aim is clearly set in the Lisbon Treaty under the auspices of the Freedom of Information,<sup>3</sup> and obliges public authorities to fulfil the basic democratic requirements of openness and transparency in their functions. However, there are two big problems: first, not all European Union member states have followed this principle, neither *de jure* nor *de facto*, as its implementation falls under national sovereignty.<sup>4</sup> The sec-

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1 Universal Service Obligation refers to the principle that basic telecommunication services must be offered to all potential users, independent of their location, with equal conditions and moderate costs (see EurLEX, 2016).

2 4G and 5G (Fourth and fifth generation, respectively) refer to mobile broadband technologies. The aim of each new generation is to package more information on each frequency bandwidth than the previous generation. This means both a higher capacity of information delivery and better quality, e.g. in video streaming. See the mobile industry report 'Understanding 5G' at <https://gsmintelligence.com/research/?file=141208-5g.pdf&download>.

3 "Article 42 (the right of access to documents) of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights [...] recognises the right to freedom of information for EU documents as a fundamental human right. Further, specific rights falling within the scope of freedom of information are also enshrined in Article 41 of the Charter (the right to good administration)". (Index on Censorship, 2015).

4 Two EU member states, Cyprus and Spain, are still without any freedom of information laws. Ibid.

ond problem follows from the fact that any freedom of information legislation can only oblige public authorities – non-governmental and privately owned institutions are excluded.

An additional problem that has emerged with the expansion of the Internet concerns the abundance of information. Today we have access to almost limitless information, which makes it extremely tough even for experts to find and select information that is most relevant for our needs and interests. Both researchers and journalists have experienced that the increasing fragmentation and trivialization in the information supply create problems. In relation to journalism, the danger is that borders between fact and fiction are blurring, which leads to people's diminished trust in news journalism – a trend that is being experienced in many countries.

A recently exacerbated problem is created by the attempts of several network operators to prioritize their own content services by slowing the online traffic of their competitors (the problem of Network Neutrality; see European Union on the issue: EU Net Neutrality, 2015a). Although widely condemned as a major violation against the basic ideals of the Internet as a neutral conduit of information, this policy is actively promoted by many major service providers and network companies.<sup>5</sup> Until now, the attempts by the European Union to tackle net neutrality have been less convincing (see EU Net Neutrality, 2015b; Save the Internet, 2016; Wired, 2015).

*Orientation:* Orientation refers in general to the interpretation and contextualization of information. The significance of orientative information is emphasized when the amount of available information increases rapidly. The ability of the private citizen to gather and interpret all information that is relevant for his/her needs is necessarily limited. Here the interpretations offered by the news media, even though often contradictory and competing with each other, are indispensable. In order to foster democratic will formation, orientative information in the forms of plurality of opinions and diversity of interpretations should be available to allow people to weigh contradictory claims and recommendations independently. In the European Union, media pluralism has been a topic of constant debate and concern (Harcourt, 2005; Ward, 2008). In 2012 the EU co-established the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (as a part of the European University Institute in Florence; CMPF, 2016), whose tasks include monitoring and reporting on the state and developing pluralism and diversity in European media.

From the viewpoint of pluralism, the present state of democracy in Europe invites critical analysis.<sup>6</sup> Too often the media – both the newspapers and the electronic media – offer interpretations that are excessively uniform, exclu-

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5 For the case of India, one of the biggest telecom markets globally, see Soni, 2015.

6 On the measures by the European Union to foster media pluralism, see EU Media Freedom, 2016.

ding alternative explanations. This is facilitated by the intense centralization of media ownership, diminishing external pluralism, and a narrowing down of internal pluralism in the media, as the well-known cases of the Berlusconi's and Murdoch's media imperia have shown us (see Day, 2015; Davies, 2015). Even when competition occurs – for example, between the evening papers in many countries – it is often based only on scandals and celebrity gossip (Esser, 1999; Uribe, 2004).

Previously media pluralism in many European countries was promoted by means of public subsidies or state aid policies. It facilitated, among other things, that the political party press to continue publishing for a time. However, the European Union decreed that state aid to the media distorts the market and violates European competition law (see EU State aid, 2009). Public subsidies have been drastically reduced since the 1990s (Murschetz, 2014). However, recently the topic has re-emerged as the economic basis of the news media, in particular, has become threatened by the global economic crisis involving a rapid decrease in advertising and consumer demand for news journalism. This is felt, in particular, to threaten the diversity and pluralism of news journalism.

*Social cohesion:* The media have historically played a major role in supporting and enforcing social and cultural cohesion. This is promoted in equal measures by the media's news and current affairs provision, as well as entertainment and arts and culture programmes. The High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism, invited by the European Commission, stated in its final report that from the viewpoint of democracy it is essential that media contents serve the social and cultural needs of all the different social groups and strata in a balanced way (HLGMFP, 2013). However, there are still major imbalances between different social groups in their public representation. This concerns the differences in, e.g. gender, culture, language, ethnic origin and social class (Cottle, 2000; Dines/Humez, 2003; Gill, 2007; Conversi, 2014).

3. By *competence*, we mean citizens' skills and abilities to use the media and their contents critically according to their needs and expectations. Although it has been on the European Commission's agenda as *digital competence*, its practical promotion has necessarily been left with national authorities (Ala-Mutka, 2011). Often media competence is understood merely as a concern for schools and educators; special subjects of criticism have been the Internet, its uncontrolled use as well as the lack of control concerning its content. Too often the problems concerning media competence are brought into public debate only as a reaction to some scandal or online-related crime, in the form of moral panic (such as after the massacre in Oslo 2011 or as a reaction to the online recruiting campaign by Isis 2015). Recently, this problem was raised in connection to the role of journalism in reporting the European financial crisis of 2010-2012 (Picard, 2015).

Serious discussion on media competence not only needs the engagement of users and educators but also all stakeholders of the media system. The topic needs the expertise of those responsible for developing new media technologies and their applications as well as content creators and distributors. From the viewpoint of technology, the need is very practical: how to make and keep technology user friendly. For service operators, the challenge is to make the service conditions and pricing bases less ambiguous. A major obstacle is that many of the most used media applications are owned and controlled by US-based companies (e.g. Microsoft, Apple, Facebook, Youtube, Google). With a lack of effective international jurisdiction, European consumers have very little protection against these companies in cases of conflicts of interests.<sup>7</sup>

4. By *dialogue* we mean the very core of democracy. The media system should promote democratic public debate, allowing decision makers and citizens to exercise frank and open dialogue. It is based on a belief that democracy is best realized when citizens can actively participate in discussions and negotiations concerning their needs and interests, and in planning alternative ways of action. In particular, in the early days of the Internet there were great expectations for direct democracy; in other words, that online communication, purely by its seemingly direct and “*unmediated*” character, would democratize communication and create a wholly new and open public sphere. This optimism has somewhat waned today (Dahlberg/Siapera, 2007; Curran/Fenton/Freedman, 2012.)

In its order to increase interactive communication the European Commission has adopted the use of the new ICT in the form of online consultation (EC, 2016). Although consultation, being a non-symmetric form of communication, does not fulfil the criteria of dialogue, it certainly is one way of giving voice to citizens and stakeholders. The problem is, though, that consultation is by nature reactive: the participants can only react to the alternatives or proposals that are available to them.

If dialogue is difficult for public authorities to construct, it is no less easy for the media – for several reasons. Embedded in the professional culture of media business, especially journalism, there is a certain understanding of professionalism; journalists are experts in collecting, filtering and interpreting information, and by these means serve their audiences. The construction of dialogue with their audience has not traditionally been part of how the media work and how journalistic professionalism is understood (Eide, 2014). With the proliferation of media forms, multiplying channels and the fragmentation of audiences, the media industry has been forced to re-think how to engage readers, listeners and watchers to a certain platform (be it a newspaper or a

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7 On the planned new EU legislation on data protection, see EC, 2015.

radio channel). In many countries different forms of interactive journalism (in the form of citizen and public journalism) have been experienced with varying results (Ahva/Heikkilä/Kunelius, 2015).

5. By *privacy* and individual autonomy, we mean that citizens should have a guaranteed right to decide for themselves on how they use their private information and on its public display. Privacy refers to two interlinked directions: protection of private life and protection of private information. The protection of private life concerns a person's private affairs, such as family life, hobbies, habits and tastes, health, sexual orientation and religion. This information is not meant for the public domain unless the person decides otherwise. In the European Union the topic has been discussed in the terms of new Data Protection Directive (EU Data Protection, 2016) which aims to create a comprehensive European framework. The directive has been much motivated by the practices of big US-based media companies like Google and Facebook that have been judged unethical and as violating the principles of the Lisbon Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (see e.g. New Scientist, 2015; Europe versus Facebook, 2016).

The digitalization of communication and the increasing use of the Internet and social media have changed the conditions for the traditional understanding of privacy and its protection. We, as ordinary media users, regularly hand over our personal information voluntarily to a multiplicity of service providers without proper consideration. In Facebook and other social media platforms, we share information about our private preferences, free-time activities and our family members. This information we offer to service providers to be commercially exploited and sold further to third parties, advertisers and marketers. As we know today, several governments have achieved access to all this information to exercise global control of the communication networks and regularly monitor "suspicious" behaviour and people. A prime example of this is the case of Edward Snowden, who in 2013 exposed the massive global surveillance programme of the US National Security Agency (Greenwald, 2014; Lyon, 2015).

### 3 Conclusions

The major question for the European media policy today is how to answer the challenges created by the digitalization and globalization of communication. Traditional media and communication policies were based on two assumptions, neither of which matches the present situation. The first is linked with the sector-based division of media industries, separating print media, electronic media, telecommunication and recorded media into their regulatory "si-

los". Each sector has been applied with a sector-based regulation, leading to a fragmented legal framework. Accordingly, regulatory responsibilities are separated between several public authorities. The EU's framework for electronic communications services (EU Framework, 2015) is an attempt to answer this challenge by bringing together different EU regulations of both television and radio broadcasting and telecommunication.

Another assumption involves the competence of national media and communications policy. Traditionally, it has been assumed that media markets are constrained by state borders because of the restrictions set by technology, delivery network and linguistic-cultural factors. Due to digitalization and the ascendancy of the Internet, the ability of national actors and national legislation to effectively control the media within national borders has radically weakened. An increasing amount of the use of the media concerns content produced in and distributed from countries (especially from the United States) outside the jurisdiction of the user's country.

From the viewpoint of European democracy, it is difficult to see any consistent strategic planning in the media and communication policies either on EU or on national levels. As the media have increasingly withdrawn from the national regulatory regime, no cohesive international regime has developed to fill the gap. The possibilities of the EU are limited by the same challenges of globalization facing the national level. This is why the results of the EU's media and communications policy have mostly been limited to partial reforms and updating previous norms.

In these conditions, European national media and communications policies seem to be left as market-led, and global multinational media companies are allowed to dictate their further development. A central task for media policy research is to assess how to change this development in order to ensure citizens' information and communication rights and to democratize the EU's media and communication policy.

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# Free speech at an intersection. Notes on the contemporary hybrid public sphere

*Risto Kunelius*

## Abstract

This essay starts from the assumption that the notion of hybridity has become an increasingly influential part of the way we think about our societies. The chapter then asks: What are the consequences and lessons of this ascending “social imaginary” for our debates about free speech? This question is reflected on by taking a concrete, contingent moment in Paris, in December 2015 as a starting point. It offers an example of an intersection where terrorism, security and civic action for global climate change management came together. The chapter suggests that, in addition to the current boom of analyses of *institutional* and *technological* hybridization, understanding the challenges to free speech (and free speech theory) calls for more attention to be paid to the *political* dimension of hybridization in the globalizing contexts of conflicts. Some pressing challenges to uses of free speech in the context of politically hybrid problems are then suggested. Drawing from the example, such challenges relate, for instance, to the intersection of multiculturalism and security, the validity of evidence and witnessing, and the tension between the ideals and the material conditions of privacy.

*Keywords:* free speech, hybridity, public sphere, privacy, security, climate change, social imaginaries

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## 1 An intersection

It is a chilly November morning in Paris. A small children's playground on Rue Voltaire is packed with film crews and journalists. They are huddled in small clusters with representatives of indigenous peoples, who are giving interviews. This is the first global action day in the Paris COP21, the global summit that is supposed to deliver a shared roadmap for managing future climate change. We are not here by coincidence. The fringes of the park fence are covered with worn out flowers, pictures of young people smiling for the camera, small pieces of sad poetry and French flags. Across the street is *Bataclan*, a concert arena and a restaurant where 87 people died two weeks ago in a terrorist attack. The marquee still spells out "Eagles of Death Metal."

The media moment in the park is consciously planned to take place in this disturbing intersection of global terrorism and freedom, of security and the right to be heard. The fact that journalists are present shows that the plan works. At the same time, the emotional force of the mass murder suggests many associations, some of which are disturbing. Should I allow myself to compare the victims of the Bataclan murderers to the people living on islands in danger of being drowned by the rising seawaters? Or should I take this media-availability-act as a critique of the French government, which has reacted to the terrorism by declaring a state of emergency and forbidden public protests during the ongoing summit? Or both?

## 2 The rising imaginary of hybridity

Recent decades have been flooded with books and essays on the promises and warnings that come with the transformation of our communication infrastructures. Are we entering an era of increasingly pluralist, interactive, multi-modal, and richer public debate and new kinds of logics of civic action? Or is the seductively easy mobile Internet access luring us into locally redundant echo chambers inhabited by narrow-minded, redundant identities – that are being surveyed more effectively than ever? The answer, predictably, is not *either or*, but *yes*.

One conceptual shortcut for trying to make sense of this volatility is the notion of *hybridity*. Drawing from biology and the idea of "cross-breeding," hybrid creatures carry with them both the fascination of something new and the fear of breaking the "laws" of nature. Identifying and analyzing hybrid objects simultaneously both confirms the existing cultural order and threatens it. The downpour of neologisms trying to capture and promote the digital age – "prosumer", "netizens", "hackaton", "eThis", "iThat", etc. — is a constant reminder of this, as is the irritation these terms cause.

Theoretically, as Bruno Latour (1993) once suggested, the element of hybridity has always been a crucial but partially silenced element of the constitution of the Modern identity. In modern societies, he claimed, the general trend toward differentiation, and the subsequent work of keeping institutional boundaries and roles clear, feeds a counter force: a need to find boundary-transgressing practices. While this translation activity and hybridity is essential for the functioning of institutions, the public legitimization discourse of modern institutions – from science to journalism, for instance – has favored a language that emphasizes these boundaries. It has highlighted the autonomy of institutions and the importance of guarding their borders rather than celebrating those people, moments and locations where leaps from one institutional logic to another take place.

Thus, hybridity has not been as explicitly hardwired into our consciousness as some earlier modern social imaginaries, such as ‘objectified economy,’ ‘sovereign people,’ or the ‘public sphere,’ (Taylor, 2004). But the increasing sense of living in an intensively interrelated and more complex world seems to have offered some boost to hybridity as an influential figure of thought. Like other social imaginaries, it expresses itself in theoretical debates as well as in practical, everyday discourse. Latour’s own recent work (2013), for instance, seems to offer a suggestion for a new language that would enable social institutions to defend themselves in the current conditions of intensively felt hybridization and importance of boundary zones. Also, more generally and vernacularly, the idea of hybridization has become a powerful metaphor that shapes how we value what we do. By doing so, it may also be posing new questions related to what free speech means and how we think about it.

### 3 Hybridity of the ‘third kind’

There are several clearly detectable versions of the hybridization narrative. Obviously, a *technological* narrative of digitalization points to growing interactivity and complex proliferation of communication channels. New media forms and formats, when combined into a network infrastructure, have come to facilitate action and influence across previously natural, often materially structured, borders. The everyday wonders and incredible features of mobile digital Internet access have no doubt strengthened beliefs in the creative power and progressive potentials of hybridity in general. In recent analyses of media and politics, this technology is often claimed to facilitate – both materially and symbolically – creative transgressions of earlier logics, modes, practices and identities (see, e.g., Chadwick, 2013; Bennet/Sederberg, 2014; Carlson/Lewis, 2015; Russell, 2016).

Partly overlapping with the technological narrative, current uses of the concept of hybridity also have an important *institutional* reference. Institutional hybridity presents itself as heightened attention to the translation between familiar institutional borders. We increasingly celebrate the virtues and necessity of interdisciplinary work; we want to build new interfaces, and facilitate encounters as well as highlight the boundary work and contact zones as object of study. Intense interaction and communication – rather than detached autonomy – between institutions have become the desired goals and a necessity. A good institutionalized example of such a trend comes from the field of climate change, where the *Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change* is a unique creature, not only as a distinctive *transnational* and multidisciplinary organ – but more to the point here – as an amalgam between science and politics (see Funtowitch/Ravetz, 1993; Hulme, 2009). As an institution of “post-normal science,” it exemplifies the need for institutional hybridity. At the same time the IPCC is symptomatic of an even larger, overarching and existential hybridization narrative of the Anthropocene, the global collapse of the imagined nature-culture distinction (see, e.g., Dryzek et al., 2013, p. 112-128, also Latour, 2013).

Such versions of hybridization serve well to locate interesting moments and developments that are reframing the way we think about the condition of free speech and public discourse. But a richer link between the changing landscape of social imaginaries and free speech could also extend the notion of hybridization further, to the actual *issues* that are at stake when we debate the question of free speech. It is in this connection that the 2015 November morning in Paris is a provocative moment. As a concrete, contingent intersection of *terrorism*, *climate change* and heightened *security measures*, it provides a clue to yet another kind of hybridity. For lack of a better term, I will call this “third kind” of hybridity *political*. In brief, and suggestively, *political hybridity* refers to the way in which concrete and contingent political problems converge in a given moment in a given context, and how that convergence produces new kinds of political alliances and associations. Such intersections, or politically hybrid moments, can also make us reflect on the current conditions of free speech and the ways we think about it.

#### 4 Free speech and multiculturalism

It is impossible to talk about Bataclan without talking about Charlie Hebdo and the “Je Suis Charlie” meme, and hence, without talking about the Muhammad cartoons controversy of 2005-2006 – and consequently, without talking about Huntingtonian claims concerning the “clash of civilizations.” Indeed, during the past decade, the free speech vs. multiculturalism debate has increasingly

become a key factor in constructing and deconstructing political alliances in general. It has fed the rise of political populism in many democratic countries, and carried new parties into power. In the public sphere, and for our definitions of free speech, it has strongly emphasized a logic whereby *identity* comes first. The January 2015 spring meme, fittingly, was “JE SUIS” – I am.

The strong affective public outrage was not, of course, the wrong reaction to the mass murder in the Hebdo editorial offices. But while recognizing this, it is also important to see how the heightened security reach of the state in France was put into effect with the backing of this very same emotional energy – energy that was supposedly defending free speech.

Is this a paradox? Protecting free speech demands an effective surveillance of citizens? From a distance, the enhanced surveillance laws may indeed seem like an act against freedom. However, inside the borders and the logic of an identity-driven free-speech doctrine, a “strong” state easily claims a key position in free speech discourse. Such a state redeems itself as a necessary precondition of freedom, as a practical solution to the identity game. If you are one of us, you are protected and free to have a say. This may well give us a sense of clarity, but how much does it help us negotiate the pressing question of freedom and tolerance in a multicultural and complex world where differences are not disappearing? How much room is there for saying “I could be Charlie” or “You could talk me into being Charlie”?

## 5 Free speech, evidence and power

A second stream of meanings flowing through the Bataclan morning was, of course, the narrative about climate change. At first, it might seem a bit remote for a discussion of free speech. However, it should also remind us that *despite* identities and cultural constructions, we also live in a common material realm where problems are, well, *real* and materially shared – albeit not equally suffered from.

Reading the final Paris COP21 accord from December 2015, and the commentaries on it, makes it tempting to deride the celebrated global deal as mostly a complicated, acrobatic act of linguistic diplomacy. However, one can also think of it as a weak but positive example of the power of providing public *evidence*. What is relevant in the global climate debate from the point of view of free speech, then, is the – however partial – success of the strategies of the global civil society actors. It is worth noting that this struggle has increasingly been driven by claims that there is *both objective* evidence that demands action *and pressing value issues* that demand recognition. Keeping these two sides on

board has allowed their practice of *witnessing* (both as a record of experience and as an act of hearing the experience of others) to make a powerful, integrated claim about truth and justice.

It would be naive to suggest that the Paris agreement proves the strong power of witnessing in the transnational public sphere. The cruel fact is that while the COP process has, for a couple of decades, been tossing around the target of a 2-degree limit, the real carbon emissions have soared, and the current, actual business-as-usual trend is committing the world to a much more dramatically unpredictable future than the hopeful target. At a minimum, however, one can say that the pressure of evidence, produced both by hybrid, systemic institutions such as IPCC (integrating political power and claiming expert scientific evidence) and by the life-world knowledge from civil society (integrating facts of lived experience with claims to justice and basic solidarity), was able to create an opening from which to continue. The facts that the Paris accord commits to a 2-degree limit, that it recognizes a more ambitious target of 1.5 degrees, and that it embraces the idea of transparent monitoring of targets and achievements are, at this point, merely rhetorical. But potentially, the hard discrepancies between these commitments and future realities will also enhance the power to produce new, critical evidence.

## 6 Free speech, privacy and security

A third stream of free speech issues that was unavoidably present on that Paris morning was the intensified and intertwined debate about digital surveillance and security. Limiting public action in the name of security – as the Paris state of emergency during the COP21 did – opens up the core question of free speech, and exposes the collective trade-off between the state and its citizens. It also introduces the image of the enemies within our ranks, the potential need for mutual suspicion. It both highlights the issue of the *legitimacy* of the state and its power and asks almost baffling questions about free speech and *individuality* and privacy.

The legitimacy debate seems clear enough. Obviously, the state should not be able to know everything you do or say in private encounters, not even at the level of meta-data about where you are, when and with whom. We instinctively know that privacy, in this sense, is a constitutive element of the public (sphere): without the secrecy of privacy, publicity – in the modern sense in which we apply it – loses its representative claim of producing legitimacy. Protecting privacy, thus, is protecting the *possibility for the state to defend itself* discursively in public and the right of citizens to hold the state publicly accountable. Compromising privacy, in this perspective, undermines the possibility of the state to earn its legitimacy through the public.

However, when this figure of thought is set into the context of security and surveillance, problems and paradoxes surface: If security demands surveillance, can such surveillance – ever – be transparent? Would overall transparency even be a benefit to more benign institutions (see, e.g., Schudson, 2015)? Logically, there is perhaps disturbingly little solid ground for such arguments to stand on. Is it possible to have a public oversight mechanism of surveillance in general, and of digital, massively effective surveillance in particular? No wonder that in everyday conversations we are fond of detaching ourselves ironically from the whole issue (making fun of being watched) or by declaring, “I have nothing to hide.” As the figure of the deep state becomes apparent, it is best to think that you are too uninteresting for it to bother with you – or that it is indeed a benevolent deep state.

Beyond the oversight claim, there is yet another fundamental element of free speech that is exposed – and at stake – in the privacy-security debate. As we are more and more effectively digitally tracked and targeted and as we become increasingly aware of this (and willingly submit to it), the borderline between private and public becomes – again – porous and blurred. Whether we want to call this boundary activity yet another example of hybridization does not matter. What matters is that it does raise the possibility of individuality becoming a *less* plausible core ground on which a free speech theory can stand. Thus, exposing the effectiveness of the meta-data analysis of our choice can potentially also lead to an *eroding of the imaginary of individuality*. Indeed, the conditions in which we have thought that individuality – and its boundaries – is constructed and safeguarded are undergoing a fundamental structural change. The paradoxes of “transparency”, and the discrepant frames in which we come to solve them in the unfolding discussion about surveillance, are about to have their effect on your ways of thinking (see, e.g., Kunelius et al., 2016)

## 7 Lessons of political hybridity

We can take the three converging discourses above – multiculturalism, climate change and security-surveillance – as *examples*. As such, they underline the importance of not detaching free speech considerations from the substantial, political issues that activate them. A debate about free speech is always about *something* other than merely free speech – even when it claims to be only about free speech itself. Because issues in our increasingly interdependent world are more intensively co-present, it is becoming more difficult to formulate universal clarities. This is a good thing, as it requires more consideration and reflection. It is healthy to be reminded that when we declare free speech to be sacred, we are partly defending a worthy cause, but at the same time – in

some political estimations – we are also running the risk of giving the fundamentalists what they want: a world where identities rule and the demand for *conversion* replaces conversation.

We can also look at the three intersecting streams as *more than examples*, and read them as challenges to our theorizations about free speech. In doing so, at least three tasks emerge. I will end by sketching them in a slightly normative manner.

First, we need a notion of free speech that helps us live in a culturally and politically hybridized world. It must be possible to defend free speech and remain considerate to others and their values. If ‘others’ are represented within a securitization discourse, this becomes increasingly difficult.

Second, we need to defend the epistemological value of free speech, one that recognizes facts as constructions that can be defended with *evidence* as well as with value commitments. It must be possible to speak about incorrect arguments by claiming that evidence proves some facts as not being true or accurate, and that some speech acts are unjustified.

Third, we will need to develop a more nuanced understanding of the boundary between the private and the public. It is difficult to see how a theory of free speech could function without the political fiction about individuals being the essential building blocks of democracy. But it is equally difficult to see how any of us can sustain a belief on such a democratic fiction without a profound sense of irony. After all, we seem to have entered a world where you are told you must not protest because it might compromise the very values that you should protest for.

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# The normative shift: Three paradoxes of information privacy

*Jockum Hildén*

## Abstract

While a tension between social norms of privacy, technology and law has always been present in debates on privacy law, the emergence of computerized databases in the 1970s shifted the focus of privacy law from publication to control over information flows. In the past decade, data flows have become increasingly globalized and personal communications digitized. This, in combination with advances in computing, allows for the creation of extensive databases that can be efficiently and automatically analyzed. The right to privacy is gradually being eroded by data processing activities that are often unknown to users of media, and communications technology which are rarely compatible with people's perception of privacy. The legislative attempts to overcome privacy challenges associated with these trends have regrettably resulted in paradoxical outcomes. First, a privacy paradox has evolved, which suggests that people's perception of their right to privacy is rarely an indication of awareness of the privacy consequences of their actions. Second, information privacy laws have introduced a transparency paradox, where the requirement of detailed privacy notices has resulted in less understanding of how personal data is used. Third, legislators in the EU have created a purpose paradox in their pursuit of facilitating the free movement of data while simultaneously aiming to protect the privacy of citizens.

*Keywords:* information privacy, data protection, European Union, socio-legal research, internet policy

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## 1 Introduction

Privacy is a highly personal notion, which is hardly ever constant and always contested by new technologies and new settings, which means that generating a static legal definition of the right to privacy is difficult (see Nissenbaum, 2011; Cohen, 2012). Although this tension between social norms of privacy, technology and law has always been present in debates on privacy law, the emergence of computerized databases in the 1970s put significant emphasis on the role of information privacy.<sup>1</sup> Information privacy, or data protection, refers specifically to information on citizens rather than an abstract notion of what is considered private or intimate. Privacy guides what data are to be protected, but the information privacy frame focuses the discussion on the routine processing of personal data. In legal theory and policy research, information privacy relates to the access and control of information that is regarded as personal (Nissenbaum, 2010, p. 70). Access indicates when and how information about oneself is transmitted to a person or group, whereas control indicates who or what determines that access (see also Westin, 1967, p. 158). As people communicate personal information both voluntarily and involuntarily, access and control are rarely defined solely by the individual. When records were computerized they also became easier to transfer, which shifted the focus of privacy law from publication to control over information flows. Schwartz (2013, p. 1971) argues that the international debate on information privacy has always been about both human rights and data trade. Data trade does not, however, advance the privacy of a person, which generates an inherent tension in information privacy law. This tension has only become more apparent in the past decade, when data flows have been increasingly globalized and personal communications digitized, which allows for the creation of more extensive databases that can also be analyzed more efficiently due to advances in computing.

## 2 The normative shift

Privacy awareness, beliefs and actions to protect privacy vary a great deal between individuals, which means that any descriptive models of privacy must be extremely flexible (Burkart/Andersson Schwarz, 2013). Nevertheless, there are some common aspects of privacy that can be agreed upon within communities that form the basis of privacy law. Some social norms must thus be imagined to represent the “views of the nation” to such an extent that they

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<sup>1</sup> When I discuss European law specifically I will use the term “data protection,” rather than “information privacy”.

may be codified as law.<sup>2</sup> Although it would be unrealistic to state that privacy is a universal social norm that is more or less similar in all corners of the world, it can be argued that current privacy legislation originates from one single source, the US Bill of Rights from 1791. Although the ten Amendments to the Constitution do not explicitly mention privacy, the Fourth Amendment expresses the “right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects” (USA, 1787).

A century later, privacy was explicitly defined by Warren and Brandeis (1890) as a right which “protect[s] the privacy of the individual from invasion either by the too enterprising press, the photographer, or the possessor of any other modern device for rewording or reproducing scenes or sounds (p. 206).” The early privacy laws were torts that introduced compensation if the media had violated a person’s privacy. The history of privacy legislation is thus concomitant with the development of media and communication technologies. Newspapers, pocket cameras, covert listening devices, video cameras and social networking sites have changed how people relate to the private sphere, blurred the public/private distinction, and at times created an urgent need for more legislation (Tene/Polonetsky, 2013). New technologies come into conflict with social norms of privacy and therefore instigate a need for more regulation, and vice versa: Uses of technology shape social norms, which may change how information privacy laws are interpreted by both courts and laymen.

Most privacy laws in the world are based on article 12 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights from 1948. Still, privacy law in general allows for quite wide-reaching exceptions. Laws, which aim to codify social norms of imagined communities (see Koskenniemi, 1990, p. 7), tend to be vague in order to avoid over-regulation and contain exceptions so that the laws themselves allow for divergence from rules without breaking the law (Koskenniemi, 2004). The inherent vagueness of human rights law creates an apparent challenge for information privacy legislation. Civic freedoms and rights have always been partially relinquished in exchange for security and access to valuable infrastructure in the modern bureaucratic state (Giddens, 1985). There must, however, be a balance between the interests of the public, such as security, and private interests, such as privacy. This was what impelled legislators to draft the first data protection laws in Europe in the 1970s. Activists and legal professionals were concerned that state-run computerized databases could be abused and required that safeguards be instated. The first countries to introduce data protection legislation were Germany, France, the UK, Sweden, Austria, Denmark, and Norway (Schwartz, 2013; Newman, 2008).

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<sup>2</sup> See Anderson’s (2006) concept of nations as imagined communities.

As data flows are increasingly globalized, information privacy laws cannot be limited to the borders of nation states. The trade of personal information within Europe prompted the introduction of the EU Data Protection Directive in 1995. Countries with stringent data protection laws were concerned that multinational corporations were relocating their data processing activities to Belgium and Luxembourg, which lacked data protection laws altogether. Data protection authorities in the other European Community member states pushed for the inclusion of fairly strict data protection laws in order to protect the privacy of their citizens (Newman, 2008). However, since social norms of privacy are highly contextual and differ between communities and settings (Nissenbaum, 2010, p. 140), transnational information privacy legislation is challenging. Citizens from the different EU member states value aspects of privacy quite contrarily; whereas most EU citizens regarded financial information as personal data, the majority of Polish and Romanian citizens disagreed (EC 2011, p. 13). This particular challenge has been circumvented by not limiting the definition of personal data to certain categories of data, but whether or not that data can be linked to a person. This may however lead to a situation where data is retrofitted as personal data, “like an ideal gas to fit the shape of its container” (Ohm, 2010, p. 1741).

The legislative process of the Data Protection Directive shows how the focus of legislators in Europe has shifted from public to private processing of data. This shift has been advanced by the affordability of processing power and availability of data (Ohm, 2010). Powerful computers are available even to the smallest companies. In the retail industry, customer loyalty programmes are no longer merely about providing incentives and rewards to loyal consumers. As purchases are logged (in order to create databases of economic transactions), this data is used for targeted marketing and resold to so-called data brokers. The US data brokerage industry holds data points of over a billion transactions (FTC 2014).

The nature of data processing has shifted in volume, velocity, and variety, three key concepts which have been used to define big data (Laney, 2001). It is not only the sheer amount of data that has changed, but also the type of data. The right to privacy is therefore challenged by the fact that information which covers objective data, such as income or geolocation can be matched with more subjective data such as political views or even sexual preferences. Subjective data points have become more easily available since the digitization of personal communications. Social networking sites, personalized search engines, voice-over IP (VoIP), and instant messaging services facilitate the rendering of these latter data types. Users upload pictures of themselves online and share private information publicly, leading commentators to state that we live in a “post-privacy” world (e.g., Heller, 2008; 2010; 2011; Schramm, 2012). Still, that would be to gloss over questions of how infrastructure shapes

behaviour. The early online networks cherished anonymity; today's social networks reward identifiability. This evolution has created a wide gap between what data protection law recognizes as sensitive information, and what information social networking sites expect people to provide. For example, information on a person's political opinions, religious beliefs or sexual orientation are regarded as sensitive personal data, yet on Facebook they are categorized as "basic information" (Facebook, 2014); information which is very sensitive in many parts of the world.

Whereas uses of new technology challenge social norms of privacy, it is not these changes in behaviour that have influenced information privacy the most. Business practices which are unrelated to social norms, such as data mining and behavioural advertising, are driving regulatory change. The right to privacy is not only challenged by the nature of data that an organisation possesses, but also by what can be inferred from that data with statistical analysis (Ohm, 2010). These technologies are invisible to consumers and even go against social norms of privacy in ways that can be labelled as "creepy", although they are not illegal as such (Tene/Polonetsky, 2013, p. 2).

### 3 The paradoxes of information privacy

Few empirical findings would support the claim that privacy is an outmoded social norm. Instead, one can witness a "disconnect" between people's views on privacy and their actions (Andrejevic, 2015, Turow et al., 2015). Numerous studies in both Europe and the US show that people are increasingly worried about their online privacy, yet refrain from taking action which would secure their privacy in practice (Pew, EC 2015; Tan, 2011; Cobb, 2013; Turow, 2003; Debatin et al., 2009; Halbert/Larsson, 2015; Kennedy et al., 2015). This has been called the *privacy paradox* (Utz/Kramer, 2009).

According to Koskenniemi (2006), the international legal argument is often apologetic, construing the powers that be as fact and disregarding the word of the law, or utopian, construing the law as fact and disregarding actual power relations. The challenge lies in taking power relations into account without losing sight of the normativity of law. The post-privacy argument is inherently apologist, in that it merely accepts that privacy abuses are abundant and that the collection of data is highly unrestrained. Privacy activists, on the other hand, would often want to see all communications encrypted and all data processing subjected to the consent of individuals—something Obar (2015, p. 5) calls the "fallacy of data privacy self-management." The data management approach is further undermined by research that shows that even when

people are presented with a choice, the default settings should be seen as “de facto regulation” as they guide user behaviour to a large extent (Shah/Sandvig, 2008; see also Lessig, 2006).

Another paradox, which I call the *purpose paradox*, is the twin goal of information privacy legislation, as expressed here in the draft General Data Protection Regulation:

2. This Regulation protects the fundamental rights and freedoms of natural persons, and in particular their right to the protection of personal data.
3. The free movement of personal data within the Union shall neither be restricted nor prohibited for reasons connected with the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data. (EC 2012: art 1(2; 3))

From the first article of the proposed Regulation one can thus deduce two goals: first, the free movement of data (within the EU) and second, the protection of information privacy. However, privacy scholars would argue that it is precisely the free movement of data which erodes the right to privacy (Ohm, 2010). How can this apparent paradox be explained? Surely the incompatibility of the two goals cannot be based on mere incompetence from the legislators, as data protection officials have been frequently consulted during the legislative process of the Regulation.

Privacy as such does not make room for business interests, as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UN, 1966: art. 4(1)) clearly states that derogations are necessary only “[i]n time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation and the existence of which is officially proclaimed”. However, the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR), ratified by all EU member states, does contain a reference to the national economy of a state:

There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others (Council of Europe, 1950: art. 8(2)).

The exceptions outlined in the ECHR outline some of the collective interests which can be invoked as reasons to limit the right to privacy. The processing of medical data is, for example, a prerequisite for the success of clinical trials. Privacy scholars are usually reluctant to discuss cases where denying privacy for social interests is not only reasonable but also preferable (Cohen, 2012, pp. 109, 116). It is still important to stress that the focus lies in the interest of the nation, which could also be equated with the public interest. In any case, the private interest(s) of corporations is undoubtedly secondary, if not outright incompatible with the right to privacy. It can also be argued that the interests of

a powerful corporation may in some cases be interpreted as the public interest. Nevertheless, the costs and benefits of the collection, processing and trade of personal information come at potential benefits for businesses and costs to individuals, which would argue for an interpretation of privacy which prioritizes the individual (Nissenbaum, 2010, p. 111). In information privacy law, this balance is no longer as clearly tilted in favour of citizens.

What is at hand is essentially a balancing act of apology and utopia – when legislators set to create the first data protection rules, data was already being processed and analyzed with the help of computers. When the debate evolved to include international transfers of data in the drafting stages of the EU Data Protection Directive, international transfers were already commonplace. Instead of simply accepting the situation, legislators created a legal document which recognized both transfers of data and the legitimate privacy claims of citizens. The purpose paradox was consequently introduced not because of the EU citizens' complex, contextual and relational approach to privacy, but the existence of unregulated business practice.

For this reason, information privacy law can be interpreted either by looking at the commercial advantages of data transfers or the value of limiting access to private information. Information privacy is fundamentally different from the negative right to privacy that requires the state to refrain from being intrusive, unless a crisis requires the state to limit that right. Information privacy is a positive right, which happens to recognize practices that both protect the rights of individuals and limits those rights at the same time. Freedom of expression has also been pointed out as a right which is in conflict with the right to privacy, and the legal system is partly grounded on conflicts of rights. The abnormal trait of information privacy is that this conflict is built into the right itself.

On the one hand, European information privacy entails principles on data minimization, consent and transparency (e.g. EC, 2012: art. 5; 7). Data minimization refers to *what* data may be retained and processed. The retention should not exceed the minimum level of data necessary in order to fulfil a function, be it cookies on websites or patient data in medical records. Consent is a requirement for when data may be processed. Even when data is easily obtainable, the data subjects should give their consent before processing. Exactly how consent is obtained is a question of great debate. It has been vividly discussed among practitioners and legal scholars, some of whom argue that consent can be given implicitly while other argue that there is no such thing as implicit consent, and that all consent should be explicit (e.g. EC, 2010). Transparency sets out principles for how the data should be processed. Data subjects should be made aware of how and for what purposes their data is used. The transparency requirement has been somewhat undermined, however, by the extensive use of highly complex End-User Licence Agreements (EULAs)

which outline how an entity is processing data. This has led to what Nissenbaum (2011, p. 36) calls a *transparency paradox*, according to which detailed privacy policies are less likely to be understood if they state all the possible conditions for the use of personal data.

On the other hand, there are principles which facilitate the free movement of data, such as the use of self-regulatory instruments and the encouragement of data protection authorities to cooperate (e.g. EC, 2012: ch. V). In theory, these concrete provisions are not each other's antithesis, and may coexist within the same legal documents. The provisions on self-regulatory instruments which facilitate international transfers do not threaten the protection of individuals on their own, however, their purpose is to advance the free movement of data which is a threat to the right to privacy in its own right. By introducing more and more systems that facilitate international transfers of data, the right to privacy is eroded.

## 4 Conclusion

While technological advances in the 20th century encouraged European legislators to introduce the concept of data protection, 21st century applications of 20th century innovations are proving to be even more challenging for the right to privacy. Notwithstanding government infractions as exemplified by the NSA and GCHQ scandals, private processing of personal data increasingly tests the right to privacy. The challenges are first and foremost introduced by technological innovations, but these innovations also affect our behaviour, and by extension, social norms.

The legislative attempts to overcome privacy challenges have unfortunately resulted in paradoxical outcomes. First, they have created a privacy paradox (Utz/Kramer, 2009), which suggests that people's perception of privacy is a poor indicator of awareness of the privacy consequences of their actions. Second, information privacy laws have introduced a transparency paradox (Nissenbaum, 2011), where privacy notices are counterproductive and bring about less understanding of data processing, not more. This implies that data controllers should go against the word of the law that requires detailed notice of data processing if the goal is that users would actually understand the notices. Third, and perhaps most importantly, legislators in the EU have created a purpose paradox in their pursuit of trying to enable the free movement of data at the same time as they aim to protect the privacy of the citizens of the EU.

These paradoxes are an expression of the apologist and utopian elements of information privacy: on the one hand, personal data is already being collected, processed and transferred across borders; on the other hand, personal data is an important element of the right to privacy and must be protected

despite these processing activities. However, it is worth noting that the challenges of information privacy are not a consequence of changing social norms, but evolving business practices that are largely unknown to users. Information privacy laws should for this reason become more grounded in the ideals of privacy rather than facilitate the reality of large-scale collection and transfers of data.

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### *Biography*

Jockum Hildén is a PhD Candidate in Media and Global Communications at the Department of Social Research, University of Helsinki, Finland. In his dissertation he studies the evolution of data protection policy in the EU by examining the legislative process of the new General Data Protection Regulation. The research aims to assess the influence of interest groups on information privacy policy and ascertain whether or not their efforts have affected the regulatory output of the EU institutions.

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*'It's like they're looking inside your body or inside your brain.'* Internet surveillance practices in a special school

*Herminder Kaur*

Abstract

This chapter reflects on the struggle of a small cohort of teenagers with physical disabilities to resist surveillance when they use the internet in a special school, in England. Findings obtained from an ethnographic study with eleven students with physical disabilities in a special school revealed, students internet access and use was under two forms of surveillance, (i) physical and (ii) virtual. Each form of surveillance is discussed with reference to a case study which challenges the idea of the panopticon in the school. The first case study of a young girl, Bruna finds the physical presence of adult staff becoming oppressive and intrusive. She turns to the online realm to find a private space to socialize with friends and family. Her story highlights her daily struggle to resist the physical surveillance she is under when using the internet on her personal device in the school. The second story discusses how a young male named John, comes to learn of the virtual surveillance he is under when he uses a school laptop at home for personal use. The two stories discussed in this chapter draw on the surveillance practices as experienced by teenagers with physical disabilities in a special school. To conclude the article argues the measures of resistance expressed by the students in the school, signal their need and struggle for online privacy, and questions whether extensive measures to monitor students' use of the internet is justified by their disability.

Keywords: Internet, surveillance, disability, teenagers, privacy, resistance

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Kaur, H. (2016) "It's like they're looking inside your body or inside your brain." Internet surveillance practices in a special school', pp. 75-86 in L. Kramp/N. Carpentier/A. Hepp/R. Kilborn/R. Kunelius/H. Nieminen/T. Olsson/P. Pruilmann-Vengerfeldt/I. Tomanić Trivundža/S. Tosoni (Eds.) *Politics, Civil Society and Participation: Media and Communications in a Transforming Environment*. Bremen: edition lumière.

## 1 Introduction

The internet is described as a medium that not only offers significant online opportunities to young people. It is also perceived as a medium that is uncontrollable, unregulated, and one that exposes young internet users to multiple risks (Ey/Cupit, 2011). A perspective repeatedly reproduced by practitioners carrying out policy orientated research with young people, is one that emphasizes the internet should be safe and capital enhancing for every young user. In order to make sure this takes place much research continues to identify what these online risks are, and how they should be and are being managed by various actors such as teachers and parents (O'Neill, Staksrud/McLaughlin, 2013; Livingstone, 2006; Livingstone et al, 2013; Livingstone/Bober, 2005; Cankaya/Odasbasi, 2009; Duerager/Livingstone, 2012). Discourses on internet risks and safety end up presenting young people as vulnerable internet users, unlike responsible adults, parents, educators and governments who represent themselves as active protectors to young people. Youngsters with disabilities are particularly regarded as vulnerable to the internet. As Whittle et al (2013) argue, they may readily trust unfamiliar adults online because they develop trusting relationships with the many adults providing care in offline settings. Furthermore, they may not be as competent as non-disabled adolescents in recognizing their exposure to online grooming, or be able to manage such an encounter in and online or an offline context.

What fails to emerge from these studies, as they rely heavily on large scale surveys, is the diversity among young people and their experiences of managing online risks. The purpose of this chapter is not to delve into online risks, but to examine how the concerns around adolescents exposure to online risks and their online safety shapes the experience of using the internet for teenagers with disabilities in a special school. By discussing counter surveillance strategies adopted by teenage students with physical disabilities in the special school, this chapter supports scholars that challenge the concept of panopticism offered by Michel Foucault (1977) for studying internet surveillance practices in a school. With reference to two participant case studies this chapter highlights the struggle for internet privacy made by teenagers with physical disabilities. Before this is discussed, this chapter begins by providing a discussion on surveillance in schools, followed by a discussion on two forms – physical and virtual.

## 2 Surveillance in schools

In the simplest sense the term surveillance refers to the performance of keeping a close observation on someone (Staples, 2000; Lyon, 1994). Michael Foucault's (1977) famous concept of 'panopticism' has become synonymous with studies on surveillance. Foucault's (1977) work looked at the surveillance practices in a prison design. It was based on the idea that all prisoners would be placed individually in isolated, separate cells of a circular arrangement facing a central tower. The central tower in the middle of the prison would be visible from all cells. It would be from here that the prison guards would be able to monitor the prisoners in their cells whilst they would remain unseen as a light would mask their presence. Foucault (1977) discussed the notion of discipline and power in relation to how the surveillance takes place in this design. The design can be applied to other settings i.e. schools, where the students resemble the prisoners and the tower would represent how a teacher or a supervisor carries out surveillance. It presents how few people i.e. the prison guards/teachers hold the power over many i.e. the prisoners/students. Owing to backlighting the prisoners are unaware of when they are being watched and the guards in the tower can give the impression that they are constantly keeping a watch on the prisoners. This results in "a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault, 1977, p. 201). Because the tower from which they are being watched is directly in front of the prisoners, they internalize the notion of always being watched and start to measure their own behaviour against how they should be behaving according to the guards (or teachers in the school context). "It is a profound understatement to say that the panopticon dominates the study of surveillance." (Haggerty, 2006, p. 25). Although the concept of the panopticon has been disputed, it has also aided studies that have looked at surveillance in schools (Hope, 2005). Markus (1993) has noted the architectural design of schools has facilitated easy monitoring of large numbers of students by few teachers. This also takes place through the installation of CCTV cameras and ID cards in surveillance schools, which are used to detect, group and follow the movement of pupils (Taylor, 2013).

Over the years the panopticon has received much scrutiny, leading scholars to formulate alternative concepts. One attempt, as noted by Landahl (2013), is the concept of the synopticon. As discussed by Mathiesen (1997), this concept draws on the argument that many people can surveil a small number of people rather than a few people placing many others under surveillance. Hence the power asymmetry is not held by the few people but by the many. In a classroom scenario, for example, surveillance is unidirectional; the teacher is clearly visible to the students and therefore the many students can watch the few teachers, allowing them to know exactly when they are being monitored or are

likely to be monitored. As the teachers are visible to students, they in turn can gaze at them, which allows the students to know when they have the opportunity to resist by behaving in the ways the gaze of the teachers would encourage them to behave in. Gallagher (2010) found the concept of the panopticon to be insufficient when applying it to the surveillance taking place in the classroom. His study found surveillance by teachers is not constant and therefore open to resistance and does not simply operate on the basis of vision but also through hearing and sound. In contrast this study found, surveillance was constant in the classroom, students were not permitted to be without the supervision of an adult staff. Hence opportunities to resist or challenge the surveillance during lessons were unlikely. Hope (2005) looked at how students become subject to surveillance in schools when using the internet. His study also showed students actively resist school surveillance by minimizing their screens, and instead of internalizing constant surveillance, they actively tested teacher authority. In contrast, this study found that as there were many members of staff present in a classroom at a given time, the students would not be able to test the authority of all the staff members. Evidence of this taking place with physically disabled teenagers was again absent. While this section has just touched upon some of the shortcomings of the panopticon, it needs to be said there are a number of other critiques made in relation to the concept. However, this chapter recognizes the concept is multifaceted and that despite its shortcoming has not gone away (Lyon, 2006).

The concept of the panopticon has been used to see how far schools are panoptic (Gallagher, 2010) while the studies above have looked at mainstream school surveillance practices. This study uses the concept to observe the different ways the surveillance practices seen in relation to internet use in a special school for teenagers with physical disabilities diverge from panoptic surveillance. This study has found that the students want to use the internet privately without being under surveillance. In order to ensure this, they adopt measures to resist surveillance practices in the school when using the internet for personal use.

This chapter refers to the definition of surveillance by Lyon (2007), which claims that it must be “focused, systematic and routine” and pay “attention to personal details for purposes of influence, management, protection or direction” (Lyon, 2007, p. 14). The surveillance practices taking place in the school were not casual, occasional or spontaneous but purposeful and systematic. Furthermore, they were embedded in everyday routine life hence they were normalized for those doing the surveillance as much as for those subject to it. The different surveillance practices noted in an ethnographic study in a special school are clustered under two names. The first is physical surveillance, which refers to the ways internet use was under the surveillance of the watchful eyes

of adults in the school. The second is virtual, which means the surveillance of students' online activities by the school through different online software programmes it had subscribed to.

The following sections present two case studies to outline each of the surveillance practices played out in the lives of two teenager students with physical disabilities.

### 3 Physical internet surveillance

Life in a special school for students with physical disabilities entailed being surrounded and watched over by numerous members of staff. As the school catered to students with a diversity of special needs and abilities, it employed a large number of adult teaching assistants to assist students throughout the day with learning and care. The constant presence of many members of staff throughout the day becomes normalized, as their teaching, caring and assisting of the students is embedded in their daily school life routine. Class sizes in a special school consist of a small number of students, each with differing levels of abilities and ages. They consist of up to eight students and at least five members of staff. Hence when students in the school accessed the internet, it mostly took place with a member of staff caring to their needs, teaching them, or helping them to access or use the internet on a device. The arrangement of the classroom computers was designed to allow members of staff to view with ease all students working on the screens. Hence the first way in which the students in the school became subjected to surveillance is through the physical observation conducted by members of staff. This observation was eased by positioning school computers and laptops close to one another, thus allowing a member of staff working with students to overlook more than one screen, while they were assisting one student.

While peers could also overlook fellow students' screens when using the internet in class, there was no strong evidence of this taking place. Since the number of adults would match or even outnumber the students in the classroom, the need for students to monitor each other did not arise. Group work on the internet rarely took place. A common time to see a group of students around an internet device was during break times. As students were not permitted to use personal devices for internet use, students would keep a watch on which member of staff was nearby when using their personal devices that went against school rules. Some members of staff would be more lenient than others in allowing students to openly use their devices for online games. However, others were not. The proximity of a member of staff to a student using an internet device would determine the student's online activity. This shows physical surveillance was not unidirectional - while the staff were watching the

students, the students too were keeping a watch on staff to find a moment they could engage in online activities they would not be able or willing to partake in if teaching staff were present. For students without personal internet enabled devices a room with school computers was made available for them to use under the surveillance of teaching assistants overlooking their online activities. In both scenarios the behaviour of student groups around a screen could give insights into their use of the internet. If a group of students huddled around a computer screen raised their voices, this often attracted a member of staff to physically surveil what was being watched on the screen. Hence, like Gallagher (2010), this study also found sound is imperative to surveillance and not only vision her condition limits her to stretch in her chair. In order to illustrate the bearing of physical internet surveillance and its implications particularly on teenagers, let's look at one participant named Bruna. The case study reveals the ways in which being under physical surveillance in the school leads her to finding ways to access and engage in private internet use.

#### *Bruna's tactical approach towards internet use*

At school, like many students, Bruna is a user of an electronic wheelchair; her ability to move and stretch is limited when in her chair. In a daily scenario this may mean she needs to ask someone to turn on the desktop computer power switch if located out of her reach. There is always a member of staff close by to help with physical assistance. She explains "you know in this school you can't do anything without staff. It's like you don't have your personal [space], [...] you don't have a time where you're not with a staff [member]." She further elaborates, when in the rare situation a member of staff is not around she feels "a bit more free, not like under control." Being in a classroom where the ratio of staff to students is roughly equal, at break and lunch times, too, the students are surrounded by staff members. This makes it difficult for students to find a moment where they can be without the presence of adult staff. In such an environment, where Bruna is constantly feeling the presence of adult staff and "hates" attending school as the entire day is spent indoors and in classrooms. She claims "breaks and lunches are meant to be for when you get a time away from your classroom but like all day being in a classroom in the environment of a classroom it's awful." For students like Bruna, going outside to play is unfeasible. She spends most of her time conversing with teaching assistants in lessons and is unwilling to spend her break time doing the same, but has little liberty to do much else. One means of escape is the internet.

During break times Bruna would whizz to the toilets to use her iPod connected via the school wireless internet connection to access the internet privately. This gives her the opportunity to hold a conversation on applications

like Kik and Touch which are designed for free online chats. She would engage in conversations with her friends from the local temple, her cousins and a close male friend who has moved on to college. As Bruna is not able to spend all her time in the school toilets, she continues to seek ways once out of the toilets cubicle to use her iPod to get online. She does this by monitoring the numbers of staff members around her and where they are positioned. To avoid the attention of numerous staff members on duty, she would turn herself towards a corner or position herself away from adults, finding a wall to position herself against in order to avoid a member of staff standing behind her that would glare down at the screen of her iPod as she would pretend to use it for online games.. She looks for reasons to move from one area to another in the school so she can check her device while on the move, or if lucky when in a room without an adult. She also rushes to the toilets as breaks come to an end before members of staff arrive there with students to assist them in the washroom.

While Bruna does not engage in any activity on her iPod that one could object to i.e. chatting to strangers, she does have a reason why she avoids the physical surveillance of the school staff, which is not related to landing herself in trouble by violating school rules prohibiting the use of personal devices in school. Bruna explains:

Not that I do anything wrong, I just don't want them to see it because they already, they already look at half of my life in school actually all of my life in school and know everything about me, plus on my iPod, it's like there should be a privacy point, they've already passed it but I can't let them go through this...you know everything about me, you are always next to me, always got your eyes on me, what more do you want? It's like there're looking inside your body or inside your brain, trust me I hate it, it's like I hate the fact that there's staff everywhere.

For Bruna, internet access is not just about escape it is about her struggle to maintain a private space in her life to socialize with peers that she lacks offline and feels she can maintain online.

#### 4 Virtual Internet surveillance

Coupled with the physical surveillance that takes place in the special school is virtual internet surveillance. An array of computer mediated observation tools exist that the special school has ascribed to in order to track and restrict the students' online activity. Online activities are logged by devices in cyberspace. As explained by Hope (2005), the computers used to access the internet also carry much information about an individual's online activities. If the student arouses the suspicion of a member of staff, all they need to do is use a few clicks of the mouse to open up the recent history of websites visited or the stored list

of documents downloaded from the Web that have been accessed. In schools, staff can also examine student computer accounts to see whether they have stored any unsuitable material on the school computer hard drive. However, during interviews with computer technicians in the school, they mentioned the various means by which students online activities can be checked but provided no incidents where they resorted to such practices. This is because, as one member of staff argued, most online activities are noticed through physical surveillance. When interviewing many members of staff and questioning how they physically monitor the students use of the internet in lessons the findings revealed there was a general consensus amid staff members that the filter software blocks many inappropriate and even appropriate sites, which heavily restricts what the students can access from the school computers, thus making their job of physical surveillance of students' use of the internet a lot more relaxed. Furthermore, as the school caters to students with different abilities, the staff normally know which students can be mischievous online and therefore they keep a closer eye on those students.

Social networking sites popular among youngsters like Facebook and YouTube are blocked from school computers. Local Educational Authorities make it compulsory for schools to use filter software to ensure students internet safety. However, this restricts students' use of many internet sites (Valcke et al, 2011; Barrow, 2006). For example, once when a student in a lesson carried out a search to find images of nuts (food item), the search engine prevented the site from showing the results. This confused the students and stopped them from completing the class task. The class teacher explained the word nuts can have inappropriate connotations, hence images may have appeared which may have upset the students had results from the search been accessible.

Meeder (2005) notes that by adopting software filters that block sites which may be considered inappropriate, schools may also be preventing students from accessing sites which are clean and educational. Aston and Brzyska (2012) have noted the internet is creating challenges for teachers. This study found this challenge stems from managing how much surveillance is sufficient for the students to enjoy the educational benefits of the internet but also from the stark differences in teachers' perceptions of what is educational and inappropriate online. We can refer to Lim et al (2013) to raise the concern placed over the misuse of the internet and the potentially grave harm it may bring to students in this school.

It was noted when students from the special school had access to internet enabled computers from different sites i.e. mainstream colleges which did not block or restrict their access to social networking sites or video channels the students still avoided using these sites, fearing their online activities on those devices may be monitored. They were worried they might land themselves in a different kind of trouble which they were not aware of yet, or the staff may

be able to see those online activities they would prefer to keep private. In presenting the case study of John, we can see some students internalized this fear of surveillance since he became reluctant to access and use certain online sites on a laptop provided by the school for use at home.

#### *Avoiding the use of school internet devices*

John has a condition that affects his coordination, movement and vision. This makes working on a computer screen difficult and he often requires a magnifier to be able to view his on screen activities. John is provided with a laptop by the school to work on and take home as it comes with a visual software to magnify what is displayed on the screen when needed. Sometimes it takes much longer for John to read and view all the contents of the webpage when using the internet. Many features go unnoticed as he focuses on features present on the screen that are of interest to him. This has led John to some difficulty with the school. His mum recalls a time when she was invited to the school after seeing that the virtual surveillance software, installed on John's laptop by the school, had detected that John had viewed pornographic material. His mum was well aware that he must have done this by accident if he was aware at all of such material appearing on his screen. In his argument John explains he was visiting a gaming website and a box popped up on his screen with such material from the site he was using. He had no intention of viewing the material nor did he. John realized even when using safe internet sites he could land himself in trouble because it would show he was doing something inappropriate online. In order to avoid such a situation, John started to restrict his online activities on the school laptop as he did not want the school finding out what he does online outside of school.

John had little understanding of how this internet surveillance system worked until he found himself once again being called into the principal's office. When using the laptop at home, John realized he was able to access the websites that would be otherwise blocked in school. He continued logging onto his favourite social networking site until his private messages, which he was exchanging with a friend online, were flagged up and sent to his school principle. The principle brought up his entire conversation with his friend and John tried hard to explain that though it was being interpreted as inappropriate, the conversation was nothing more than teenage banter. After this experience John realized that even when he thinks his activities online are private, he really has no privacy at all when accessing the internet from home on the school device. This experience left him feeling cautious, weary and annoyed with the school. Today John strictly limits his activities on the school laptop to educational use and does not use it outside of school. Instead he uses his personal

computer and tablet for personal use, thereby avoiding school surveillance and maintaining his online privacy. Even during break times, he connects his personal internet device to the school Wi-Fi connection, and switches between his Facebook chats and a music application when a member of staff is close by. By plugging in his earphones and quietly engaging with his tablet, he attracts little attention and gives the impression he is listening to music or playing games on his device. By accessing the internet during school breaks, it allows him to socialise briefly with his friends online that have moved on from the school.

## 5 Does disability justify Internet surveillance?

This chapter has raised many points. Firstly, internet surveillance takes place in many ways, physical as well as virtual. Secondly, surveillance practices are not always panoptic, measures to resist surveillance can be implemented by those under surveillance as was also found by Gallagher (2010) and Hope (2005). Students were able to engage in resisting and challenging these practices by avoiding the use of the internet when it is under surveillance, and accessing it in ways which would ensure their online activities remain private. The smartness of the students that are able to resist and challenge the surveillance practices in the school raises the question of whether disability justifies the level of surveillance the students in the school become subjected to. These two forms of internet surveillance, whether combined or taking place individually, constrain the way in which the youngsters in this study were able to access but also use the internet. However, the study found the majority of the students in the school were unable to engage in resisting the physical and virtual gaze. As the school catered to students of different abilities, some students benefitted from the protection the surveillance practices provided them. Those students that were able to some degree resist the gaze of school staff or learn about how their online activities were being monitored and tracked through online surveillance were able to actively engage in measures to maintain their internet access and privacy. Issues of online privacy are embedded in everyday life. This study has tried to understand where those issues fit into the lives of young physically disabled students. Privacy is a multidimensional concept and challenges excessive surveillance (Bennett, 2008). At root the term privacy means the extent to which individuals have control over personal information (Kanter et al, 2012). While much policy research, as shown by Steeves and Jones (2010), has been concerned with youngsters' personal data being collected online by market driven organisations in a way that raises concerns for their data protection and privacy, this study has found out that the participants are not only concerned about disclosure of information online. Rather, they would like to have control over where, when and to whom information concerning their internet access

is disclosed. Boyd (2014) argues that privacy is important for marginalized groups, and this study agrees. Hence teenagers in this study consistently tried out new ways to resist the control or to avoid it altogether. When they were unable to resist it being exerted by educators through surveillance practices, it was perceived as a form of oppression by the students.

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## Biography

Herminder Kaur completed her Master's degree in Social Research at University of Warwick in 2012. After which Herminder secured a three year funded scholarship from the Graduate School at Loughborough University to study for a PhD. Whilst at Loughborough University, Herminder has been a co-convenor for the Culture and Media Analysis Research Group. She has also taught across various undergraduate modules that focused on social research methods, communication, media and cultural theory. She has been a visiting lecturer at Bishop Grosseteste University, teaching content analysis and sociology of the moving image with a focus on British television. Herminder's research interests centre on understanding the uses of the internet by teenagers with physical disabilities. There are four key themes in her research: the enactment of disability; internet surveillance and its resistance; the rhythmic practices of internet use and how it is that teenagers build and maintain relationships online.

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# What is a decision? A post-structuralist exploration of the trinity of decidedness, undecidedness and undecidability

*Nico Carpentier*

## Abstract

Decidedness has been celebrated in many societal spheres as the unquestioned, fetishized and ultimate moment of the exercise of political agency, where political or business leaders wield their powers and authorities. Conversely, the failure to decide, undecidedness, is seen as the failure of political agency, of leadership, and of politics or business itself. This chapter offers a more nuanced perspective on decidedness and undecidedness, by exploring their interdependent relationship, grounded in a deconstructive strategy. The relationship between these binary opposites will be enriched and deepened by introducing a third notion, undecidability, which is a broader concept that describes the ontological impossibility of a discursive order to ultimately fixate reality. In the first parts of the chapter, the usages of decision and indecision, decidedness and undecidedness, are discussed in combination with an explanation of the notion of undecidability as it has been developed in post-structuralist theory (in particular, in Laclau and Mouffe's discourse-theoretical framework). These reflections provide support for the definition of the decision as a temporary fixation, which does not escape from the context of undecidability. It is this context that produces undecidedness. Decidedness should not be discredited either, as –despite its limitations– it remains a requirement for the political to function and a significant driving force. The importance of decidedness, and the coping strategies developed to deal with its failures, is theorized in the last part of the chapter, by reverting to the psychoanalytical concept of the fantasy. The conclusion then invokes the idea that in order to understand the social and the political, we need the conceptual strength of the trinity of decidedness, undecidedness and undecidability.

*Keywords:* decision, indecision, decidedness, undecidedness, undecidability, post-structuralist theory, discourse theory, leadership

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## 1 Introduction

In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.

Theodore Roosevelt (quoted in Manganelli/Hagen, 2003, p. 11)

The concept of the ‘decision’ is frequently used in academic writing, but despite some of the work in political and organisational theory, it is often invoked without much reflection or consideration for its meanings, as they are seen to be part of the realm of everyday language. Examples of this frequent usage can be, for instance, found in the fields of government and business (studies), where the decision and decision-making are (obviously) omnipresent. Also in organisational sociology, the notion of the decision features at the many different levels that organisations have (and are studied). To give one more example, in Hartley’s (2012, p. 121) *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies: The Key Concepts*, he defines the gatekeeper as follows: “[...] the gatekeeper refers to key decision-making personnel in the choice of which news stories will be published, with what prominence.”

The definitional vagueness in relation to the decision is not without consequences, as it leads to the underestimation of the complexities of this notion, in particular, when we accept the existence of a context of contingency and indeterminacy, which we can also label a context of undecidability. The challenge then becomes one of reconciling the notion of the decision, which implies fixity, and the context of undecidability, which implies unfixity. Here, it is important to first clarify a terminological issue. The notions of ‘decision’ and ‘indecision’ are used in this chapter to refer to the act of deciding (or not deciding), while ‘decidedness’<sup>1</sup> and ‘undecidedness’ refer to the state of being able to decide, or not. These four concepts are all situated at the ontic level<sup>2</sup>. Undecidability, in contrast, is located at the ontological level. Through this confrontation of these four concepts at the ontic level, with the context of undecidability at the ontological level, we can strengthen the definitional grounds of the decision (and the related concepts), and offer a better understanding of these notions.

In order to further deepen this analysis, and to underline the complexities embedded in the notion of the decision, a third concept will be introduced, namely the decision’s opposite –indecision. As will be argued later, undecidedness<sup>3</sup> is often represented as a problematic notion, referring to the incapacity

1 Another concept – ‘decisiveness’ - is not used in this chapter.

2 This chapter uses the distinction between the ontic and the ontological, where the ontic refers to the world of concrete practices, while the ontological “concerns the very way society is instituted.” (Mouffe, 2005, p. 9)

3 (In)decision is used here to refer to the act of deciding (or not), while (un)decidedness refers to the ontic (im)possibility of deciding.

of decision-makers to reach a decision, which is in turn articulated as a failure. Decidedness has been celebrated in many societal spheres as the unquestioned, fetishized and ultimate moment of the exercise of political agency, where leaders in politics or business (whether they are traditional or not, authoritarian or democratic, directive or delegative) wield their powers and authorities. Conversely, the failure to decide, undecidedness, is seen as the failure of political agency, of leadership, and of politics or business itself. If we return to our context of undecidability, the argument can be made that undecidability produces undecidedness, which should lead us to reconsider the latter's negative connotations. Moreover, this approach also leads us to reconsider the notion of decidedness itself, and emphasize its limits without ignoring its necessary existence to create (temporary) fixations<sup>4</sup> and stabilities.

This conceptual analysis is embedded in a discourse-theoretical framework (showing its capacity to rethink key notions like the decision, which is relevant for a wide variety of academic fields – including communication and media studies), and driven by a deconstructive strategy. The former is closely related to Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) work, while the latter remains within shouting distance of Derrida's interpretation of the deconstruction, as is summarized by Culler (1982, p. 86): "to deconstruct a discourse is to show how it undermines the philosophy it asserts, or the hierarchical oppositions on which it relies ...". At the same time, I consciously move away from the focus on the deconstruction of a particular text, inspired by the work of authors working in the discourse-theoretical tradition (Norval, 1996; Howarth, 2000), in order to discuss the theoretical (and interdependent) workings of the binary oppositions of decidedness and undecidedness. Undecidedness thus becomes identified as the weak side of the binary opposition of decidedness/undecidedness (and their materializations of decision/indecision), arguing that undecidedness is necessary and unavoidable. The argument is not that decidedness is non-existent or undesirable – after all, this is a deconstruction, and it is "not destruction, is not annihilation, is not negative" (Derrida, 1999, p. 77) – but that decidedness is dependent on, and intimately connected with its counterpart, undecidedness. Moreover, the relationship between these binary opposites will be enriched and deepened through the third notion, undecidability, which is a broader concept that describes the ontological impossibility of a discursive order to ultimately fixate reality.

The first part of the chapter shows how the notions of decision and indecision feature in a variety of academic and cultural fields. Then we will shift to a more theoretical discussion, clarifying the notion of undecidability, as it has been developed in post-structuralist theory. After this, we can reconsider the

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4 The notion of the 'fixation' is a discourse-theoretical concept (see later). In this theoretical context, it does not have the connotation of neuroticism that it sometimes has in everyday language.

notions of decision and indecision, as their positioning in the ontological context of undecidability also clarifies and enriches their meanings. Even though, ultimately, total decidedness can never be reached, it remains a requirement for the political<sup>5</sup> to function and a significant driving force. We should be careful not to discredit decidedness either. Its importance, and the coping strategies developed to deal with its failures are theorized in part 5, by reverting to the psychoanalytical concept of the fantasy.

## 2 Evaluating the decision

Political theory has traditionally placed a strong emphasis on the notion of the decision, and its connection to power in decision-making processes. This tradition placed decision-making within the framework of rationality, where rational actors are concerned to identify problems and the factors that influence these problems, investigate the alternatives for resolving the problems and select the option that maximizes benefits and minimizes costs (Riemer/Simon, 1997, p. 308). Within this framework, these rational actors are also deciding actors, who exercise their power. Here, Weber's (1947, p. 152) understanding of power, as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests," shows the connection between the power and the decision ("carrying out his [sic] own will"). Also with later authors we can find this connection: Dahl's (1957, pp. 202-203) definition ("A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do") similarly emphasizes overt decisions. In later critiques of these approaches, the notion of the decision becomes more explicit, for instance in the work of Bachrach and Baratz (1962), with their emphasis on covert decisions (or non-decisions), which prevent decision-making or exclude subjects or participants from the process, and Lukes' (1984) analysis which connects power to latent decisions (or no-decisions) that persuade people to act against their own (class) interest.

One concept that can be used to show the significance of the decision (in combination with power differences) is the notion of leadership. Although many different forms of leadership can be distinguished<sup>6</sup>, the leadership con-

5 Following Mouffe (2005, p. 9), the political refers to the "dimension of antagonism [that is] constitutive of human societies", while politics is "the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organising human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political."

6 See, for instance, the difference between authoritarian and democratic leadership developed by Lewin and his colleagues (Lewin and Lippitt, 1938; Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939; Lewin, 1950; White and Lippitt, 1960), and the difference between directive and delegative leadership described by Bass and Bass (2008, p. 460).

cept, and the ways it highlights the importance of individuals (and organisations) in making decisions, is omnipresent in theory and practice. Writing from an anthropological perspective, Lewis (1974, p. 3) observes: “Whether or not a society has institutionalized chiefs, rulers, or elected officials there are always, in any society, leaders who initiate action and play central roles in group-decision-making.” In more traditional (19th and first half of the 20th century) approaches, leadership was mainly seen as a unidirectional process, where the leader controlled the decision-making process, “impressing the will of the leader and inducing obedience” (Bass/Bass, 2008, p. 24). This locates the decision with the leader. Weber’s (1947) classic distinction between charismatic, traditional and rational legal authority can be seen as an illustration of these logics, as it takes the legitimization (strategies) of the decision-making of particular persons or institutions as starting point (in all three cases, but mostly in the first two). When focussing more on democratic theory, we can find another illustration of the decision (the ‘power to decide’) located with the leadership, namely in Schumpeter’s definition of democracy. In the 1940s, Schumpeter (1976, p. 269) defined democracy in the following way: “the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.”

Later, organisational leadership models changed (without their diversity disappearing) and leadership became (in an organisational context) more geared towards “the ability to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute to the effectiveness and success of the organisations of which they are members” (House et al., 2004, p. 15, quoted in Bass/Bass, 2008, p. 23). From a media studies perspective, Sánchez-Taberner (2006), for instance, refers to leaders as “builders of great teams”. Also in discussions of political leadership, the emphasis is placed more on how “leaders and followers are involved in a circular process of motivation and power exchange that is often difficult to break up into a causal sequence,” although leaders are still seen to “mobilize a significant number of followers to accept their diagnosis of, and policy prescriptions for, collective problems or crises,” (Masciulli/Molchanov/Knight, 2013, p. 4) which returns us to the importance of the decision. Some, such as Molchanov (2013, p. 48), would argue that the decision has only increased in importance: “The importance of individual decision-making – the ability to take charge, to act quickly and decisively – increases as demands for political accountability are voiced across the world.”

Despite their differences, these models have the explicit or implicit tendency to articulate the decision as the core component of (applying) power, which also impacts on how decidedness and, in particular, undecidedness is articulated (and problematized). In some cases, the nature of (some) decisions is of course deemed problematic (e.g., because they go against the self-interest

of an actor, see Lukes (1984), or because of their destructive nature), and particular types of leader are considered more prone to taking these problematic decisions. Moreover, in contemporary political theory, there is a considerable focus on the limits of reason. As Weimann and Kaplan (2011, p. 171) put it: “Sometimes decisions can be based on well-defined data and their clear implications, but many decisions, and these among the most important ones, must rest only on vague impressions and trust in one’s judgment. Reason has a part to play throughout, but the part may be no more than a supporting role.”

But the inverse idea becomes easily problematized, when there is an absence of a decision, not because of a conscious political strategy, but because of the mere incapacity to reach a decision, or in other words, when there is undecidedness, defined as the ontic impossibility of deciding. Through this problematization, undecidedness becomes synonymous with failure and impotence, in sometimes subtle ways. For instance, in organisational theory, when Bass and Bass (2008, p. 460 – my emphasis) describe the directive-delegative continuum, they describe the (delegative) “extreme of the continuum” as a situation where “some leaders may completely abdicate their responsibilities.” In political theory, we can find another illustration in the work of Deutsch (1978), who distinguishes between ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ leaders, and describes the personal qualities of the latter as having weak and indecisive personalities, while they were disconnected from the ‘spirit of the times’.

Also, in political practice we can find these problematizations of undecidedness. One major location for the articulation of undecidedness is that of populist projects. These projects are characterized by “a particular logic of articulation” (Laclau, 2005, p. 33) that creates an opposition between the people and the elite, where the old elite is seen as disconnected from the people – unable to represent it – and needs to be replaced by the new political (populist) movement (which is still among the people). One of the populist rhetorical strategies for critiquing the political ‘establishment’ is to point to their inability to decide (and to move towards radical change). An example can be found in the acceptance speech for the Free Speech Award by the leader of the Dutch populist Freedom Party (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*) Geert Wilders in which he presented his ideas on: “ten things we would have to do to stop the Islamization of the West” (PVV, 2009). The tenth item on his list was: “Get rid of the current weak leaders. We have the privilege of living in a democracy. Let’s use that privilege and exchange cowards for heroes. We need more Churchills and fewer Chamberlains.” (PVV, 2009)

One other location for the critiques on undecidedness is the cultural sphere. Terry Gilliam’s 1985 dystopian film *Brazil* relentlessly exposes the impact of an authoritarian bureaucratic system (Wheeler, 2005, p. 99; Mathews, 1988, p. 22), which can only be escaped through death or madness. But at the same time the film represents the undecidedness within this authoritarian

bureaucratic system, whether it involves taking simple administrative decisions, exemplified by the main character's boss, Mr. Kurtzmann (played by Ian Holm), who is described by Wheeler (2005, p. 99) as "the archetypal slave to the system: a scared and paranoid individual who locks himself away in his office rather than face a reality outside that terrifies him", whether it concerns dealing with problems (with a wrongful arrest or with the failing apartment heating system of Sam Lowry, the main character (played by Jonathan Pryce), or whether it concerns dealing with the revolt, the terrorist resistance movement(s) and the renegade plumber Archibald 'Harry' Tuttle (Robert de Niro)). One scene contains a subtle reference to undecidedness when Sam Lowry is promoted to the Department of Information Retrieval, and receives a present from his mother. When he, during his first day in the office, unpacks the present, it turns out to be an 'Executive decision-maker', a tool which has a plunger that can be dropped to fall to one side of a divider, with one side marked 'yes', and the other side 'no'.

Also Shakespeare's work contains structural critiques on undecidedness. Here, apart from Hamlet, Macbeth (Shakespeare, 2009) – the tragedy about the Scottish general - comes to mind, as a timeless representation of self-doubt and undecidedness, and the damage it can cause. After hearing a prophecy from three witches predicting he will be king of Scotland, and spurred on by his wife, the ambitious Macbeth murders King Duncan to take his throne. Indecisive as King Macbeth is, Lady Macbeth "tips the scales in favour of manly action." (Sadowski, 2003, p. 276) Further prophecies trigger more uncertainties and anxieties, and Macbeth continues to eliminate possible contenders and becomes a tyrannical leader. In the play, there are repeated references to his inability to decide and to his doubts as to whether he will lose the throne again. For instance, when Macbeth hears that Banquo's son, Fleance, another possible contender to the throne, has not been killed together with Banquo, he says: "But now I am cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in / To saucy doubts and fears [...]" (Shakespeare, 2009, p. 62) These fears materialize, as Macbeth is defeated by an army raised by Duncan's son, Malcolm, who is joined by Macduff, the Thane of Fife, who kills Macbeth in battle.

### 3 The context of contingency/undecidability

In order to bring in the logics of contingency and undecidability, I want to employ a discourse-theoretical framework, and more specifically Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, because their theoretical model provides a toolbox that can be used to analyze the social within the dynamics of fixity and fluidity, emphasizing contingency and undecidability while allowing sufficient space for its (temporary) fixation.

In order to initiate the discussion on undecidability, we can point to Laclau and Mouffe's concept of articulation, which brings in the logics of contingency and undecidability at the level of discourse itself. Articulation is seen as "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice" (Laclau/Mouffe, 1985, p. 105). The articulation of elements (or moments) produces discourses that gain a certain (and very necessary) degree of stability. Discursive stability is enhanced by the role of privileged signifiers, or nodal points. Torfing (1999, pp. 88–89) points out that these nodal points "sustain the identity of a certain discourse by constructing a knot of definite meanings." Simultaneously, the field of discursivity has an infinite number of elements, which are not connected to a specific discourse at a given moment in time. Instability enters the equation through the idea that these unconnected elements can always be articulated within a specific discourse, sometimes replacing (or disarticulating) other elements, which affects the discourse's entire signification. Due to the infinitude of the field of discursivity and the inability of a discourse to permanently fix its meaning and keep its elements stable, discourses are liable to disintegration and re-articulation.

In discourse theory, contingency and undecidability are not only intra-discursive, but also generated by an inter-discursive political struggle. Discourses are often engaged in struggles, in an attempt to attain hegemonic positions over other discourses and, thus, to stabilize the social. Through these struggles, "in a field crisscrossed by antagonisms" (Laclau/Mouffe, 1985, pp. 135-136), and through attempts to create discursive alliances, or chains of equivalence (Howarth, 1998, p. 279), discourses are altered, which produces contingency. In contrast, when a discourse eventually saturates the social as a result of a victorious discursive struggle, stability emerges. Laclau and Mouffe use the concept of hegemony for this stability, a concept that they borrow from Gramsci. Originally, Gramsci (1999, p. 261) defined this notion as referring to the formation of consent rather than to the (exclusive) domination of the other, without however excluding a certain form of pressure and repression: "The 'normal' exercise of hegemony [...] is characterized by the combination of force and consent variously balancing one another, without force exceeding consent too much." Following Laclau and Mouffe's interpretation of the concept, Torfing (1999, p. 101) defined hegemony as the expansion of the discourse, or set of discourses, into a dominant horizon of social orientation and action. In this scenario, a dominant social order (Howarth, 1998, p. 279), or a social imaginary, is created, which pushes other meanings beyond the horizon, threatening them with oblivion.

This argument is founded on the claim that hegemonic practices require an open system. In a closed system there would only be repetition, and nothing would be left to hegemonize (Laclau/Mouffe, 1985, p. 134). It takes more than

mere articulation, however, to speak of hegemony. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985, pp. 135-136), hegemony implies that antagonistic practices link elements in so-called chains of equivalence. They claim, “in other words, that hegemony should emerge in a field criss-crossed by antagonisms and therefore suppose phenomena of equivalence and frontier effects. But, conversely, not every antagonism supposes hegemonic practices.” It is important that this stabilization, or sedimentation, is temporal. As Sayyid and Zac (1998, p. 262) formulate it: “Hegemony is always possible but can never be total.” There is always the possibility of resistance, of the resurfacing of a discursive struggle, and of the re-politicization of sedimented discourses, combined with the permanent threat to every discourse of re-articulation. And, again, this generates structural contingency. Citing Mouffe (2005, p. 18): “Every hegemonic order is susceptible of being challenged by counterhegemonic practices, i.e., practices which will attempt to disarticulate the existing order so as to install other forms of hegemony.” Some have argued that the many contestations and de-stabilizations have led to the demise of hegemony itself, as for instance Scott Lash does:

I do not want to argue that hegemony is a flawed concept. I do not want indeed to argue at all against the concept of hegemony. Hegemony as a concept has I think indeed great truth-value. What I want to argue instead is that it has had great truth-value for a particular epoch. I want to argue that that epoch is now beginning to draw to a close. I want to suggest that power now, instead, is largely *post-hegemonic*. (Lash, 2007, p. 55 - emphasis in original)

I would like to argue that hegemony still serves its purpose. Hegemony “remains a central and productive concept in the study of culture, open to further elaboration and practical work” (Brooker, 2003, p. 121) and post-hegemonic theory has “a marked reduction of social complexity [...]. It is strange, however, that the result is viewed as the end of hegemony rather than as a new hegemonic moment.” (Johnson, 2007, p. 102) At the same time, we should continue to argue that undecidability structurally affects hegemonic orders, making it difficult for them to be imposed.

#### 4 From undecidability to decision

If we follow this argumentation, which locates undecidability at the level of the ontological, the question then becomes: what is the role of the decision (and decidedness)? Laclau argues that contingency requires decisions to constantly supersede the undecidability (Laclau, 1996, p. 92). In Laclau’s vocabulary, the notion of the decision refers to the moment of fixation, where discourses are articulated in particular ways and discursive struggles are waged, leading to particular outcomes. This renders it a political process, as Mouffe (2000,

p. 130) formulates it, in her call for a “proper reflection on the moment of ‘decision’ which characterizes the field of politics.” She adds to this idea that the decision – as a moment of fixation – entails “an element of force and violence.” (Mouffe, 2000, p. 130) Another way of understanding this is to refer to Deleuze and Guattari’s (more materialist) metaphor of the machine, which is “a system of interruptions or breaks”, which “is related to a continual material flow [...] that it cuts into” (1984, p. 36 – emphasis removed). For Laclau, the decision is the moment that arrests the continuous flow of meaning and signifiers, bringing it to a (temporal) halt and structuring it in a particular way.

In Laclau’s work, the decision is closely connected to the subject, who is both free to decide and bound by already-created structures. In a long footnote in *Emancipation(s)*, Laclau (1996, p. 18) includes an earlier interview with him, by David Howarth and Aletta Norval. There - summarizing their interpretation of Laclau’s position - the interviewers raise the following question: “The failure of the structure fully to constitute the subject, forces the subject to be subject, *to take a decision*, to act, to identify anew.” (Howarth and Norval, quoted in Laclau, 1996, p. 18 – my emphasis) In his response, Laclau emphasizes that freedom itself “is both liberating and enslaving, exhilarating and traumatic, enabling and destructive,” and he resists an interpretation where being “forced to respond” means that “we are unfree.” (Laclau, 1996, p. 18) At the same time, he agrees with the conclusion of the two interviewers that “the moment of freedom and possibility is simultaneously the moment of my greatest constraint, of unfreedom.” (Howarth and Norval, quoted in Laclau, 1996, p. 18) The decision then becomes what constitutes the subject “who can only exist as a will transcending the structure.” (Laclau, 1996, p. 92) And again, Laclau points to the interrelationship of the decision (the will), decidedness and the structure:

Because this will has no place of constitution external to the structure but is the result of the failure of the structure to constitute itself, it can be formed only through acts of constitution. (Laclau, 1996, p. 92)

In discourse theory, the role of the decision, as a temporary moment of fixation, is also used in relation to the concept of hegemony. A very short and clear formulation can be found in their “Preface to the second edition” of Laclau and Mouffe’s *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, where they write that “One can see hegemony as a theory of the decision taken in an undecidable domain.” (Laclau/Mouffe, 2001, p. xi) Also, on a previous occasion, Laclau, when comparing Derrida’s deconstruction with his approach to hegemony, formulated a similar point, connecting hegemony with the decision which fixates discourses within a context of undecidability:

This is exactly the point at which deconstruction and hegemony cross each other. For if deconstruction discovers the role of the decision out of the undecidability of the structure, hegemony as a theory of the decision taken in an undecidable terrain requires that the contingent character of the connections existing in that terrain is fully shown by deconstruction. (Laclau, 1996, p. 89)

This reflection on the decision, within a context of undecidability, then allows us to return to the discussion on undecidedness. Contingency first of all impacts on the context of the decision, rendering it unstable. If the decision is a temporal fixation of meaning, or - to use Deleuze and Guattari's terms - an (equally temporal) interruption of a flow, then the decision is permanently susceptible to change. Undecidedness, as the ontic impossibility of deciding, then refers to the possibility that every decision can be altered by a new decision. This idea is echoed in Lefort's (1986, p. 305 – emphasis in original) statement that: "This society is *historical society par excellence*", especially in the way that this statement is clarified by Rushton (2013, p. 147): "The decisions made in democracy are never fixed 'for all time'. Rather, they are always historically dependent and have to be instituted under their own weight and at each time anew." From a discourse-theoretical perspective, the impossibility of ultimately fixating the social (with decisions) is seen as a key characteristic of the social. When we shift our gaze from the ontological to the ontic level, undecidedness, just like decidedness, and connected in an intimate relationship with it, then becomes an inherent part of the political, an argument which should caution us against the negative connotations often connected to undecidedness.

The argumentation mentioned above is only partial, as it tends to black-box - to use one of Latour's (1987) conceptual instruments - the decision itself. Without ignoring the contingency of the decision (because of it being embedded in a context of undecidability), we should also acknowledge the presence of undecidability in the decision itself. Again, Deleuze and Guattari's (1984, p. 36) machine metaphor can be used, when they say that "every machine is the machine of a machine," arguing that the machine is a flow itself. It is seen as the law of the production of production: "[...] every machine functions as a break in the flow in relation to the machine to which it is connected, but at the same time is also a flow itself, or the production of a flow, in relation to the machine connected to it." Another way to argue this position is to state that, just like 'fully constituted identities' cannot exist, so 'fully constituted decisions' cannot exist. From this perspective, decisions already contain the seed of indeterminacy engrained in them, for instance, because it is impossible to perfectly represent them through language. In Laclau's (2000, p. 70) words, we have to take the "autonomization of the signifier" into account. Or to use more Lacanian language, the Real is seen always to resist its representation. But also the always immanent possibility of interpretational differences, as thematized by Hall (1980) within the field of Cultural Studies, destabilizes the decision as

such. From a more materialist perspective, decisions are undermined by the equally persistent presence of the resistances that decisions provoke, as Foucault (1978) and de Certeau (1984) have argued.

One final addition to this argumentation is that the identity of the decision-maker is also affected by the context of undecidability. In other words, the subject position of the leader can be articulated in different ways. One example of this is the labels of weak and strong leader, used by Deutsch (1978) in his analysis. Obviously, in social practice (and not only in academic analyses), leaders' identities are also articulated using signifiers related to weakness and strength. This articulation affects the capacity of the decision to be a decision, or to be accepted as a decision. If the subject position of the leader becomes articulated as a "castrated leader" (to use a term Žižek [2000, p. 262] uses), then it is unlikely that the actions of this leader will be transformed into, or accepted as, decisions. In more traditional organisational theory (and research) there are several references to the acceptance of decisions by subordinates, which brings us back to the Weberian discussion on leadership authority and legitimacy. To give one example, Vroom and Yetton (1973, p. 28) refer to the "circumstances in which the leader's decision has high prior probability of being accepted by subordinates," which are grounded in the relationship between leader and subordinates. The argument that is made in this chapter is that the articulation of the subject position of the leader (but also of the subordinates), and its (potential) re-articulations over time and place adds instability to the decision itself.

## 5 Fantasies of decidedness

This discussion then raises questions about the explanation for the positive connotation attributed to decidedness and the negative connotation of undecidedness. Here I would like to introduce the concept of fantasy. In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, which has heavily influenced discourse theory, fantasy is conceptualized as having (among other functions) a protective role (Lacan, 1979, p. 41). In providing the subject with (imaginary) frames that attempt to conceal and finally to overcome the major internal psychic cleavage of the lack (Lacan, 1994, pp. 119-120), fantasy functions as "the support that gives consistency to what we call 'reality'." (Žižek, 1989, p. 44) Subjects "push away reality in fantasy" (Lacan, 1999, p. 107); in order to make the reality (imaginary) consistent, social imaginaries are produced, accepted and then taken for granted. Nevertheless, this ultimate victory remains out of reach, and eventually all fantasies are again frustrated. Their limits become visible, showing the contingency of the social.

In an earlier text (Carpentier, 2011), I have argued that there are three distinct fantasies at work in policy-making: the post-political desire to attain political consensus in the face of social conflict, deploying, in a contradictory manner, strategic power to attain it; the fantasy of social ‘makeability’, based on the belief that political agency (via formal politics) can realize its objectives to impact on (parts of) society – to ‘make a difference’ – and can successfully apply what can be considered as a form of social engineering; and the fantasy of universality, which envisions political and social-cultural unity among citizens but is confronted by manifestations of the non-incorporated particular, and by the Other.

Although more fantasies can be distinguished<sup>7</sup>, it is possible to argue that the cultural importance of decidedness (and the failure to recognize the significance of undecidedness and the context of undecidability) is fed by a cluster of fantasies, made up out of social makeability, political agency and leadership. A more general formulation of the agency fantasy is provided by Contu (2008, p. 370), when she describes it in the following terms: “the fantasy of ourselves as liberal, free, and self-relating human beings to whom multiple choices are open and all can be accommodated.” When applied more to the political and business realm, the agency fantasy is strengthened through the leadership fantasy, envisioning leaders as actors who can solve societal or organisational problems, as they are omnipotent and omniscient (Gabriel, 1999, p. 151). As mentioned before, social makeability refers to the ability of political and business actors to achieve an impact on the social, through their decisions. These three interlocking fantasies establish the decision as the key moment of the exercise of agency and leadership, which has a clear and unilinear impact on the social, whether this is at the macro, meso or micro level. The decision thus becomes an anchorage point for some key desires that define these fields (such as politics and business) and commit people (and resources) to these fields. In this way, the decision can be seen to embody the sense that the political (and politics and business) matter.

## 6 Conclusion

This chapter is a cautionary tale about the decision, which plays a crucial, but sometimes hidden role in political theory and is often engulfed in positivity, driven by the fantasies of social makeability, political agency and leadership (that also affect (academic) theory development). At the same time, the decision is very much needed to halt the incessant flow of the social (and the political), but its fantasmagoric celebration and articulation with the normative first of all blinds us to the importance and unavoidability of undecidedness.

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<sup>7</sup> One example is the unmediated access to the Real. See Carpentier (2014).

Undecidedness exists, because the decision is unstable and changeable, and because the decision itself incorporates undecidedness, as no full and final decision can exist in a context of contingency. The articulation of the decision as positive (and undecidedness as negative) is problematic, because it ignores the complexity of the political and the workings of a series of political fantasies. Moreover, it is equally problematic because it ignores the unavoidability and the democratic importance of the reversibility of decisions, and the absence of full and final decisions that would exclude the possibilities of (re)interpretation and resistance.

But at the same time this chapter has aimed to show the importance of a third concept, which contextualizes both decidedness and undecidedness: namely undecidability. This concept entails the very necessary move into the realm of the ontological, which provides meaning to both decidedness and undecidedness. Undecidability theorizes the inability to reach an ultimate decision, and opens a pathway to acknowledging the importance of undecidedness. In addition, undecidability also allows an emphasis to be placed on the need for the decision, as a temporary fixation, without which the political cannot exist. To paraphrase Laclau and Mouffe (1985, p. 112): the absence of any fixity implies psychosis, but unfixity has to be conceived at both the ontic and ontological level. This then brings us to the conclusion that to understand the social and the political, we need the conceptual strength of the trinity of decidedness, undecidedness and undecidability.

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## Section Two



*civil participation  
in and through the media*

Photo: François Heynderickx



# A competent participant in the new media landscape: Promoting an interdisciplinary perspective

*Joanna Kędra, Anne Laajalahti, Mélodine Sommer  
and Panu Uotila*

## Abstract

Dynamic changes in media technology, society, media consumption and the economy affect the media landscape as well as the role and status of media users who are no longer passive receivers, but active media participants, and thus need to develop appropriate competence areas. We argue that using an interdisciplinary perspective within communication and journalism studies is necessary to address the scope of challenges that new media users are facing. Hence, we propose a palette of competence areas to be achieved, which would include intercultural communication, interpersonal communication and a basic knowledge of ethics, visual literacy, and source criticism abilities. While we understand these competence areas to be strongly intertwined, we elaborate each separately. Throughout this chapter, we raise issues related to (i) the pervasive and unproblematized use of the notion of culture, (ii) the increasingly interactive and interpersonal nature of the new media landscape, (iii) the importance of learning how to interpret visual content, and (iv) the ability to evaluate information accuracy and quality. We conclude that a holistic view, including, but not limited to, communication scholarship and journalism studies is required and needs to be further developed in order to define the characteristics of the new media participant. Directions for future research are suggested in the conclusion.

*Keywords:* intercultural communication competence; interpersonal communication competence; media participant; source criticism; visual literacy

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## 1 Introduction

Dynamic changes related to media technology, the economy, society, and media consumption have characterized the last two decades in the media landscape. Communication with and via media is increasingly visual and interactive, while the borders between professional and amateur news reporting are blurring. These changes influence the role and status of media users (Livingstone, 2004), who are no longer passive receivers, but instead are active participants who create and disseminate content in the global media environment. However, users may not always be fully prepared and competent to follow changes in the media landscape, which includes not only traditional media, but also social media, and digital incarnations of the press, radio, and television. Thus, it is important to determine the kinds of competence areas required to become conscious participants in the new, rapidly changing media environment.

Media education research has mostly focused on media literacy within formal education, as well as on the media usage of children and adolescents through new technologies (Buckingham, 2003). In this chapter, we argue that the new media landscape creates new challenges for all users regardless of their age. The ability to access, create, analyze, and evaluate media contents is a vital life skill for full participation in contemporary society. Thus, we argue that there is an essential need to understand the competence areas media users need to acquire during their lifespan, via either formal education or informal learning.

Interdisciplinary perspectives within communication studies are rarely applied to identify challenges dynamic changes pose in the new media environment. In this chapter, we attempt to bridge this gap by proposing a palette of competence areas that media participants should obtain. We base our argument on our expertise in particular fields of communication and journalism, where many competence areas are frequently discussed separately. We selected the following competence areas as the most crucial for participants in the contemporary media landscape: intercultural communication competence, interpersonal communication competence and a basic knowledge of ethics, visual literacy, and source criticism abilities. Furthermore, while understanding each of these competence areas as being tightly intertwined, we elaborate them individually. We conclude that any attempt to sketch the outlines of the new media participant requires a holistic view of communication scholarship (intercultural, interpersonal, and visual) and journalism studies.

## 2 New requirements for competent media participants

Research in communication competence has examined various life contexts such as working life, formal education, and close relationships (Greene and Burleson, 2003; Hargie, 2006). Previous studies have used different concepts, sometimes synonymously and interchangeably, but also with different meanings. In this chapter, we use the concept ‘competence’ to refer to (i) knowledge and understanding, (ii) skills, and (iii) motivation/attitudes that media participants need to operate in the new media landscape. Thus, following a common definition (see e.g., Spitzberg and Cupach, 2011), we consider that competence consists of (i) cognitive, (ii) behavioural, and (iii) affective dimensions which can be estimated by following two criteria of competence: effectiveness and appropriateness.

Constant dynamic changes characterize the aforementioned competence areas (i.e. intercultural communication competence, interpersonal communication competence, visual literacy, and source criticism abilities), which find a new relevance in the contemporary media environment. In light of changes in practices, novel aspects of these competence areas have emerged and created new competence requirements for media participants. Furthermore, it is no longer possible to distinguish or value one of these competence areas over any other. Instead, each should gain equal attention and be developed simultaneously with others. Thus, this chapter highlights the main features of each of these competence areas and the ways, in which they may complement one another.

### *2.1. Competence requirements in intercultural communication*

The new media environment widens the scope of accessible content, increases opportunities for intercultural interaction, and alters communication practices (Shuter, 2012). Opportunities and challenges associated with such transformations highlight the relevance of developing intercultural communication competence. Media participants are encouraged to critically read representations in their surroundings that have been constructed as “normal” as well as reflect on their own practices and responsibility in either or both reproducing and contesting specific discourses.

The aim of intercultural communication competence is to raise awareness about categories commonly used to explain and classify people’s practices. Particular attention is paid to cultural categories that increasingly punctuate discourses. In urging people to examine “*who makes culture relevant to whom in which context for which purposes*” (Piller, 2011, p. 72), intercultural communication highlights culture as constructed, performed, and permeated with

power. The unproblematic use of the term culture can be especially dangerous given the shift in discourses of racism where explicit mentions of “race” have often been replaced by cultural claims and an emphasis on cultural differences (Essed, 1991). Essentialist views presenting culture as a static attribute have contributed to these new discourses and remain popular across a variety of discourses, including those of media (Sommer, 2014). Professional media have often been criticized for providing biased representations of foreigners and minorities (Fürsich, 2010). Drawing on Edward Said’s (1987) discussion of “*Orientalism*”, numerous studies have explored the ways media represent certain groups as salient and different in ways that sharply contrast with the main normalized group. Urging people to be alert to the way cultural claims are used is an important initial step to acknowledge which particular stories are told and the role that people have in sustaining and revising these narratives.

Opportunities for individuals to create and select content have increased within the contemporary media environment. Intercultural communication competence encourages audiences to select texts that contrast with traditional leanings towards “*banal nationalism*” (Billig, 1995) or essentialist discourses of culture. The pervasive overlapping between the notions of culture and nation has been criticized for sustaining the status-quo concerning practices, discourses, and power structures. (Halualani, Mendoza, and Drzewiecka, 2009.) Questioning and moving past existing cultural categories is elemental to making the most of the varied content available online and to renewing the scope of “*imagined communities*” associated with professional media outlets (Anderson, 1991). The new media environment could offer more visibility to culturally-varied and culturally-sensitive content and thus contrast with one of the major pitfalls of professional media. Studies exploring the geography of news have, for instance, pointed out the overall absence of Africa from foreign news across countries (Wilke/Heimprecht/Cohen, 2012).

As promising as the new media landscape may be, it cannot translate into actual positive outcomes without developing intercultural communication competence holistically. People’s attitudes and motivations are important aspects to consider given the frequent racist outbursts in social media. Occurrences of public shaming as well as explicit hate, race, homophobic, and sexist speech challenge theoretical assumptions about the post-racial or “*colour-blind*” era, and political correctness in the general public discourse (Cisneros/Nakayama, 2015). A key aspect of intercultural communication competence is the willingness to search for similarities. Most cross-cultural approaches emphasize differences between people from different backgrounds by providing causal explanations between culture and behaviour patterns that reinforce, rather than deconstruct, stereotypes. Such a solid approach constrains people into thinking of intercultural communication as communication between cultures rather than individuals. A liquid approach to intercultural communication urges people to

look for and construct similarities that mirror the complexity and diversity of their everyday experiences. (Dervin, 2011) Within the new media landscape, users can build bridges with more people than ever before by focusing on a variety of shared interests and practices. Developing one's motivation to look for commonalities can help build new de-territorialized "*imagined communities*" and counter online expressions of racism.

## *2.2. Competence requirements in interpersonal communication*

In the new media landscape, and especially in social media, communication is increasingly "social" and interactive by definition. Opportunities for commenting on news and media user generated content and for interacting with journalists and other media participants necessitate a new kind of interpersonal communication competence between individuals, and also highlight the importance of interpersonal ethics. Media participants need to have a new kind of knowledge and understanding about possibilities and constraints of technologically-mediated interaction, a variety of interpersonal skills enabling their operation in digital platforms, the motivation to take part in new forms of online interaction, as well as positive attitudes towards new interactive technologies.

Media participants are required to possess interpersonal communication competence to be able to fully engage in the current media-saturated society and to participate in online discussions and various internet communities. Thus, interpersonal communication competence might affect their "*community integration*", which is a process through which individuals form, sustain, and join communities (Friedland, 2008). Being able to integrate in such communities is important since, according to the "*Theory of Peer Community Integration*" (Pörhölä, 2009), peer relationships and communities have an effect on an individual's psychological, physical, and social well-being. Besides spatially proximate and commonly tight internet communities, interpersonal communication competence is required when operating in more spatially dispersed and boundless networks on the internet, or persuading, and taking part in discussions in the digitalized public sphere and in relevant "*issue arenas*" (Vos, Schoemaker, and Luoma-aho, 2014), thus highlighting the importance of such competence in individuals' feelings of empowerment, equality, and democracy.

Castell (2009) contends new forms of online communication include aspects of "*mass self-communication*": communication is self-directed and personal but it may potentially be diffused throughout the world. Interpersonal communication competence is needed to understand these aspects of communication, including self-disclosure and self-presentation, both as a receiver and creator of content. Thus, media participants need to understand the blurred

lines between public and private and, for example, what they are about to share and with whom, how much personal information they are willing to reveal, and how to manage their privacy.

An ability to find and create content as well as to be present and interact with others in the new media environment also creates specific technical and practical requirements for media participants. Besides technology acceptance and technology-related interpersonal communication competence, taking part in online communication necessitates particular nonverbal communication competence. Since, as opposed to face-to-face communication, nonverbal clues are often missing or restricted in the new media environment, individuals need to have competence in expressing their own and interpreting others' emotions and intentions by using alternative means, such as emoticons. The absence or limitation of nonverbal communication and new substitutive, but not yet established, ways of communicating nonverbally online can lead to misunderstandings, emphasizing the importance of interpersonal communication competence.

Social interaction and the possibility to create as well as share contents in the new media environment also highlight the importance of understanding and the willingness to follow ethical principles, or, as Silvennoinen (2015, p. 163) phrases the idea, the desire to act as a good soul. Many researchers have emphasized the ethical aspects of interpersonal communication competence (e.g., Laajalahti, 2014; Spitzberg/Cupach, 2011). In the new media landscape, the ethical requirements include a specific 'netiquette', the correct and acceptable way of communicating on the internet, as well as an ability to plan, reflect, and estimate the ethicality of one's own conduct and communication behaviour. In addition, ethical principles include respecting others, moral responsibility, and a willingness to respect interpersonal trust. However, since hiding behind, stealing, or creating fake identities is quite easy to enact, it lays the ground for individuals to abuse netiquette. In addition, some people upset others by acting as trolls and submitting intentionally offensive and provocative posts with the aim of inciting hate responses. Also other phenomena, such as cyberbullying and harassment, highlight the importance of ethical aspects of interpersonal communication competence in the new media landscape.

### 2.3. *Competence requirements in visual communication*

The claim that we live in a visually stimulated environment is already a cliché. Contemporary learners are expected to demonstrate a high level of visual literacy, that enables them to “*understand (read), and to use (write) images, as well as to think and learn in terms of images*” (Avgerinou, 2001, p. 142). Brumberger (2011) demystifies this assumption when finding out that students

have a very poor ability to identify visual elements in photographs in an interpretation process. Furthermore, she points out that even when the interpretation's guideline was simplified, students were still unable to perform at a high level of visual literacy.

The lack of competence in visual literacy was identified in the late 1960s (Fransecky/Debes, 1972), at which time the visual literacy movement emerged. Since then, visual literacy has been addressed by scholars and educators, who wish to introduce teaching about visuals and their interpretation into the curriculum at different educational levels. Bleed (2005) indicates that because visual media have taken over our daily routines and communication, both at work and while socializing, competence in visual literacy has become essential. However, skills of reading, understanding, and using images are still taken for granted, and do not gain much attention in formal education.

Fostering visual education is also challenged by the difficulty, even impossibility, of measuring visual literacy (Avgerinou, 2001). Nevertheless, the most basic of visual literacy skills, such as the reading, interpretation, and use of images should be included in the curriculum. Visual literacy skills can be developed by a conscious creation and reflective interpretation of both still and moving images. Courses that are not entirely dedicated to working with pictures may, where pertinent, include visual analysis. In addition, informal learning can occur through more conscious everyday interaction with images, such as by attending photographic exhibitions, taking photographs, and evaluating them.

However, contemporary education should be neither purely textual nor solely visual, because as Mitchell (2005, p. 260) argues "*there are no visual media*", and thus, "*all media are mixed media*". Indeed, there are media, such as photography, which mostly involve vision. Photographs appear in a certain context, which is either textual-visual in the press or more interactive on the website. This feature of the new media environment imposes additional challenges to media participants, who should learn to identify all possible modes in media communication. Meanwhile, educators also need to adjust their teaching methods to incorporate these new dimensions.

Nowadays, images travel easily between the various platforms and through different contexts. They often gain political overtones as in the recent case of a photograph of the migrant Syrian child Aylan Al-Kurdi, who drowned in the eastern Mediterranean. Since publication, the photograph has appeared amongst a plethora of media, such as drawings, collages, and posters displayed at mass refugee crisis gatherings. The photograph gained intertextual meaning, which has not only referred to its actual content, but also earned it the status of an icon of the refugee crisis. This example shows the need for media participants not only to view, but also critically approach images, or even create related content (as in the case of drawing competitions based on the photo-

graph of the drowned child). Interpreting and creating visual (or multimodal) media artefacts, and thinking in terms of images requires competence in visual literacy. This need should receive more attention in contemporary education, because “*if we accept that visual literacy is an essential ability for the 21st century, we must teach our students to be visually literate, just as we teach them to be verbally literate*” (Brumberger, 2011, p. 46).

#### *2.4 Competence requirements in source criticism*

The internet, and social media in particular, contains fewer control guidelines, information assessments, and verification methods than traditional media. The amount of information and the speed of its diffusion have increased substantially. Everybody can be a producer of the information, and also deliberate or accidental disseminator of false information and rumours. The absence of filters and control mechanisms on the internet leaves the responsibility of source criticism and evaluation with the media consumer. Social media and user generated content does not necessarily increase our understanding of the surrounding world, because social media platforms, like Twitter and Facebook, favour the short format and strong opinions without context and proper argumentation.

Apart from social media, another changing element in the new media landscape is the way advertising and content marketing adapts the formats and trustworthiness of professional journalistic content. Traditional journalistic normative values like accuracy, balance, authenticity, accountability, and autonomy are now blurring with new kinds of media content as content marketing, brand journalism, and native advertising are becoming increasingly popular both in media production and media usage (Zerfass et al., 2015). The ability to evaluate information accuracy and balance has gained importance, because commercial companies as well as nations and governments involved in media and propaganda wars are trying to win over users to their side (Silvennoinen, 2015).

Due to the risk of inaccurate or biased information available online, competence in evaluating online information quality and the ability to practice source criticism are core skills for every media user (Metzger et al., 2003). Source criticism is an essential part of both the journalistic work process and journalists’ education. However, the audience also need to be capable of asking the essential question of source criticism for every media content: What is this claim based on and how is it argued? (McKane, 2014). Hence, we argue that to be able to participate and communicate as a well-informed member of the information society one must have the ability and motivation to conduct source criticism.

A key competence in source criticism is the ability to evaluate the objectivity of certain information. Westerståhl (1983, p. 403) defines objectivity as “*adherence to certain norms and standards*”. Westerståhl’s understanding of objectivity includes four basic concepts: truth, relevance, balance/non-partisanship, and neutral presentation. Measuring truth and relevance enables an estimate of the factuality of the information, and by measuring balance and neutral presentation it is possible to estimate the impartiality of the information. Objectivity consists of factuality and impartiality.

Hayes, Singer, and Ceppos (2007, pp. 264-275) present ten key questions that can help citizens determine the trustworthiness and usefulness of the information available to them:

- 1) Do I want news and opinion that exclusively agree with my views?
- 2) Do I want news mixed with opinion?
- 3) Do I care whether news and opinion are clearly distinguished from one another?
- 4) Does my source of information facilitate public discourse?
- 5) Does this source break news itself or merely aggregate?
- 6) Are some articles based on first-hand observation rather than secondary sourcing?
- 7) Is my source of news transparent?
- 8) Are the sources used in articles clearly identified?
- 9) Are all sides asked to comment within an article?
- 10) Are errors corrected promptly and prominently?

One aspect of journalism is to unequivocally distinguish between facts and opinions. Since the journalist must undertake a choice of context in which to place the facts, the choice of how to frame the story cannot be anything but subjective (Wien, 2005). We argue that objectivity is a goal that journalists should try to achieve, but can never wholly attain. Source criticism is a technique to evaluate the proximity of content to objectivity. The new media landscape is blurring the lines between journalists and other content producers, which makes source criticism more difficult and more important.

### 3 Conclusion

In this chapter, we mapped the competence areas that are crucial in the new media environment. By combining various communication perspectives (intercultural, interpersonal, visual) and journalism studies, this chapter aimed at enhancing our understanding of new competence requirements brought about by dynamic changes in the new media landscape. However, further interdisciplinary research, including other fields such as education or information and communication technologies, is still needed to better understand these requirements. Such a holistic view could help (i) describe and evaluate recent developments in media usage, (ii) identify users’ practices and needs, and (iii) provide concrete tools to respond to emerging challenges in the new media environment.

In this chapter, our focus was solely on competence areas that individual media participants need. Future research should also explore competence areas that journalists and other communication experts need to successfully operate in the new media landscape. However, communication competence should also be approached as a shared and networked area that is co-created in the relationships between individuals, groups, communities, and nations (Laajalahti, 2014).

Future studies could add more depth to this topic by looking beyond what competence areas need to be acquired and explore how to teach and learn them. Studies should aim at developing concrete strategies for participants of different age groups to build relevant competence areas through both formal and informal learning. Differences between generations are important since the phase of life in which individuals start to use new media forms and devices also shape their attitudes towards them. Thus, it is necessary to also elaborate what kind of media education adults need and who teaches them. (See e.g., Mäkitäinen, 2015.) Since the media landscape keeps evolving, research needs to constantly address emerging challenges and related competence requirements.

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# Rejuvenating the public sphere – The rhetorical arenas of social media

*Eirik Vatnøy*

## Abstract

Social media has become a central research arena within political communication research. However, few qualitative studies have explored the nature of discourse in social media. In this chapter I argue that a rhetorical approach can give us a better understanding of the nature of political discourse in these arenas. By combining rhetorical theory with elements of Anthony Giddens' structuration theory I suggest that the rhetorical arenas of social media can be understood as "social systems" surrounding issues, institutions, physical locations or media platforms in which rhetorical action is structured in a particular way. To illustrate the usefulness of this approach the chapter also presents some insights from a study of the Norwegian "Tweeocracy", the well-established voices from the media, politics and academia using Twitter as an arena for public debate. The case study shows that the rhetorical arena-approach can open new understandings of particular public spheres within new media and give us a better understanding of what kind of activities people are engaged in on social media.

*Keywords:* rhetoric; political rhetoric; social media; structuration theory; network politics

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## 1 Introduction

It is safe to say that social media has become a major buzzword in media and communication research. As social media's presence is growing, so is debate about its democratic value. Some have saluted social media as an upgrade from the limits of broadcasting and an opportunity to establish direct lines of communication between voters and politicians. Others have suggested that the revolutionary potential will be normalized by the socio-political reality, and even that online networks fragment and polarize public opinion, rendering it irrelevant to the real decision-making.

However, few qualitative studies have explored the *nature of discourse* in social media forums. In a field dominated by new technical possibilities for quantitative research and big data-studies the need for qualitative studies is growing. Also, as Scott Wright (Wright, 2012b) points out, research on social media is plagued by an old schism between the "revolution-school" and the "normalization school" in communication research. This tendency to reduce new phenomena to a narrow either-or-debate has rendered much of online deliberation research with a narrow understanding of politics and deliberation that may not be particularly suited for the new logic of social media. Consequently, we still need more elaborated analyses of the complex potential role of social media in the public sphere.

In this chapter I argue that a *rhetorical approach* to social media and the public sphere offers a fruitful way towards this kind of anti-reductionist analysis. By combining rhetorical theory with elements of Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, I suggest that the rhetorical arenas of social media can be understood as "social systems" surrounding issues, institutions, physical locations or media platforms in which rhetorical action is structured in a particular way.

In what follows, I will develop this approach by first underscoring the contribution of rhetorical studies to the rethinking of what we mean by the "public sphere". I will then combine this perspective with structuration theory and its insights into structure, agency and institutionalization. Finally, I will briefly illustrate the usefulness of this approach by drawing some insights from a study of the Norwegian "Tweetocracy".

## 2 Social media, rhetorical studies and the public sphere

In brief, rhetoric refers to the domain of "purposive and effective communication" (Kjeldsen, 2004). As this definition suggests, a defining feature of rhetoric is to see communication as *intentional* activity. The speaker is thought to adjust her communication to the audience and the situation to best achieve her

communicative goals. From a rhetorical perspective communication is always seen as *contingent* and *situated* (Kjeldsen, 2014). Not only the outcome of the communication in question but the best or most efficient rhetorical choice of action will depend on the particular circumstances. This way, rhetorical communication is always inextricably linked to the *entire situation* in which it occurs.

How we understand situations has thus major importance for a rhetorical approach. Depending on whether the emphasis is placed on the structuring properties of the context or the acting agent, rhetorical research has either seen the speaker as reacting to a set of situational demands (Bitzer, 1968), or viewed the speaker as creator of a situation by defining and drawing attention to certain issues (Vatz, 1973). Without dismissing the analytical usefulness of these approaches, contemporary rhetorical theory has increasingly turned to an understanding of rhetorical situations as *inter-subjectively defined social constructions* (Miller, 1984), emphasizing rhetorical communication as a co-operative two-way process that requires mutual understanding and trust.

When we understand situations this way, it becomes clear how important it is to grasp the social and institutional conditions under which the rhetorical situation is constructed. In our present media environment this task is increasingly challenging (Kjeldsen, 2008; McGee, 1990). In a digital media-environment the speaker engages in a multitude of potential situations and with an audience that is dispersed in both time and space. Thus, studies of rhetoric in digital environments are concerned not only with persuasion in a traditional sense but also with formations of individual and collective identities and constructions of new relations and encounter settings (Eyman, 2015; Zappen, 2005). It is this wider concern with the complexity of the communication *from the perspective of the speaker (or rhetor)* that makes a rhetorical approach potentially useful in capturing the new dynamics of public sphere in the era of social media.

Social media has different boundaries and affordances than traditional mass media in terms of interactivity, uptake and identity. As a form of public sphere, often described as a networked public (boyd, 2010), the new social media are shaped by the blurring of public and private, the loss of imagined common context, high degree of circulation and lesser control of the message (Warnick/Heineman, 2012). Social media is also to a much greater extent than traditional media formed by users' content and participation. This emphasizes the participatory role of citizens as active rhetorical agents, but it also increases the much-described complexity, fragmentation, and changeability of the contemporary public sphere.

From the perspective of rhetorical studies our new digital public sphere is perhaps best described, in line with rhetorical scholar Gerard Hauser, as a *reticulate public sphere*, consisting of a network of discursive arenas in which the

norms that govern the communication are derived from local practices rather than an any idea of universal reasonableness or other criteria traditionally associated with public deliberation. Such an approach offers a better understanding of the multitude of informal conversations and symbolic actions through which ordinary citizens engage in public opinion. These diverse discursive arenas are not addressing a general audience, nor are they fulfilling an institutionalized civic task. Rather, they consist of *vernacular exchanges*, the voices of average citizens engaged in everyday communication. People interact differently in different spheres, Hauser argues, and therefore we should be more open to the diversity of rhetorical norms that arise within different arenas (Hauser, 1999).

Hauser's approach can be a way to take the field of social media research forward and to broaden our definition of politics online. If we consider social media solely as new means of communication between politicians and voters, we run the risk of overlooking significant aspects of how these sites might influence political values, attitudes and identities.

This point has also been made by Scott Wright (Wright, 2012a). To overcome the limitations of the "revolution/normalization" divide in social media research, he has suggested that we look for politically relevant communication in "third spaces": "formally non-political online discussion space(s) where political talk can emerge" (Wright, 2012a). This is based on Ray Oldenburg's concept of "third places" as sites outside of the home ("first place") and the workplace ("second place") that constitute the gathering places of informal public life (Oldenburg, 1989).

I follow Wright in claiming that major social network sites like Facebook and Twitter can accommodate such "third spaces", or contingent *rhetorical arenas*, as I will refer to them.<sup>1</sup> In order to better understand how these arenas can be what Hauser calls a "locus of emergence for rhetorically salient meaning" (Hauser, 1999), we must understand how rhetorical practice is structured in a way that makes the arena recognizable as such in the first place. This we can do by approaching rhetorical arenas through Anthony Giddens' theorization of "social systems".

### 3 A new theoretical approach to rhetorical arenas

The conception of "rhetorical arena" can be developed to provide a more comprehensive approach to rhetorical practice by linking it to Anthony Giddens' structuration theory.

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<sup>1</sup> Several rhetorical scholars have developed similar approaches focusing on „mid-level“ rhetorical spaces (see for instance, Miller), however, they do not place much emphasis on media's impact on rhetorical practice. Neither do they give any detailed description of how arenas of particular practice are upheld over time.

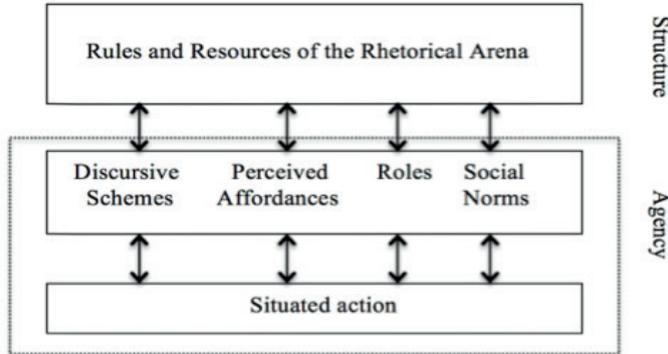
In his theory, Giddens attempts to bridge the dualisms between individual and society by replacing them with a single concept: the *duality of structure*. According to Giddens, agency and structure should not be regarded as opposing or even separate phenomenon. "Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices", Giddens argues, "and 'exists' in the generating moments of this constitution" (Giddens, 1979). Structures should be understood as both rules and resources, meaning that they will not only limit the agents' action-possibilities but also empower the agents. In acting, and in interpreting the acts of others, actors draw upon their knowledge of these rules and resources, reproducing them in the process. It is this reflexive reproduction that gives form to social systems, "the patterning of social relations across time-space, understood as reproduced practices" (Giddens, 1979, p. 5)

This process of reciprocity between agency and structure is what Giddens refers to as the *process of structuration*. As structure only "exists" in action, a theoretical possibility of change is inherent in all moments of social reproduction. Stability, a necessity for social systems, is therefore understood not as the absence of change but as the continuation of action in accordance with the structural properties of the social system. Structuration, then, is the process governing the continuity or transformation of structures, and -- through this -- the reproduction of systems. As this process is variable, different social systems will have different degrees of "systemness" depending on the level of interdependence of action. The defining feature is that systems reproduce action that is recognizable as *regularized social behaviour*.

Giddens' formulations offer a chance to think of rhetorical arenas as social systems situated in time-space and organised as encounter settings for rhetorical practice. Rhetorical arenas create more or less stable contexts of interaction through the actors' inter-subjective construction of rhetorical situations and their fitting responses to these situations. When they act and interpret the acts of others, actors draw on their knowledge of the rules and resources of the arena. By doing so, they recreate the rules and resources in the process. Through this structuration process the arenas provide and reproduce the structural properties necessary for rhetorical practice.

Viewing rhetorical arenas as social systems upheld by processes of structuration allows us to analyse rhetorical practice through the modalities of structuration. These are analytical concepts identified by Giddens as the enabling and constraining elements of structure. He identifies three modalities: *facilities*, *interpretive schemes* and *norms*. On the structural level these modalities relate to structures of *signification*, *domination* and *legitimation*. Since we are not here concerned with social action in general, but rhetorical practice in particular, these modalities can be more sharply defined to capture the specific rules and resources of rhetorical practice. Here I will modify these modalities

to *discursive schemes*, *perceived affordances*, *roles*, and *social norms*. These are analytically separated as *four* dimensions, as the dimension of domination is divided into the *perceived affordances* of the material facilities of the medium (allocative resources) and the *roles* of the actors (authoritative resources).



*Discursive schemes* describe the constitutive and qualitative norms of discourse that the actors draw upon when interacting. These include the classification of utterances in genres and what constitutes as quality within the genres. *Perceived affordances* describe the action possibilities made available for the actors by the technological and physical resources of the arena. The concept of perceived affordances should be understood in line with Donald A. Norman as the combination of the actual and perceived properties of the environment (Norman, 1999). These are determined by the physical and technological resources and the actors' access to, and knowledge of, these resources. *Roles* describe expectations and opportunities attached to the actors as speakers and audience within the arena. These are the social resources available for the different actors due to their position in the arena. *Social norms* describe the rules shared by the actors in the arena of what is proper and what is not proper to do. Failure to follow these rules may lead to sanctioning by other actors.

These will always be overlapping and interdependent, as is the case with the structural dimensions they mediate. Enforcement of social norms depends on the different roles of the actors; the perceived affordances of the arena are intertwined with the dominating discursive schemes, and so on. The separation between different modalities can only be made analytically.

As the duality of agents and structures affects how the actors interpret what happens around them, the modalities are not only relevant to how the actors react to situations, but also to how they perceive and interpret situations and how their actions recreate them. Similarly, even though different arenas

will have different thematic orientations, what are recreated are not the topics of interest or the issues discussed, but the structuring properties, the rules and resources of the particular arena, which makes these issues salient.

This way, Giddens' analytic vocabulary allows us to start translating the complex nature of our new media reality and its consequences for the public sphere into theoretical language. Major social media sites like Twitter and Facebook support a multitude of different social configurations and practices that are not adequately described in terms of genre (micro-level) or public sphere (macro-level). The "rhetorical arena" approach is a way to study these mid-level practices by seeing technological change and social and discursive norms as joint preconditions for rhetorical practice.

## 5 The Norwegian Tweetocracy

Twitter is often described as the social media that is most closely attached to the political debate (Aalen, 2015). At the same time, Twitter use is more differentiated than other, traditional forms of political participation. In Norway the press has coined the phrase "Tweetocracy" to refer to the well-established voices from the media, politics and academia using Twitter as an arena for public debate.

This study explores how opinion-makers perceive the rules and resources of political and civic debate on Twitter. The study is based on 18 in-depth interviews (1h), structured around questions about the modalities of Twitter as a political rhetorical arena. The informants were selected using a snowball-method, having the interviewees identify other "insiders" in the arena of *political commentary* on Twitter. The actors' own description of this sphere circles around their *professional and public roles*, the *form of interaction* they are engaged in, and their understanding of what "*Twitter-friendly*" issues are.

**Professional and public roles.** The actors are people with a lot of access to the public and traditional media, often described as "the chattering classes", "talking heads" or "the punditocracy", who use Twitter to comment on current affairs in close relation to the news agenda. But while the offline roles are thus brought into the Twitter-sphere, the *nature of activity on Twitter* builds particular kinds of social relations. According to the respondents, interaction in Twitter is seemingly more open, casual and egalitarian than debates in traditional media. This form of interaction also helps separate the inside-actors from the outsiders who, although they may hold similar roles in off-Twitter public life, are not able or willing to participate in the same rhetorical activity.

**The form of interaction.** The respondents emphasise the specific quality of Twitter communication as “chatter” or a *continuing flow of comments and discussion on current events*. This conversation has a unique tone and style. An editor in a major publishing house offers a description:

IE: Easiness is a good word for it. (...). It's a feeling that Twitter is the people on the backbench (at)on a political meeting. We're definitely present and got our own opinions, but we crack jokes about what's going on (on)at the podium. That doesn't mean we're not there, or that we don't take the discussion seriously. On the contrary. It's like the guy on Saturday Night Live, Jon Stewart (sic), said: “We're the ones throwing paper balls (at)on the speakers”. Twitter is like that.

Thus, while the off-line punditocracy are perceived as taking themselves too seriously, the “tweetocracy” is clearly more self-ironic. The respondents identify themselves as part of an elitist “chattering” class, but feel no need to reply to the criticism this originally derogative term implies.

The Twitter-sphere follows closely the mainstream political, academic, and cultural debate, and the respondents see the Norwegian public divided between those who are interested in political debates and those who are not. This categorization makes strong assumptions regarding social class and cultural capital based on assumed interest in political, academic, and cultural debate. The respondents, also those whose entry into the public sphere is primarily based on social media-activity, place themselves at the high end of this intellectual dimension.

A metaphor the respondents frequently use to describe the communicative situation in Twitter is “pub-talk” or “a discussion at a party”. Many of the informants are highly educated and display much knowledge about political history and their description of Twitter bears a striking resemblance to academic analyses of the 18th and 19th century public sphere, suggesting not only that such an analogy can be made, but also that the actors themselves perhaps see themselves as a revived bourgeoisie public.

The description of the form of interaction also tells us something important about what sort of public the actors perceive themselves to be part of. The interpretive schemas of Twitter provide the opportunity for the respondents to act in public and discuss serious issues in a more casual and somewhat informal way. Discussing with a politician “at a party” is not the same as debating with him in the newspaper. The discussion at a party is seemingly open and egalitarian. It differs from a political debate not because the actors are more likely to modify or change their initial perspectives, but because the conversation is carried out as if they were. In the same way, the egalitarianism is not a result of people being ascribed the same weight, but that the conversation is carried out as if they were. An actor in Twitter must grasp this regulative fiction to be recognized as a competent participant. While some politicians obviously

do, the attitude among the respondents is that a “common” politician does not. This is not because of their public role, but because they do not engage in this form of “chatter”. In other words, the question of politicians’ roles in the rhetorical arena is not so much about their formal public roles (whether they hold an office or not) as it is about their rhetorical and social practice, and willingness to accept the rules of the Twitter-sphere. The respondents often mention overtly strategic communication, infusing the communication with an agenda, as an obstruction of the sort of interaction they themselves participate in. It is described as “dishonest” and “false”, or, more frequently, as “boring”.

**Twitter-friendly issues.** The political Twitter-sphere is also defined by *what* the actors talk about. If the form of interaction separates the arena from mainstream politics, the topics of interest separate it from other areas of Twitter that revolve around topics like soccer, music or teen culture. The respondents most frequently describe their topical interests as *current political and civic matters that are high on the news agenda*. This also implies that Twitter rarely sets its own agenda but feeds on the general news agenda.

Some political issues the respondents describe as particularly “Twitter-friendly”: the arena generates more attention for what it calls “value politics” or “culture wars”. These sorts of issues involve immigration, religion, gender roles, prostitution, sexuality, abortion, and freedom of speech. The respondents describe them as “hot button issues”, articulating “principles”, “moral aspects”, and “an element of something private”. They are seen as involving “personal and collective identity”, and being “controversial”, “touchy” or “flammable”. Thus Twitter-talk insists on a strong connection between person and belief, challenging the separation of the public and private realms. A journalist working with online debate forums reflects on this:

IE: Well, I think they’re about identity and the relation to the collective. Who am I as a person? Who am I as a body? What is my identity, and how do I relate to the collective identity? For instance, the Islamic debate is about how I as a person collide with a society that’s rapidly changing. It’s the same thing with the questions about health and sexuality. Who am I? And how do others perceive me? How do I get recognition?

One thing the “value politics”-themes have in common is that they are easy to personalize. The recurring issues of the Twitter-sphere are often approached as personal opinions and beliefs, something that is enforced by the affordance of Twitter as being the users’ *own* account. Value politics implies a strong linkage between opinions and personal beliefs. They concern issues about which the average citizen can be assumed to have an opinion, without depending on expert knowledge.

## 6 Concluding remarks

The case study of the Norwegian “Tweetocracy” shows that the rhetorical arena-approach can open new understandings of particular public spheres within new media. The interviewees clearly identify themselves with a particular Twitter-sphere based on *who* is active in the arena, how they interact with each other, and *what* kind of issues they are engaged in. The interviews suggest that the structures of signification, legitimation, and domination that give systemic form to the arena connect the Twitter-sphere rather closely to traditional media. But as we have seen, these structures are mediated in new ways, as Twitter reflects different rules and resources for rhetorical practice.

Identifying these arena-specific rules and resources gives us a better understanding of what kind of activities people are engaged in on social media. It also brings new interesting questions to the fore, like how structures of signification, legitimation, and domination in the public sphere will be mediated differently in different spheres? Ultimately, they help us pose the question: What kind of change might new rhetorical arenas bring to the public sphere at large? In order to answer these questions, we need a variety of methods and theoretical approaches. This chapter has argued and demonstrated that rhetoric can play an important role in this task.

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# Collectivities in change: The mediatization and individualization of community building from a subjective and figurational perspective<sup>1</sup>

*Andreas Hepp and Ronald Hitzler*

## Abstract

There is an ongoing discussion in media and communication research about the extent to which mediatization involves shifts in collectivities and community building. However, if mediatization is taken to refer to the changing relationship between media and communication, and to the shifts of culture and society linked to the diffusion of technical means of communication, then we need to examine how we might conceive shifts in community building as part of this changing relationship; or, indeed, whether this involves quite different changes, for individualization in particular. In this chapter we will approach this problem by first considering the way in which the concept of ‘individualization’ at stake here relates to shifts in collectivities, relating this to conceptions of post-traditional communitizations and communities. We make at this point the distinction between communitization as the subjective process of being affectively involved in community building and community as the more stable figuration of those individuals who share with each other such feelings of ‘belonging’ and a ‘common we’. A conceptual distinction between ‘communitization’ and ‘community’ offers us a framework, through which we can then in the following develop a differentiated approach to questions of mediatization. In our conclusion we argue for the dissolution of simplistic contrasting conceptions of change in respect of the mediatization of collectivities.

*Keywords:* mediatization, individualization, media change, community, communitization, collectivities

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## 1 Introduction

Changes in media and communications bring with them changes in community building – this is something with which those studying media and communications have long been familiar. We are not here thinking only of historical works that, for example, highlight the way in which ideas of “nation” and “community” depend upon the formation of mass media (cf. Anderson, 1983). Nor is our focus only upon those major studies that link the emergence of a “global village” to the development of new media (McLuhan/Powers, 1992). We also find in small-scale studies a constant emphasis upon changes in the experience of community: firstly, through discussion of the way that a “networked individuality” associated with the internet transforms family and friendships (Rainie/Wellman, 2012, pp. 117-70); or, secondly, when the extent to which online platforms might reasonably be treated as communities is discussed (cf. Deterding, 2008; Eisewicht/Grenz, 2012).

Common to all of these approaches is the question of the extent to which mediatization involves shifts in collectivities (see Couldry/Hepp, 2013, 2016, pp. 168-189). If mediatization is taken to refer to the changing relationship between media and communication, and to the shifts of culture and society linked to the diffusion of technical means of communication (Hepp, 2013, pp. 29-35), then we need to examine how we might conceive shifts in community building as part of this changing relationship, or, indeed, whether this involves quite different changes, for individualization, in particular (Hitzler/Honer, 1994; Hitzler, 2006).

We will approach this problem by first considering the way in which the concept of “individualization” at stake here relates to shifts in collectivities, relating this to conceptions of post-traditional communitizations and communities. We make at this point the distinction between communitization as the subjective process of being affectively involved in community building and community as the more stable figuration of those individuals who share with each other such feelings of ‘belonging’ and a ‘common we’. Even if this anticipates some ideas that will be considered in their relation to mediatization, some general remarks are necessary here in order to establish the sociological framework for a conceptual distinction between “communitization” and “community”, hence developing a differentiated approach to some questions of mediatization. In our conclusion we argue for the dissolution of simplistic contrasting conceptions of change with respect to the mediatization of collectivities.

We consequently seek to develop and clarify the conceptualization of communal change and its connection to mediatization. Although we refer to the work and arguments of others that have been crucial to our thinking, we consider the existing conceptual basis to be inadequate. Our own work on the

mediatization of subjective communitization (Hepp et al., 2014a, Hepp et al., 2014b), in connection with the DFG programme on “Mediatized Worlds” and on the experience of communitization in online poker (Hitzler/Möll, 2012), should contribute to the clarification of the phenomenon at issue here. Clarifying the related terminology, we go back to classics of this field of investigation, mainly Ferdinand Toennies and Max Weber. The reason for this is that their basic distinctions have been an implicit model of orientation up to now (cf. for example, Wittel, 2008). In respect to this we want to relocate such original arguments to the discussion about mediatization.

## 2 Individualization: The return of a yearning for the past and for a sense of community

Ulrich Beck’s conception of individualization (1992, 1995) lays emphasis not on a *framework for action*, but on a *form* of behaviour in the transition to a new modernity: men and women are set free from inherited identity-forming structures that secure the existence of classes and strata, kinship relations and nuclear families, neighbourhoods, political and religious groups, ethnic and national allegiances and so forth. It is hard to ignore the way in which, while traditional and *direct* distributional struggles lose force, all kinds of other more indirect and unregulated distributional struggles emerge around material goods, conceptions of the world, collective identities, ways of living and quality of life, social spaces, time and resources, principles and questions of detail. These do not any longer easily fit into established analytical frameworks regarding left and right, progressive and conservative, revolutionary and reactionary. There is a new fragmentation in which ever newer, localized and specific conflicts over meaning erupt; new, unstable interpretative coalitions successively form and reform, since the options open to one and all for individual, even idiosyncratic ways of shaping one’s life have increased, and continue to do so.

Expressed in the theoretical language of the conception of ‘reflexive modernization’ (Beck et al., 1994; Beck/Bonß, 2001; Beck/Lau, 2004), the emancipation of the individual from dependency and tutelage, a central project of modernity that is supposed to make possible the shared existence of free and equal men and women, has given rise to an increasing number of unforeseen consequences. In reaction, rather than seeking ever greater liberty, many *yearn* for that which this developmental process had originally sought to negate: for the security of a common existence that rests on trust and acceptance. The essential humanity of “warm” communality is increasingly contrasted with a “cold” and dissociated sociability (Gebhardt, 1999). The liberty of making one’s own choices corresponds with the real *need* to choose for oneself. People rendered “homeless” by this development yearn for a sense of belonging,

while at the same time rejecting the claims that such belonging might impose. As a consequence, the typical contemporary communal form desired today is one that offers the individual a maximal prospect of self-realization linked to the least possible degree of dependence and obligation. We call this new form of community “post-traditional” (Hitzler, 1998; Hitzler et al., 2008). However, we have to be careful here not to describe “post-traditional communities” in an un-critical manner: While being lifted-out of *traditions*, they nevertheless remain marked by conflicts, inequalities, exclusion and gender differences.

We consider the decisive difference between what could be called forms of community “suited to” individualization, on the one hand, and *established* collective forms on the other. This difference involves the fact that participation in the former does not involve those ties and obligations associated with traditional communities. One is *not* born or socialized into these new communities that suit individualization; instead, one seeks them out *oneself* on the basis of some interest, and so feels more or less “at home” in one of them, or in several; at least for a time. What has been labelled as a post-traditional form of community is based on a shared sense of belonging, the coincidence of inclinations, preferences, and passions, together with what is regarded as the “proper” behaviour of those involved. Consequently, the ties binding a community of this kind together are structurally *unstable* – if not in every case, at least as a general rule.

And so the post-traditional form of *comunitization* follows from the fact that the participating individual does not assume obligations, but can only be diverted by involvement of whatever kind (Hitzler, 1999). One principal element of such diversion appears to be the creation of a feeling of collectivity with other people that goes beyond the feeling of belonging; other people who expect one to be pleasant or acceptable (so as a rule like-minded or with a common background). Among these, the post-traditional person seeking a sense of community finds his or her own sense of “cosiness”, at least situationally.

From the analytical standpoint, our attention therefore increasingly shifts not only to new or newly-recognized forms of community and communitization, but to associated effects of diffusion and embedment of modes of behaviour in other medial representations. Their possible transformations likewise come to our attention as important aspects of a process of change. This raises the question of how the individual elements of a changing communal life can be linked to changes in media and communication.

Besides the empirical complexity arising in connection with the investigation of “change” and “inertia” in mediatization, and hence generally in the “continuity” and “discontinuity” of existing forms of community and communitization (see Hepp/Röser, 2014), we also find ourselves faced with a thoroughly opaque conceptual field; for with “community” and “communitization” we are dealing with distinct, and in some cases barely compatible, phenom-

ena. This is not an issue confined to changes in media and communication. This makes it difficult to pinpoint changes in these concepts as registered in a number of empirical studies. Writers as different as Sherry Turkle and Hubert Knoblauch have pointed to this same problem. The former, for instance, is extremely resistant to the inflation of the concept of “community” in connection with online platforms: “Perhaps community should not have a broader but a narrower definition. We used to have a name for a group that got together because its members shared common interests: we called it a club.” (Turkle, 2011, p. 238). Hubert Knoblauch justifies his own reservations regarding empirical analysis of online communities with reference to the lack of conceptual precision in the research that has been done, stating that “[...] the more I have read, the less I have been concerned about empirical questions, and the more about conceptual ones.” (Knoblauch, 2008, p.73)

Such references to the need for clarity, independent of any connection to media and communication, can already be found in the writings of Immanuel Kant (1998, p. 318): “In our language the word community is ambiguous, for it can mean both *communio* and *commercium*.” Translated into the conceptual language we wish to use here, Kant’s distinction involves the need to describe a subject’s perspective (the individual’s experience of communitization) as well as the collectivity to which this experience relates. For the first of these we use the expression “communitization”, while for the latter we use the term “community”. With respect to mediatization, they are related in a manner we need to explore, and this also needs to be reflected with regard to the general transformation of individualization.

We start therefore by seeking to define the more commonly-encountered of these two concepts: constitutive of communities *of any kind*<sup>2</sup> are: a) demarcation with respect to those who are “not one of us”, however defined; b) a feeling of collectivity, whatever its *origins*; c) the establishment of a shared set of values among members of the community, whatever these values might be; and d) some kind of space that is accessible to members for their interaction with each other.

For the same reason, following a logical path, we begin with the mediatization of communitization as a subjective experience, so that we return from there to the mediatization of *community* as a figuration of collectivity. The resulting clarification should render plausible our presumption that it is necessary to differentiate the various perspectives in empirical analysis more strictly than has hitherto been usual in the study of mediatization.

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2 While Hitzler and Pfadenhauer (2008) adhered more strongly to Tönnies conception of “community”, we build here upon the concept of “communitization” sketched by Max Weber in §9 of his “Basic Sociological Concepts” (1972, pp. 21-23). We are generally concerned to link processes in which a sense of community is created with the term “communitization”, whereas “community” relates to the resulting (situational) sense of community in a figuration of actors.

### 3 The mediatization of communitization as subjective experience

Communitization is a subjective experience that the subject presumes to be reciprocated. Max Weber alluded to this aspect of the idea when defining communitization: “A social relationship will be called a “communitization” (*Vergemeinschaftung*) if and to the extent that the orientation of social action rests – in the individual instance, or on average, or as a pure type – upon a subjectively *felt* (affectual or traditional) *mutual sense of belonging* among those involved.” (Weber, 1972, p. 21 emphases in original). He explicitly distinguishes this concept of communitization from the way in which Toennies differentiated “community and society”, for according to Weber, Toennies’ usage was “much more specific” than that of Weber (1972, p. 22), Toennies being concerned to show that the inherent bond of a community was, historically, increasingly displaced by the deliberate arrangements of society. The associated, and foreshortened, conception of transition – loss of community correlated with the gain of society – is clear, even if Toennies’ conception of community is more complex than generally recognized today.

Toennies had started from a “community of blood” that could form from the mother-child relationship, from family and kin, upon which basis there could then develop a “community of place” and a “community of spirit”. But even the “community of blood” is not itself treated as identical with biological kinship relationships, but arises from the human “sense of bond” – an anthropologically-inflected sense of “sympathy” arising typically among “blood relatives”. He thought that community arose from the supposedly universal human characteristic of a *wish* to bond with other humans on the basis of “positive” emotional, ethnic and consanguinity ties. What Toennies referred to as “communities of fate” (2004, p. 18), communities that one did not choose for oneself but into which one was born – into a parent child relationship, as a hunter-gatherer, kinship networks, tribes, localities – were in fact cultural products like any other human society: constituted, stabilized and reconstituted through ritual.<sup>3</sup> In ideal typical terms, this apparently quasi-natural “living [blood] community” might be contrasted with the highly-artificial, cosmologically inflected “community of meaning”, a pure “community of the spirit” detached from the pragmatic demands of everyday life – here we follow the differentiation made by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their essay on “Modernity, Pluralism and the Crisis of Meaning” (1996). However, empirically all forms of community, whether considered diachronically or synchronically, are placed on a continuum between these two extremes “community of

3 Using the term “ritual” here in the sense employed by Émile Durkheim in *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1995)

place” and “community of spirit”; just as are the six forms of community that Max Weber distinguished (1972, pp. 212 et seqq.) – house community, local community, tribe, ethnic, religious and political communities.

Community and communitization have come and gone on the social sciences, but they are fixtures all the same (in place of many examples, see Gläser, 2007; Böckelmann/Morgenroth, 2008; Rosa et al., 2010). Nonetheless, it seems to us worthwhile to begin with Max Weber’s definition. There are two reasons for this. In the first place, his definition is sufficiently open to encompass very different communitizations. The examples that he takes – reaching from small group to nation – make clear that from the subjective point of view “collectivity” and the feeling of being “one of us” are central to communitization, and that this can be applied to quite different social relationships. Secondly, Weber does not link his definition of communitization to *specific* traditional collectivities (such as family or village), but emphasizes that the felt sense of belonging can also have other origins.<sup>4</sup>

Above all, it is Weber’s subject-centred approach to the problem of communitization upon which we here draw: the extent to which, or whether at all, a collectivity is experienced from an individual’s point of view as a communitization depends on the degree to which a subject (an individual acting meaningfully) feels that it has something in common with others, whatever that may be and however the subject understands it. Consequently, a family is, for example, *not* a communitization per se, nor is a workgroup in a firm. Both of these *can* be experienced by a participating subject as communitization, given the existence of the relevant sense of identification.

In this subjective experience of communitization two aspects can be distinguished: first, that of situational experience in which the feeling that someone is “one of us” arises, in which one “feels” a sense of belonging; and secondly, that of the *horizon of meaning*. As proposed by Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann (1973, pp. 31-35), it can be said that everything that we experience, suffer and do is always in the context of a particular subjective horizon of meaning. Hence, besides talking of the *experience* of communitization we can also talk of a subjective *horizon* of communitization. This means that for the subject a general horizon of communitizations arises beyond the situational experience of communitization, within which the subject can recognize and position itself. The horizon of communitization is the “backdrop” against which the situational experience of communitization occurs. On the other hand, it is also the “point of departure” from which situations of communitization can be evoked as experiences.

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4 Although we are perhaps over-sensitized to the idea, but in these reflections we already see traces of the idea sketched above of “post-traditional communitization” (Hitzer/Pfadenhauer, 2010), forms of communitization that are currently becoming more important, in which the sense of belonging derives from individual choices in a consumer society with many options (as in Gross, 1994; Prisching, 2009).

One aspect of a subject's horizon of communitization could be that a general sense of belonging is experienced within a family or a group of friends (Hitzler, 2008; Hitzler/Niederbacher, 2010). This sense does, however, depend on its constant actualization in concrete experiences, in the absence of which the sense of belonging fades into the background. A subject will participate in family and other events to experience communitization as a feeling of belonging on a continuing basis. Participants expect that they will draw from such events special experiences beyond the everyday, reinforcing the sense of communitization shared with like-minded others. The attraction of such events, in fact, derives to a great extent from this promise that some kind of *common* experience will result. There is also here the promise that one will witness and participate in something quite special, experienced not as an individual but as part of a collectivity (the event community), and in so doing attract the attention of others to oneself (Hepp/Krönert, 2010, Hitzler/Pfadenhauer, 1998; Forschungskonsortium WJT, 2007; Hitzler et al., 2013a).

On the basis of our own empirical research<sup>5</sup>, we claim that mediatization on a first level relates to this conception of *subjective* communitization, both in regard to the situational experience and the horizon of meaning. It is not difficult to establish that in today's mediatized social world the situational experience takes place in and through media. A rave is a techno event that is inconceivable without media; media are significant components both in the organisation of events and in the communication of particular experiential expectations of the events, while also providing options for experiences during the events (Hitzler/Pfadenhauer, 2002; Hitzler et al., 2011). The symptomatic sense of collectivity is inseparably correlated with dancing together and the associated synchronization of physical movement (Hitzler et al., 2013b). Juvenile communitizations are today typically mediatized, their existence bound up with the continual creation and ascertainment of common interests on the part of their members using communication technologies more or less accessible to all.<sup>6</sup> This does not only mean that more media and different types of media are used, but that these are subject to constant elaboration and upgrading, attracting ever more attention (Krotz, 2003; Leichner/Steiger, 2009). The internet stands out from all other types of mass media because of its capacity for bidirectional flow, providing users with a cheap means for creating, sharing and participating; as such, it is a significant driver for media development (Ab-

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5 For example, on communitization with respect to diasporas (Hepp et al., 2012), on the Techno scene (Hitzler, 2001), on World Youth Day, 2005 in Cologne (see among other others Hitzler/Pfadenhauer, 2007; Hepp/Krönert, 2010), on the City of Culture 2010 (Hitzler, 2013), and on poker (Möll/Hitzler, 2013).

6 The symptomatic medium of communication for juvenile communitizations is the fanzine, in which insiders can express views on the quality of places to meet up and what has happened at different events, talk about new developments, present accessories, talk about leading personalities; in short, satisfying interest in information about a niche.

bott, 1998; Albrecht/Tillmann, 2006). Going online is for young people today an experience seamlessly integrated into their everyday lives (Wilson, 2006), both in respect of the reception and use of media and with regard to the extensive behavioural competences the new media demand (Vogelgesang, 2008), creating in turn virtual communities (Hug, 2006).

There is no doubt that the internet offers a cheap and accessible platform for juveniles seeking the most diverse kinds of desires; not only beyond the street, but also within the traditional media world (Androutopoulos, 2005; Gross, 2006; Kahn/Kellner, 2003). As ever, young people's forms of association and interaction are many and varied (Tillmann/Vollbrecht, 2006). Above all, they involve structures, building global micro-cultures (Hitzler, 2007; Ganguin/Sandler, 2007) that are becoming established in the virtual space of the World Wide Web (Williams, 2006).

But there are, of course, many other forms of mediatized situational communitization experiences; in today's mediatized social world there are all kinds of situational reception communitizations. Here, the experience of communitization in the family or with friends might be gained through, for instance, watching television together – whether a serial, a football game, or another format. Another and quite different example would be the experience of computer gaming, whether with face-to-face groups gathering around a monitor or with a large-scale LAN party. This was especially true of the first decade of the twenty-first century (Vogelgesang, 2003; Ackermann, 2011), and is now especially apparent in isolated participation in live streaming (Kirschner, 2012, 2013).

The *horizon* of communitization is, however, also a phenomenon that is comprehensively mediatized (Hepp, 2013, pp. 121-126). Not only do the most diverse forms of communitization involve situational experiences that are ultimately media-related, but the entire horizon of meaning is saturated with *ideas* of communitization which have, from the subjective standpoint, arisen through the sedimentation of the most diverse kinds of media use (Schütz/Luckmann, 1973, p. 283). To take but one concrete example: the fact that a local fanbase, to which a subject feels that he or she belongs by virtue of a sense of fellow-feeling with other actors, is itself part of a global fanbase with a variety of options for communitization, is something that the individual cannot experience personally and directly. Instead, any such experience of being part of a global micro-culture is gained through the media specific to that fanbase. The situation is analogous when we move from an individual's national sense of identity to more complex collective transnational representations that could be part of the horizon of communitization.

#### 4 The mediatization of community as a collectivity

Long ago Max Weber placed emphasis not only on subjective experience, but also upon its correlate, the representation of a collectivity that was experienced as such. In doing so he brought another concept centre-stage: “It is only when on the basis of this feeling [of communitization] that their behaviour is in some way mutually *oriented* that a social relation is formed among them, not only a relation between each of them and their environment; and it is only when this social relationship is registered as such that a “community” can be said to have formed.” (Weber, 1972 p. 22) Weber thus distinguishes between the feeling of communitization (something which must always be firmly linked to subjective experience) and the enduring community that these reciprocal *existing* feelings create through their action being oriented by them. And so for us it is not only a question of the mediation of subjective experience, but rather the mediatization of a social aggregate, a collectivity. At this point we discuss the whole figuration this collectivity builds, a figuration which is nowadays deeply mediatized (cf. Couldry/Hepp, 2016, pp. 168-89).

This is the point raised by Hubert Knoblauch in the comment cited above. He makes use of Simmel’s concept of form, and characterizes communities as “social forms” (Knoblauch, 2008, p. 77) characterized, first, by a structure composed for the most part of traditional and affective behaviours (or practices); second, by a shared sense of belonging among its members; and third, through the distinction of members from non-members of any kind.

Knoblauch is generally referring like others (for a survey see Hepp, 2013, pp. 102-108) to a transformation of communities qua mediatization. In those times when there was no ongoing diffusion of technical means of communication, communities were more or less exclusively “communities of place” in Toennies’ sense, based on direct communication. An example of this would be a community of believers. After the emergence of communication media that enabled the maintenance of communication and social relationships in multiple places, the community shed its need to be directly experienced at a local level (for instance, the church). This development has been addressed with a number of different concepts. We can here, again drawing upon Toennies, talk of “communities of mind”.

Benedict Anderson’s conception of “imagined communities” (1983, p. 5-7) has a stronger relationship to media and is explicitly related to all communities that are larger than the village with its face-to-face contacts. Here the nation is only one, territorially defined, imagined community, although an obvious one. Knoblauch (2008) shifted emphasis in making a distinction between “knowledge communities” and “communication communities”: the first being based on direct communication, members having common experiences and

so having access to common knowledge; while in the second case, structure, sense of collectivity and distinction are created through a mediatized communication process that transcends specific locations.

There are many examples of this latter form in the literature, ranging from “nation” (Anderson, 1983), fan communities (Jenkins, 1992, 2006), “post-traditional societies” (Hitzler, 1998; Hitzler et al., 2008) or “aesthetic communities” (Bauman, 2001, p. 66), and including “transnational communities” such as the EU (Risse, 2010). And so beyond the conceptual distinctions being made here, there is also a great deal to be said for an emphasis upon the impact of mediatization on the changing manner in which communities are constituted.<sup>7</sup>

If we consider the transformation of communities from the empirical perspective, it becomes evident that “communities of place” with face-to-face contact, or “knowledge communities”, are themselves characterized by mediatization. That is not something confined to raves. Many writers have pointed to village or urban communities, and these too are today created and maintained by media-based communication. There is the parish newsletter, the local newspaper, and often the local radio or TV station. Social events are organised through social media and web pages, presenting the parish and its various activities. Local communities in this way create both connections and distinctions with respect to other mediated communities, such as “Europe”.

Our own research shows that the “communities of mind”, “imagined communities and “communication communities” that transcend place are based in large part upon local groups in which communitization is experienced subjectively: the sense of being “one of us” is evoked on national holidays or among national football events; the communal experience of fan cultures occurs through local events, and even the sense of Europe as a community presupposes that one has locally-based experiences that promote this sense of communitization (Hepp et al., 2011).

## 5 Conclusion: Subjective experience of communitization between mediatized communities and media-based communities

Given the above, it seems to us that the usual binary conceptual distinctions made in the literature are not adequate for an understanding of material changes in mediatization. We consider that a basic distinction should be made between

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<sup>7</sup> We emphasize the ‘also’ here because we think it would be mistaken to generally attribute changes in the manner in which communities are constituted to mediatization. There are many other sources of change; besides the progressive increase in geographical mobility through the ages there is also the issue of pluralization (Berger/Luckmann, 1996), individualization (Beck/Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), the opening up of multiple options (Gross, 1994), commercialization (Prisching, 2009), and more recently also eventing (Hitzler, 2011).

*local communities* and *translocal communities*, to both of which mediatization relates, but in different ways (Hepp, 2015, pp. 205-216). By local we mean the location of an everyday lived world. Translocal on the other hand lends emphasis to the fact that even communities that transcend locality still have a local connection, for they are experienced on a local basis. But as a community they relate to a large number of local places. This presumes the existence of communication that transcends locality, and so also mediatization, insofar as this is not created through the mobility of its members. Communication media are required to maintain the structure, sense of belonging together, and sense of distinctiveness of translocal communities. Hence, communications media are *constitutive* for this kind of community. *Communitization* can be direct to both.

But this does not mean that mediatization is only relevant for translocal communities. Local communities are also characterized by new and increasing volumes of mediatization. Even the local communications that constitute these communities are to some degree or other mediated. This makes it seem helpful to revise the existing conceptual armoury, so that we might more precisely approach the contexts in which we are interested. We therefore propose to use the term *mediatized communities* for what results from the mediatization of local communities; and *media-based communities* for those communities in which mediatization processes have only just begun to develop, and which are therefore constitutive for communications media (cf. Couldry/Hepp, 2016, pp. 168-189). Examples for these media-based communities are fan-cultures that emerge from the interest in certain media as content or technology, or online groups when they are not just a 'club' or 'gathering' but become a community. While these collectivities differ fundamentally in their character they all share that they cannot exist without media.

This terminological distinction should help to make clear that, in the case of mediatized communities, processes of communitization can always be "controlled" by direct communication, while this cannot happen with mediatizing communities, or, at least, not in general. Notwithstanding that, the possibility still remains of linking back this kind of community with direct, and therefore local, communication through relevant prospective experiences. Mediatization is therefore closely linked to a more substantial change in communitization and community than simply the movement from one type to another. It therefore appears that there is an empirical question that still needs to be clarified: whether with the advance of mediatization, "imagination" and "knowledge" become transformed in local communitization *as well as* in communities.

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# Conceptualizing metropolitan journalism: New approaches, new communicative practices, new perspectives?

*Leif Kramp*

*“The result of new blood in metropolitan journalism  
will be watched with the deepest interest” (Fourth Estate, 10 October 1895, p. 1)*

## Abstract

The chapter introduces a socio-geographical concept of metropolitan journalism, taking into account political, economic and cultural factors. It discusses empirical examples from journalism practice in Germany to identify certain patterns of structure-building, news production, news mediation and audience engagement. In so doing, it uses a figurational approach as a heuristic, depicting current transformations of journalism in metropolitan setting. The chapter argues for a differentiation between metropolitan journalism and local journalism. Due to the lack of an elaborated concept for metropolitan journalism in journalism theory, the following considerations draw on general characteristics of metropolitan areas that comprise geographical, administrative, political, economic and socio-demographic factors. On this basis, using the example of the situation of recent developments on Germany’s news market, the chapter discusses how metropolitan journalism develop a capability to shape the overall orientation of journalism practice towards innovation and experimentation with new technologies, forms of expression, organisation models, and product development. It is thereby argued that metropolitan journalism functions as an interdisciplinary test field with signal effect for the news industry, and becomes in its broad variety and diversity a nucleus of a figurational transformation of journalism in general.

*Keywords:* metropolitan journalism, metropolis, conceptualization, urban media environment, transformation of journalism, cross-media, mediatization, digitization, communicative figurations

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## 1. Introduction

Journalism is on the verge of many things: its institutional pillars struggle heftily with the economic challenges that arise from changing media habits and the unpredictability of what gains and loses popularity among audiences. Audiences become even more fragmented day by day. They can select from countless digital media services and contents globally at their convenience, only restrained by their own capabilities in terms of literacy and resources.<sup>1</sup> This continuously pushes forward competition between legacy news organisations and ever-new actors that enter the global information ecosphere. In a rapidly urbanizing world where cities grow and reach new levels of complexity (cf. Kouritt/Nijkamp/Scholten, 2015), journalism has a lot to accomplish while being confronted with transformational challenges. It was Simmel who accentuated the complex and consequential interdependencies of social interaction in a metropolis with serious consequences for (public) communication:

The relationships and affairs of the typical metropolitan usually are so varied and complex that without the strictest punctuality in promises and services the whole structure would break down into an inextricable chaos. Above all, this necessity is brought about by the aggregation of so many people with such differentiated interests, who must integrate their relations and activities into a highly complex organism. If all clocks and watches in Berlin would suddenly go wrong in different ways, even if only by one hour, all economic life and communication of the city would be disrupted for a long time. (Simmel, 2000 [1903], p. 50)

Against this background of profound change, journalists try to find ways to sustain their societal function. Journalism as a practice is confronted with seemingly endless possibilities of using emerging media technologies, tools and services to produce the news and present information in new ways and forms. This is especially true in the mediatized metropolis where urban dynamics of a dense and culturally diverse population are facilitated by a fully or at least better developed ICT infrastructure, compared to rural areas. In the city, technological evolution has conquered time and space, as Gottdiener and Hutchison (2011, p. 388) write in their book on “*new urban sociology*”. Their scholarly interest is less concerned with the overcoming of the spatial dimensions of the city by media technology but with the merger of the two worlds: How does social life change in a city where information and communication infrastructure enable the emergence of new communicative practices, especially those that were formerly place-bound?

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the economical and social dimensions of access to and appropriation of digital information and communication technologies (“*digital divide*”) cf. Proenza 2015.

In this perspective, journalists are confronted with constantly altered pre-conditions of media usage and transformation of their working contexts: while coping with these structural challenges, they try to adjust by pushing boundaries of mediation, weighing alternative forms of audience engagement and finding additional roles for themselves while trying to maintain their functional stability (cf. Weischenberg/Malik/Scholl, 2011). This stability is increasingly challenged as the mediatized city offers many alternative sources and social practices for the dissemination of news and information beside the traditional distribution model of mass communication. The connected risk of economic marginalization and existential intimidation of journalism as the prime agent in the construction of a critical public sphere is a well-covered issue in journalism research. What have been overlooked widely are the specific characteristics of journalism in big cities and its exemplary function for the overall news industry. This chapter argues that this is especially true for metropolitan areas where, since the dawn of the modern age, media have played a crucial role in accompanying and shaping urban development and a certain type of journalism has been moulded.

It is the metropolis, cities that meet general characteristics of large agglomeration, economic growth and both cultural and political domination, that “most vividly reveal the politics of a changing mediated world”, as Georgiou (2013, p. 2) puts it. She argues that “the relation of media and the city has become synergetic but ordinary, so much so that it is rarely spoken about, even in media and communications studies” (Georgiou, 2013, p. 5). She is not talking of news media necessarily, but rather of technologically based communication media in a broader sense. In her view, the more apparent the interdependence between media technologies, media practices and media contents on the one side and the urban environment on the other side become, this interdependence should be taken for granted. One might add: neither should the central role of journalism within the urban media environment, which essentially means all technologically based communication media and their affordances that are theoretically accessible in the metropolitan area at a specific moment (cf. Jensen/Helles, 2015).

Georgiou makes a point here by highlighting the interwovenness of metropolitan life with media practices and affordances that have become somewhat natural. The implications of that are profound, especially for journalism: it is not solely about the economic challenges for everyone involved in the news industry that come with simply more complementary or substitutive media affordances and transforming media practices. It is also about normative considerations that grow out of this close connection between social change and media change: primarily, how journalism should (or should not) adjust against the backdrop of its central function in a democracy. It is more and more difficult for legacy news organisations to fulfil the profession’s role as a

social stabilizer: their quantitative and qualitative outreach is on the decrease due to the co-existence of personal, social and mass media that has already led to a relentless competition for the attention, favour and time of audiences in a highly diversified information ecosphere where journalism is no longer the only news source. Following Thomson (2011, p. 11), the path seems already paved: not only newspapers as commodities *have to* change in order to survive, but also does journalism as their prime ingredient. Surely, journalism changes not only as a profession but as a cultural practice by the doings of its actors, also by emerging actors who – professional or with a layman’s perspective – participate in the very same process of change. News organisations have to reconfigure their institutional workflows in many aspects in order to *react* to external changes of market, audiences and technologies and beyond that to be even able to take an *active* and *creative* role to shape transformation, to be “*ahead of the curve*” (Mele/Whibey, 2013), not merely “*playing defensive*” (Nasalskaya/Zabrovskaya, 2015). The transformation of journalism directly relates to the transformation of social and cultural practices where digital media technologies have gained importance for various communicative functions due to their increasingly comfortable appropriability. Lewis and Westlund (2015) note a certain dissolution and more difficult detectability of professional roles, boundaries and processes in (digital) news work because of this. In the mediatized urban ecosphere, professional actors of various kinds, (technological) actants (like algorithms or other forms of automation), and audiences are involved in similar (if not the same) media activities that are concerned with accessing or observing, selecting or filtering, processing and editing as well as the distribution and public interpretation of information.

In the following, a conceptual framework for a *distinctive* metropolitan journalism is proposed in order to discuss what the transformation of journalism in metropolitan media environments can tell us about the overall changing communicative relation between journalists and audiences. However, also the communicative relations between established news organisations and emergent agents of public communication, i.e. citizens, part time or full time journalists and news entrepreneurs with unconventional concepts, are of interest here. The focus will be on the function of journalism in areas of high agglomeration as a signifier of change and best practice for journalism in general. Thereby, the focus will be, first, on *defining concepts for new journalistic formats for a metropolitan audience*, second, on *institutional impulses by new market entries*, and, third, on *new concepts of audience engagement* in a metropolitan setting. Following this outline, the chapter will discuss examples that indicate how metropolitan journalism transforms by action and reaction or, to rephrase, by creativity and compulsion.

## 2 Researching ‘metropolitan journalism’

### 2.1 Current state of research

Metropolitan journalism is a rather unspecified concept. As Sjøvaag (2015, p. 18) pointed out, geographical or spatial dimensions are a blind spot in the conceptualization efforts within journalism research, stating a “lack of attention in the research as to the distinction and relationship between local, metropolitan and regional news content”. It should be emphasized at this point that metropolitan journalism is regarded, here, as an integrative cross-media and cross-institutional concept that comprises local, national and global perspectives in reporting no matter what the organisational contexts are. Whether it is newspapers or magazines, television or radio broadcasters, news websites, blogs or freelance journalists who use various online platforms and channels for their reporting: what connects them all is their metropolitan setting. Thereby, each of them constantly create and shape the metropolitan news ecosphere.

The interplay of local, national and global approaches to news in metropolitan areas, which are admittedly still dominated by legacy publishers, does not come without tensions. Local journalism has been regarded as not so prestigious, capable and exemplary as national and global (political) reporting and commentary, which are not infrequently seen as the true core of quality journalism in both academic focus and professional self-perception. Yet, existing scholarship has been mostly concerned with tensions between the civic importance of local journalism and its quality in contrast to the national press and its uncertain economic future (cf. Franklin/Murphy, 1998; Levy/Nielsen, 2011; Nielsen, 2015; Schudson, 2011). There are only few studies investigating differences between metropolitan and rural journalism cultures (cf. Hanusch, 2015; contributions in Hutchison/O’Donnell, 2011). Surprisingly, too, little scholarship explores how economic, technological and cultural changes have impacted the patterns of action of metropolitan news making and how it resonates with other areas of news production (cf. for the United States: Anderson, 2013 and Ryfe, 2013; for the UK: Coleman/Thumim/Moss, 2016). However, what can be understood by metropolitan journalism remains unclear because the existing works lack a conceptual perspective. In other words: they do not grapple with the metropolitan in journalism in a way that would go beyond a (taken for granted) descriptive account and clearly delineate the metropolis from a small or mid-sized city in terms of its distinctive characteristics. Even one of the most influential (i.e. most cited) studies on metropolitan journalism – Anderson’s “*The Rebuilding of News*” (2013) – does not offer an explicit definition of what is meant by metropolitan journalism in the first place.

Not much help comes from the field of urban sociology, either. Here, it is even unclear what can be understood by a metropolis, except that it is a large city of importance that emerges over generations (cf. Duncan et al., 1960; Singh, 1996). Following Wirth (1969, p. 148), a metropolis is basically defined as a “large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals”. Taking the example of Germany, the federal administration has adopted this general idea of metropolises, characterizing them as “spaces of high agglomeration with more than half a million inhabitants which develop dynamically with respect to economic criteria like economic value added, economic power and income and are particularly prominent and incorporated internationally” (BBR, 2005, p. 177, translated by author). Furthermore, metropolises in Germany are regarded as ‘important’ in terms of attracting global corporations, political decision-making on a national and international scale, providing gateways to information and transportation infrastructure, and thriving as cultural and scientific centres, including media production (cf. BBR, 2011, p. 208). Looking at further European countries, it is even more difficult to agree on a clear definition of the metropolis, also because of the strategic development of metropolitan areas that include suburban regions of varying size, growth and economic potential (cf. Tomàs, 2015).

To conceptualize journalism in a metropolitan context, these characteristics do not suffice as they cannot grasp social and cultural dynamics and mentalities that make the metropolis – and ‘its’ journalism – distinguishable. Wirth (1969, p. 160) stressed a sociological perspective on the city that, in his view, features “a set of practices, of common habits, sentiments and traditions which have grown up through several generations of life and are characteristic of a typical cultural unit”. Insofar, understanding a metropolis might start with its mere size, but must continue with its sociological dimensions: Läßle (2007, p. 505, FN11) pointed out for Germany that a process of metropolization had been pushed forward by political institutions in order to strengthen economic potentials of urban agglomeration sustainably. This endeavour led, together with the societal meta processes of globalization and digitization, to a lasting appeal of the metropolis concept as a space for “new urban dynamics”, taking advantage of the “fluidity of goods and information”, the “advantages of scale effects” that are connected to agglomeration economies (Läßle, 2007, p. 235). A first step might be, hence, to define the size of the metropolis, but this should be followed by an analysis of how it is constructed and moulded by urban dynamics, which essentially means (changing) communicative practices. Amin and Thrift (2002) have posed this quite paradigmatically:

The city is everywhere and in everything. If the urbanized world now is a chain of metropolitan areas connected by places/corridors of communication (airports and airways, stations and railways, parking lots and motorways, teleports and information highways) then what is not the urban? Is it the town, the village, the countryside? Maybe, but only to a limited

degree. The footprints from the city are all over these places, in the form of city commuters, tourists, teleworking, the media, and the urbanization of lifestyles. The traditional divide between the city and the countryside has been perforated. (Amin/Thrift 2002, p. 1)

So, the urban spirit – the perception of what urbanity means and expresses – is disseminated and boosted by media communications. The metropolis can be conceived as a very strong reference point: signifying are no longer space-related clichéd representations like the “*shadow of the skyscraper*” (Zorbaugh, 1976, p. 1) (although skylines do have at least a touristic value), but rather the unique cultural identifier of communicative (inter)action in the metropolitan setting.

In this context, urban sociology neglects journalism widely in favour of overall media communications, used by citizens to engage with each other and the institutional realm at large. In his study on how cities become ‘*smarter*’ through (the use of) media technologies, Townsend (2013, p. 320) argues that especially digital media have opened up an unprecedented horizon for participation, networking, transparency and civic action towards “*a more just, social and sustainable future*” (for everyone’s own city that is), emphasizing that it is not about contestation but about communitization, bringing the citizens together to build their community collaboratively. It is obvious that Townsend is not interested very much in legacy news media. However, he focuses on the mediatized empowerment of new actors on the public urban stage. Shirky (2008) boiled this down to the catchphrase “*here comes everybody*”, highlighting the grassroots as starting point for individual and collective agency. Townsend shows that this process starts to matter in the modern metropolis and complements the traditional news media public, thereby redefining the urban information ecosphere of the formerly (mass) ‘*media city*’ (cf. McQuire, 2008) into the ‘*mediatized city*’ (which signals a more profound social and cultural transformation). This is where Townsend’s discussion unfolds the underlying issues as he is not concerned with explicit forms of news production and distribution, neither with traditional vessels (e.g. newspapers, news broadcast) nor unconventional forms (e.g. alternative local news websites, social media reporting), but very much with fundamental consequences of ICT transformation, namely the open source movement, political communication, and digital divide.

## 2.2 Journalism in a metropolis

Where does that leave journalism as a profession, as a cultural practice and as a commodity? As cities continue to grow, it is worthwhile considering media – especially those technologically based communication media that are used by citizens to consume and share *journalism* and *information* that are relevant to them – as a core functional characteristic of a metropolis. If newspapers as

a prime journalistic medium and product have been traditionally the “*beating heart of society*” (Calcutt/Hammond, 2011, p. 63), journalism has been definitely the pulse of the metropolis in the twentieth and also the beginning of the twenty-first century. Taking into account recent developments, seemingly substituting emergent media services that do not offer journalism but communication capabilities and occupy the attention and time of media users who use them to create their own networks of information, there has also been a remarkable growth of reporting both in quantity and diversity in many large cities. Notwithstanding falls in newspaper circulation, there have been and still are numerous start-up initiatives by (partially laid-off) freelance journalists, young professionals or lateral entrants that increased, especially in large cities, the overall range of reporting (cf. Beckett, 2015).

The partial disentanglement of journalism from legacy news organisations has been reflected quite extensively in journalism research (e.g. Atton/Hamilton, 2008; Couldry/Curran, 2003; Harcup, 2005; Meadows, 2013). However, a solidified concept of metropolitan journalism is required to comprehend properly the related transformations in an urban media environment. In her study on the interrelation of media and the city, Georgiou (2013) discusses four interfaces between media and the city: consumption, identity, community and action. All of these are characterized by tensions and have implications for the role of journalism in the urban information ecosphere:

*Consumption:* The metropolis is an urban space where commercialization of everything becomes particularly apparent: nearly every aspect of the city is transformed into a consumable entity, not only for touristic purposes, but as an economic imperative. Ubiquitous advertising is a vivid example, next to retail, most noteworthy malls, development sites or ostentatious institutional self-representation. Yet, journalism is a part of this commodified environment, and media are instruments and commodities at the same time. Media technologies, their desirability (‘*gadgets*’) and appropriation in everyday life is one of the most important driving forces of present urban transformation. However, they do not exclusively promote consumption, but also media practices that create alternative perspectives, e.g. individual efforts in media production or consumption-critical approaches as a form of political participation (cf. the chapter by Sigrid Kannengießner in this volume).

*Identity:* Primarily in the city, differing identity representations that object to mainstream political morale tend to become explicit in public space. This can take various forms, for instance sub-cultural critique, resistance even, but most take advantage of media. Georgiou mentions music or graffiti art. Those identity-relevant counter drafts use the symbolic and material repertoire of the media and bear witness to a creative effort that is, as Georgiou (2013, p. 149) states,

“sometimes the only kind of representation that certain groups are allowed to have within (neo)liberal western democracy.” Journalism amplifies this by providing information and commenting on current metro affairs, and by stimulating discussions on public issues it contributes towards an understanding between individual life plans, social realities, and cultural contexts.

*Community:* The term ‘*community*’ has a relational meaning. It can refer, for instance, to a geographical space or to a notion of building relationships. In both cases, ‘*community*’ stresses a notion of connectivity, collaboration, and participation (cf. Bartz, 2016). Media play an important role for all kinds of communications within a community, including direct communication, news dissemination, self-representations and so forth. A strong body of research has been conducted focussing on community journalism, analysing influences and interactions between so-called citizen journalists (laymen who engage as independent reporters) and professional newsrooms who pursue a close link to the citizens of the community they serve (e.g. Abernathy, 2014; Altschull, 1996; Lauterer, 2006; Reader/Hatcher, 2012). The concept of ‘*community journalism*’ reflects the impetus of news workers to engage with their respective community, to encourage a sense of place, to encourage citizens to be an active part of the community and providing the required information for this (cf. Carpenter/Nah, 2015). Tensions can occur with fluctuations in a community, especially through the continued (national and international) migration into metropolitan areas which directly affects journalists’ integration attempts, trying to include citizens with diverse cultural backgrounds, different expectations and senses of belonging with respect to the community.

*Action:* By action, Georgiou understands organised political action by ordinary citizens and civic stakeholders. Social action with a vision for political change can be described as a natural side effect of metropolitan life: high population density, urban development, education, infrastructure and so many other public issues in a big city and its exurbs, is regularly discussed critically by collectivities like citizens’ groups or larger social movements. Communication media play a crucial role for civic action, both for coordinating collective agency and as everyday media practice, because they help to spread the word and to engage even wider urban publics. In short, action refers basically to the empowerment of the citizen to engage with the media, to take part or even induce collective endeavours in order to shape public debates – which preferably take the urban stage to set a mark. For journalism, this means a potential higher demand, but also more likely chances to provide options for participation, to “*join the conversation*” (cf. CNN’s famous tagline) in both directions: the one moderated from within the newsrooms, and the one taking place among new public agents.

To approach the conceptualization of metropolitan journalism, we have to bring to mind some characteristics that can be ascribed to metropolises against the backdrop of continued mediatization. Based i.a. on the historical concentration of mass media organisations in cities in order to be at the centres of political decision-making, media diversity in terms of the number of news media produced in a particular city including alternative media actors (individuals as well as organisations) is significantly high in areas of high agglomeration. However, media audiences living in a somewhat congested metropolis do not constitute a homogeneous mass but, on the contrary, they are rather highly fragmented in their alignments towards the available news outlets. Depending on the size and degree of media diversity in a metropolitan area, the news market there is also highly competitive; whereas monopolies prevail in many smaller cities and rural regions, posing the risk of “*news deserts*” if crisis hits (cf. Kennedy, 2013, p. 147). With growing population, the ICT infrastructure in large cities is perpetually upgraded and expanded, offering fast and uninterrupted connection rates and an increasing number of diverse emerging services. These basic characteristics mould the socio-cultural, political and economic contexts that are the determining factors for journalism practice and the institutional dynamics framing it.

Due to the mostly seamless connectivity, commuting in metropolitan areas by public transport does not entail adjourning media usage, but can even intensify it with a dense ICT-equipped bus, subway, tram or train network, giving commuters the freedom to engage with media (cf. Bjørner, 2015). Ubiquitous access to online services and the resulting omnipresence of connectivity has also led on to a more dynamic relation between the local and the global, connecting individuals, collectivities, organisations and cultures worldwide that nevertheless still rely very much on their local living conditions (cf. Smith, 2002). This translates into, for instance, most vivid social media interactions within and between metropolitan regions (cf. Takhtejev/Gruzd/Wellman, 2012) and has consequences for metropolitan journalism at the intersection between spatial parameters and communicative boundlessness. For example, local reporting in the metropolis has the possibility to scale the concept of community, from globally oriented urban cultures, to the city and the district as administrative units, to the neighbourhood and even smaller parts of the metropolitan community which might be labelled as “*hyperlocality*” (cf. Metzgar/Kurpius/Rowley, 2011).

It is not solely a cliché that metropolises are perceived (notably also by their own inhabitants) as cosmopolitan by nature: this can refer to the cultural diversity and overall international orientation at eye level with other large cities around the world (cf. Georgiou, 2013, pp. 3-4). They benchmark themselves more likely against international metropolises, “*creative knowledge cities*” in particular (cf. Van Geenhuizen/Nijkamp, 2012), because of their

globalised business relations, political ambitions, and interlinked cultural production. Demographic trends and continuing migration of the younger population into metropolitan areas further corroborate some kind of guiding role of metropolises in terms of political, economic or cultural orientation. This is also reflected by a (political, economic, cultural) orientation towards innovation in large cities that are anyhow confronted with growth development and therefore a soaring demand for urban planning. For journalism practice in a metropolis, these are relevant preconditions that can naturally create a dilemma: they put journalists and news organisations in the difficult position of needing to put effective change management strategies in place to be able to keep up with the pace of innovation and at the same time remain true to their societal functions, providing thorough and critical reporting in times of rapid and profound (media and cultural) change.

### 2.3 Journalism for a metropolis

Metropolises need a particular form of journalism that is responsive to the specifics of its contexts, orientations and, most importantly, its ambivalences: Where digital information and communications technologies open up manifold options for individuals and collectivities and tend to support processes of social splintering (cf. Graham/Marvin, 2001), journalism has at least three frames of relevance, that is specific orientations that have a guiding and determining role for journalism practice in a large city (and beyond): the democratic and socio-political function of journalism as an autonomous agent of a critical public sphere; the integrative function of journalism as a public forum for a deliberative discourse; and an economic stability of the organisational structures to ensure journalism's viability.

Firstly, its (in most European countries constitutional) *democratic and socio-political function* is supposed to provide citizens with current information about their urban environment, covering the government and politics, business, the arts and other areas of civic life in order to contribute towards a critical public and enable citizens to form an opinion and make up their minds. Secondly, journalism ideally offers a *public cultural forum* which represents a wide range of citizens' voices and viewpoints. For the most part of modern history, journalism in a metropolitan setting could rely on a relatively stable media environment: morning and evening newspapers, weeklies, bulletins, radio and even television did not change much in terms of how news was produced and disseminated in areas of high agglomeration. Whether or not the ideal of the integration of citizen's direct concerns were met depended on the structurally privileged and autonomous status of news organisations as sole agents of the public sphere. Journalism has acted as a distinct social domain producing

meaning for a mass audience. Therefore, the communicative distance between newsrooms and citizens has been relatively high. This has changed as much as journalism has had to become more responsive and needed to engage citizens in order to stay relevant as a provider of news – especially in the metropolis where alternative information sources and increasingly egalitarian public debate give news organisations a hard time. Thirdly, journalism has to *function economically* as this is its main funding structure. Nevertheless, transformations in the media environment have already raised questions about who produces metropolitan news – with many new actors like independent blogs or citizens reporting through social media – and what this implies for the already dwindling profitability and limited capacities of legacy news organisations to perform their civic functions. Hence, even if journalism might be more relevant and polymorphic than ever, it still needs to assess its financial viability in all its forms in order to ensure its performance and quality standards.

Keeping in mind journalism's frames of relevance and the main characteristics of metropolises, most importantly the elevated role of the metropolis in regional (with respect to its metropolitan area), national (due to its concentration of political and economic power) and international perception (based mainly on touristic, cultural and economic cross-linking), large cities constitute a distinctive set of implications that distinguish metropolitan journalism from other editorial focuses and contexts (see table 1).

Table 1: Implications of metropolitan perspectives for journalism's frames of relevance

| Perspectives         | Frame 1: Democratic and socio-political function   | Frame 2: Offering a public cultural forum   | Frame 3: Economic viability   |
|----------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>Political</b>     | Linking local political action and administration issues with broader (regional, national, global) perspectives  | Promoting political participation by initiating critical public debates, inviting citizens to express their opinions  | Sustaining journalism's independence and non-partisanship in times of structural crises   |
| <b>Economic</b>      | Discussing implications of economic domination with respect to urban development and beyond, including commercialization in everyday city life   | Moderating a discourse on the economic development of the metropolitan area, engaging citizens with a broad variety of corporate and administrative actors of relevance | Exploring economic perspectives of journalism practice on a competitive news market (entrepreneurial journalism, attraction of venture capitalists)     |
| <b>Cultural</b>      | Taking into account the many cultural manifestations and orientations in a metropolitan living environment and developing creative forms for news to expand its reach by meeting the preferences of urban communications among diverse, fragmented audiences | Moderating citizens' views and perceptions in the light of diverse cultural/ethnic backgrounds, promoting intercultural communication                                   | Maintaining cultural connectivity by monitoring the transformation of urban culture and sub-cultures and serving the distinctive needs of urban publics |
| <b>Technological</b> | Making use of the transforming urban media environment and new media practices to 'improve' journalism practice  | Supporting participation in various forms with emergent media technologies  | Pioneering in technological adaption and development concerning journalism practice and dissemination   |

Thus, the following can be attested to journalism in most metropolises that undergo the outlined transformational processes:

- Metropolitan journalism can be understood as a distinct communicative figuration of journalism and not merely as a form of local journalism. Drawing on Hepp (2015, p. 31), communicative figurations are defined as “*patterned processes of (transmedial) communicative interweaving*” (cf. also Couldry/Hepp, 2016). A figurational approach allows to rethink the interdependence between journalism practice, its institutional conditions and actor constellations (which include different journalistic actors and audiences), in relation to the urban media environment and social dynamics of a metropolis (cf. Kramp, 2015; Loosen, 2015). Large cities are often home to the headquarters of news organisations that have a wider regional, national or international editorial focus. However, in metropolises, there are many more actors involved in the production of news. With a highly diverse, but dense figuration of individual as well as institutional (political, corporate, charitable) actors participating in the production of news against the backdrop of the metropolitan media environment, various forms of editorial orientations coexist (e.g. local, regional, national, international or special interest), deeply intertwined with the social dynamics of the metropolis. This is true whether the city itself is the subject of news or whether it is just the living and working environment of the journalists producing the news. Furthermore, metropolitan presence offers news organisations proximity to power and to highly diverse audiences. Here, interactions, dynamics and the rules of engagement that derive from urban culture(s) can be observed in their very polarization: between audiences and journalists, and between professional communicators themselves. Metropolitan journalism, understood in this way, has a particular potential of engaging manifold audiences that themselves have transformed into traceable, but also sovereign and active media users with considerable creative potential (cf. Anderson, 2011).
- A metropolis commonly attracts not only attention from tourists, but also from investors and media from abroad that reinforce its exceptional position, pushing innovation forward. However, there is a big qualitative difference between, on the one side, the multi-faceted use of innovative information and communication technologies in metropolises, whether it is to control urban infrastructures, manage public administration and urban planning, guide tourists, organise politics and the accumulation of data, and, on the other side, the involvement of news organisations in technological innovations to enrich reporting, to engage the public or to generate new income streams. The interwoven urban media activities increase both the pressure to innovate in order to keep up with the development in other

large cities nationally and internationally, but also the likelihood of signal effects that arise from the innovation drive in the respective national media – and news – industry.

- Urban publics – especially those in areas of high agglomeration – have been altered significantly by mobile computing, social media and digital traces, blurring the private and the public and resulting in various new kinds of digital communicative practices and collective action (cf. Mathew, 2015, p. 44). What seems to be a promise of optimized connectivity leading towards the participation that matters for a ‘*better*’ city and a ‘greater good’ finds its counterdraft in metropolitan surveillance, comprehensive data mining, and controllability of mediatized human interaction (cf. Edwards, 2016). Journalism is at the intersection of these promises and threats; on the one hand, paving the way to a critical understanding of pioneering innovation and its social, economic and political implications that originate from and yield consequences in the metropolis and, on the other hand, promoting technological change for its own sake, even embracing it (cf. Witschge, 2012, pp. 105-107). Hence, it can be considered a key element of metropolitan journalism to be conflicted in terms of profound transformation processes of mediatization that metropolises have to deal with in particular.
- A metropolis mostly has usually more than one (local) newspaper and broadcaster that ensure media diversity and competition on a contested news market. Additionally, it might encompass national and special interest media that, in addition to the general interest media, provide more specific news for the diverse information demands of a population that is highly heterogeneous in terms of their cultural, educational and social backgrounds. The entirety of news media, turning the city into a production centre for widely recognized media affordances, also contributes to the elevated orientation function of the metropolis.

Metropolitan journalism itself undergoes a transformational process, pushing the boundaries of how news is produced and mediated, welcoming new actors with professional backgrounds in software engineering, media design or event development. At the same time, innovation should not just be assessed on its own merits, but mainly according to whether it bends, or even undermines, or rather supports the journalistic commitment to critical reporting to the benefit of keeping up with audiences’ preferences and demands, or develops concepts that sustainably strengthen institutional structures.

### 3 The metropolis as a trendsetter for journalism innovation on the examples of Berlin, Hamburg and Munich

Metropolitan journalism has always been in constant flux due to influences of market competition or social, cultural, political and technological changes that unfold in metropolitan areas on a regular basis. The recent “wave” of media-tization, typified by widely effective digitization processes (cf. Hepp, 2013, p. 54), gave rise to another profound transformation of metropolitan journalism. In the following, by using a figurational approach, this transformation will be analysed on the example of current developments on news markets in the three biggest German cities Berlin, Hamburg and Munich. The aim is to identify characteristic patterns of metropolitan journalism that help to substantiate its concept: First, we look at how the metropolises became centres of exploring and determining new perspectives for journalism practice (including distribution); second, how new communicative forms and styles have been developed and adopted; third, how ‘*hyperlocality*’ became a definitive pattern of mediating news in the metropolis; and, fourth, how metropolitan audiences are engaged by and with journalism.

#### 3.1 *Building centres of pioneering change*

As the study of journalism today has to go far beyond the scope of newspaper publishing to comprehend all the dynamics and transformational processes that alter the profession, its business, its roles, output and institutional frameworks, a conceptualization of metropolitan journalism should not ignore the various efforts of news organisations to invest in innovative ideas that add to journalism and news mediation in a wider sense. For example, two of the biggest news publishers in Germany, Axel Springer in Berlin and Hubert Burda Media in Munich, have already reinvented themselves not only as multiplatform corporations but as highly diversified conglomerates that made digital ventures top priority beyond their actual core business of producing news in the traditional sense. These (and other) news publishers pursue business strategies that include as diverse information and communications services as possible. Another example, the leading German news agency *dpa* (Berlin/Hamburg), founded – together with the municipal government of Hamburg – a funding initiative for digital media start-ups called next media accelerator ([www.nma.vc](http://www.nma.vc)), which actively seeks new ideas for the production and mediation of news and related business potentials.

These endeavours are accentuated by metropolitan conferences that have been founded or changed their focus with digitization becoming prevalent. Every May, Berlin transforms into the European capital of ‘netizens’: Since 2007, the re:publica conference addresses many facets of digital society. It has grown into one of the biggest gatherings for discussions on the transformation of media and society ([www.re-publica.de](http://www.re-publica.de)). In its first year, the conference was perceived by some established media actors as a self-referential closed shop without any connection to the general public (cf. Schoeb, 2007). Just a few years later, it has become an example for institutionalized dynamics of pioneer communities, bringing together activists, hackers, makers, entrepreneurs and NGOs with scholars, journalists and social media and marketing experts (cf. Wünsch, 2013, 2014). As the German capital evolved into an internationally respected attraction for digital pioneers and innovation culture with a growing number of project labs, barcamps, hackathons and other events surrounding media-related digitization, it is a vivid example of a changing urban media environment that is not a unique example any more.

This has widened the scope of journalism innovation and its reflexion in professional self-understanding. Alongside the re:publica in Berlin, other conferences were launched that bring together journalists with publishing strategists, content managers and digital entrepreneurs with quite diverse backgrounds to discuss issues, pitch ideas and build collaborations. Many European cities have launched funding programmes and development plans for the digital media industry, including news operations. Hamburg, for instance, evoked an initiative (Next.Media.Hamburg) for digital start ups in the media sector to promote and supplement the creative industries with support structures that comprise guidance, premises, graduate consulting, vocational learning, and financing. The annual Hanseatic Scoopcamp conference, co-financed by the city initiative and the *dpa* news agency, strives to push forward dialogue and join forces in order to innovate journalism ([www.scoopcamp.de](http://www.scoopcamp.de)). The Reporter-Forum, also in Hamburg and hosted by Germany’s leading news magazine *Der Spiegel*, picks up on the implications of professional adjustments due to media, social and cultural change by a strong focus on journalism practice ([www.reporter-forum.de](http://www.reporter-forum.de)). And, to give a third of many examples, the Vocer Innovation Day, organised by the non-profit German Association of Media and Journalism Criticism (VfMJ) in Hamburg, bridges academic research on journalism innovation and the experiences of pioneers from media practice to reflect on the opportunities and risks attached to ongoing processes of change ([www.vocer.org/vocer-innovation-day](http://www.vocer.org/vocer-innovation-day)). Munich is another stronghold of addressing the economic and practical challenges of media change for journalism in form of conference events like the established Munich Media Days ([www.medientage.de](http://www.medientage.de)) or the relatively young Digital Media Camp, organised by the Media Lab Bavaria ([www.medialab-bayern.de/digital-media-camp](http://www.medialab-bayern.de/digital-media-camp)). Altogether, this is an

indicator that metropolises serve as centres of the media industry to influence debates on and the race for media innovation and resulting implications for the news business, journalism practice and the constant re-assessment of digital public sphere(s) in terms of news production, news consumption and vocational training.

By this, especially in the three metropolises Berlin, Hamburg and Munich, conferences, hackathons or other gatherings that institutionalize collaboration on challenges of digital media transformation make a significant contribution towards generating *structural patterns* of professional communicative exchange and interdisciplinary development in the production of news, bringing together expertise from other parts of the media industry. In this way, metropolitan publishers develop interests in exogenous concepts like *'incubators'*, *'accelerators'*, *'beta culture'*, *'venture capital'* or *'pivot'*. And they can gain an open mind about seeking inspiration from gaming (e.g. newsgames), coding and software development (e.g. direct messaging, social networking, chatbots), wearables and other technological hardware (e.g. Virtual Reality electronics, drones), interactive design (e.g. responsiveness, Webgraphics) or new organisational models (e.g. collaboration, co-working-spaces). For Germany, this fundamental orientation of news organisations towards the interactive digital media industry and start-up culture in metropolitan areas is regarded as one of the most profound strategic adjustments in publishing history (Del Din et al., 2014).

### 3.2 *Competing for markets, creating new communicative forms and styles*

The example of Berlin also illustrates very well the long-lasting struggle of news media to dominate metropolitan press markets. In Berlin, the implications of media change have been particularly prominent with all major news publishers on the spot. Berlin – as the country's largest city – might not be the *'newspaper capital'* of Germany in terms of sold copies compared to the size of city population (this title belongs traditionally to Munich with nearly 30 newspaper buyers per 100 inhabitants). However, in no other German metropolis are more newspapers sold in total (ca. 600,000 on a daily basis) and nowhere else in Germany is there a higher diversity of newspapers, but also news media in general. Over decades, long before Berlin regained its status as the political capital of Germany, the city was the scene of a continuous trial of strength between newspapers of record, tabloids, city magazines, radio and TV broadcasters and special interest media. The city has never been easy to conquer for legacy media institutions. When the government and parliament moved to Berlin in September 1999, this was accompanied by hopes for a new period of prosperity on the Berlin newspaper market. Publishing houses started

new projects and initiatives and lured a variety of renowned journalists into the metropolis in order to dominate parts of the capital's contested news market. In her dissertation, Mützel (2002) structured the process of competition to become 'the' capital German city newspaper into four trajectories:

In phase I, "*Explaining Berlin*" (starting 1995/96), the publishers Gruner+Jahr and Axel Springer expanded their market shares with notable investments into their dailies *Berliner Zeitung* and *Die Welt*. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* introduced a special weekly page for Berlin. In phase II, 'Celebrating Berlin', just before the relocation of the government from Bonn to Berlin, a quest for interpretive power in the nascent capital commenced: The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) competed with the *Tagespiegel*, the *Berliner Zeitung* and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ) for the favour of the Berlin readers as well. For instance, the SZ started to print a page dedicated to Berlin on a daily instead of a weekly basis and increased their Berlin newsroom staff by 15 journalists. This was succeeded by phase III, '*(Re)discovering Berlin*' (starting around September 1999), when the FAZ started to print six to eight Berlin pages each day and increased their Berlin newsroom near Friedrichstraße by as many as 35 journalists. The "*Berlin Pages*" were a further step to gain interpretive influence in the new Berlin republic to offer a fresh, capital-worthy view on the cultural, economic and political melange with accompanying social challenges in a growing metropolis. The unfinished, improvised, chaotic atmosphere in the freshly elected capital was the blue print for a new feuilletonistic approach, in which political and cultural phenomena were interpreted under the impression of the zeitgeist that arose from the tensions between the general spirit of optimism and creative drive, on the one side, and the social realities and challenges on the other. The "*Berlin Pages*" merged local with national and global perspectives and were meant to offer "*a playful access to the world, feuilletonistic, young, conservative but also open to create new spaces of observation*" (Bauschke, 2002, translated by author). Young societal and arts and leisure reporters started with big attitudes, vigorous writing, and fresh viewpoints. However, the new city beat in the national newspapers of record did not meet the expectations of the publishers who hoped to win over significant numbers of new metropolitan subscribers. In phase IV, '*Being in Berlin*', the investments were diminished by the crash of the '*new market*' at the beginning of the year 2000. FAZ and SZ cut their Berlin sections barely three years after their introduction in 2002 (cf. Hornig/Schulz, 2002), but their style, their communicative approach to mediate what happens in the vibrant sphere of the metropolis, which oscillated somewhere between urban overstatement and a self-reflexive irony, prevailed in various outlets like the weekly *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, the arts and leisure magazine *Monopol*, or in the weekly magazine of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the *ZEITmagazin*. The idea has also proven successful in terms of local reporting on the relation of metro-

politan lifestyles and politics: The national weekly *Die Zeit* started local pages for Hamburg in early 2014, and the news magazine *Der Spiegel* launched a regional section for North Rhine-Westphalia in 2016. What started as a (partially failed) business strategy to boost circulation on a contested metropolitan market, transformed into the emergence and sedimentation of a unique journalism style and self-perception which intensively connected to socio-cultural and socio-political urban lifestyles.

Nearly twelve years after the vanishing of the “*Berlin Pages*”, the *Tagesspiegel* experimented successfully with a newsletter format entitled “*Checkpoint*”. On November 24, 2014, editor-in-chief Lorenz Maroldt started a daily letter that attracts growing numbers of users who receive the newsletter around 6:00 o’clock each morning (cf. Lüdtkke, 2015). In early 2016, 91,000 subscriptions were counted – at a daily print circulation of the *Tagesspiegel* of around 111,000 in the fourth quarter of 2015. Its personal perspective, the curative approach to include up-to-date news and quotes from many different urban sources (and not only exclusively from the own newsroom) as well as the witty jargon in which it is written makes the newsletter a model for a successful format to mediate metropolitan news to an audience who does not necessarily subscribe to a newspaper. Maroldt’s project received a number of awards<sup>2</sup> that underlined its perception as a trendsetter for local news. Editorial newsletters offer an individual selection, a personal approach by the editor(s) in chief, a distinctive style, and the possibility to lower the communicative distance between the newsroom and the audience. They are thereby significantly different to marketing newsletters that focus on triggering interest for publishing products, whether newspapers, broadcasts or news websites. The editorial newsletter has evolved into a unique journalistic form of expression.

The “*Checkpoint*” newsletter was not the first editorial newsletter as such,<sup>3</sup> but it set the tone for (urban) local news and triggered many similar initiatives. In the following year, the idea travelled as a conceptual role model to other German cities: *Die Zeit* started its Hamburg newsletter “*Elbvertiefung*” (which means the dredging of the river Elbe so it stays navigable for container vessels). The FAZ started a newsletter entitled “*Hauptwache*” for the Rhine-Main metro region named after the famous historic guardhouse in Frankfurt’s city centre. Beside some nationally focused newsletters by *Bild*, *Focus* and *Spiegel*, over 20 regional newspapers developed plans to set up newsletters for regular personal ‘*morning briefings*’ by their editors-in-chief about the local

2 The ‘Checkpoint’ newsletter received the ‘Grimme Online Award’ (2015) in the category ‘Information’, the ‘Local Journalism Award’ (2015) of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in the category ‘Innovation’ and the independent ‘Golden Blogger Award’ (2016) sponsored by a consortium of high-profiled bloggers in Germany.

3 For instance, the national economic daily *Handelsblatt* started a newsletter by its editor-in-chief in April 2011 that according to the publishing group reached over 450,000 recipients in June 2015 (VHB, 2015).

state of news (cf. BDZV, 2015).<sup>4</sup> This is underlined by a growing popularity of newsletters as a form of mediating the news in other parts of the world, for instance, in the United States (cf. Carr, 2014).

Both examples have been discussed here because they show how metropolitan journalism creates or shapes *patterns of mediating* the news effectively with a strong outreach to other news outlets. This should not be understood as a linear transfer of innovative formats and styles from the centre to the peripheries, but as an adaptation process that builds on the model character of the respective paragon. By this, the mediation pattern gains currency in a wider context of journalism practice as a distinct tonality or form of expression.

### 3.3 Hyperlocality in the urban context

Another communicative form that was repurposed for the mediation of news is the weblog. Blogs started as an almost exclusively private form of expressing personal views and providing insights on the social life world of its author (analogue to the function of a – public – diary). They soon became public media themselves and created a whole new referencing system, the ‘blogosphere’, generating interest and relevance for alternative approaches towards public issues (cf. Roodhouse, 2009; Weichert/Zabel, 2009). Large cities in Germany have experienced a steep increase of so-called ‘hyperlocal’ news blogs, which were founded with the attempt to compensate – and correct – the failures of established local news organisations. Metzgar and colleagues (2011, p. 774) define hyperlocal media operations as “geographically-based, community-oriented, original-news-reporting organisations indigenous to the web and intended to fill perceived gaps in coverage of an issue or region and to promote civic engagement.” Interdependent hyperlocal German news blogs like Prenzlauer Berg Nachrichten, named after a popular district in Berlin, or *neukoellner.net*, a blog from a typical Berlin ‘Kiez’ (neighbourhood) with an ethnically mixed population, have been awarded for their reporting on local issues concerning their respective city district.

In Germany there are several hundred independent blogs that fit this description. Mostly produced by freelance journalists or collectivities of citizens who practice journalism as a kind of hobby with dedication, these blogs are mainly financed by advertising, sponsoring or crowdfunding. The German *kiezblogs* (‘neighbourhood blogs’) directory ([www.kiezblogs.de](http://www.kiezblogs.de)) lists around

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4 Others followed suit after the success of the ‘Checkpoint’ newsletter. For instance, among others, the *Lausitzer Rundschau* in Cottbus, the *Ruhrnachrichten* in Dortmund and the *Stuttgarter Nachrichten* started in December 2014, the *Rheinische Post* in Düsseldorf and the *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung* started even earlier in March and April 2014.

150 hyperlocal blogs in Berlin alone, in Hamburg 50, in Munich 20 and in smaller metropolitan areas between 5 and 10. News blogs that are not part of the (growing) portfolio of established news organisation expand the local news environment by participating in news production as new kinds of actors. Depending on the organisational model of their endeavour, they are journalists, entrepreneurs or fundraisers at the same time. Financial issues were dominant in the years after the first wave of blogs, founded under the impression of the newspaper crisis that became manifest in the year 2009 when the German Association of newspapers announced the most difficult year in the history of the news business in Germany because of the continuous decline of circulation figures and advertising revenues which was followed by several rounds of layoffs and a continued market concentration. In the year 2014, hyperlocal blogs themselves experienced some prominent backlash in the form of closures of beacon projects like *Altona.info* from Hamburg or *Heddesheimblog* from Baden-Wuerttemberg in 2014. However, the overall tendency towards higher diversity in local news production by freelance journalists who offer their own product without being dependent on hierarchies and decision-making processes of legacy newsrooms is still strong: In January 2016, the German Association for Information Technology, Telecommunications and New Media (Bitkom, 2016) published results of a representative survey showing that nearly one third of all internet users in Germany read local blogs. These are not exclusively alternative non-profits or emerging start ups, as publishing houses have gradually regained lost ground by strengthening their hyperlocal reporting.

In the metropolitan environment, the willingness of news organisations like the *Tagesspiegel* in Berlin or the *Hamburger Abendblatt* in Hamburg to experiment with blog formats underline the relevance of the hyperlocal perspective that has been expedited by concerned public actors as independent news media. Harnischmacher (2015) argues that this change in actor constellations of metropolitan journalism (with respect to hyperlocal reporting from the districts) and local journalism (with respect to small cities and rural regions) has overall strengthened journalism, but did not threaten its viability. On the contrary: the initiatives on the part of few attracted interest by local audiences and has pushed traditional news organisations in a direction that had previously been neglected. In the case of *Prenzlauer Berg Nachrichten* it even proved fruitful in convincing a critical number of users to make a financial commitment to avert closure by creating a subscription base that was sufficient enough to ensure the upholding of the editorial work which had been under pressure due to the lack of advertising revenues (cf. Zappner, 2015). This support by paying users might be regarded as a value in itself or in the competition of old and new media, but it rather implies the demand for news in the immediate living environment. In another metropolitan area, the Main-Rhine region, this

perception might have attracted the investors who fund the start-up *Merkurist*, a hyperlocal news portal for the city of Mainz with plans to serve Wiesbaden and Frankfurt/Main as well. The project received venture capital to get onto the tracks and develop a revenue model based on advertising (cf. Baurmann, 2015).

After all, hyperlocality as an editorial focus is yet to become established as a *definitive pattern of news production in metropolitan journalism* with some independent projects vanishing because of lack of finances. This, however, should not be misunderstood as an overall downward trend (cf. Lowrey/Woo, 2010, p. 43) because the focus has been adopted already in everyday news production. Whether hyperlocal media operations are able to fill the perceived hole in local news coverage (cf. Williams/Harte/Turner, 2015) not only substantially, but also sustainably, remains an open question. While small independent projects struggle with their financial backing and the development of promising entrepreneurial strategies, legacy media are starting to cooperate with some of them (cf. Langer, 2012).

### *3.4 Engaging the metropolitan audience*

If the metropolitan media environment can be described as the nucleus of transformation in journalism (see above), young media users are the main drivers of change. The average audiences of traditional news products (e.g. newspapers, television and radio broadcasts) grow older each year, younger cohorts do not automatically turn towards these offerings when they reach a certain age (cf. Engel/Breunig, 2015; Newman/Levy/Nielsen, 2015, pp. 9-11). Media usage has become increasingly disperse and fluctuating (cf. Schröder, 2015), making it necessary for news organisations to enter new markets, platforms and channels in order to prevent a loss of significance and their economic basis. In the news sector, different approaches are pursued: A lasting trend – the so-called ‘unbundling’ of news distribution – aims at reaching the mobile, constantly migrating young media users through a wide range of third-party online platforms and apps like social networks (e.g. Facebook’s ‘Instant Articles’), search engines (e.g. Google’s ‘Accelerated Mobile Pages’), messaging services (e.g. Whatsapp or Snapchat) or online newsstands (e.g. Blendle or Readly) where you can buy single articles or purchase a flat rate to read as much as you can in the billing period.

Another recent trend is the emergence of news products that directly address the young target group. In Germany, a considerable number of metropolitan newsrooms launched customized websites for adolescents and young adults somewhere between 12 and 35. This cohort is in the focus of many industries, e.g. consumer marketing and human resource management, and is

depicted rather differently by generational labels like “*Generation Y*” (Bolton et al., 2013), “*Generation Z*” (Carrington et al., 2016), “*Millennials*” (Poindexter, 2012) or “*transformational natives*” (Schuldt/Ehret, 2015, pp. 9-13).

Apart from these attempts to characterize highly heterogeneous audiences or consumers in a specific age range for product development, representing “nearly half the audience for entertainment in developed markets and more than a third of the audience for publishing and online services” (Colombani/Sanderson, 2015, p. 1), some common denominators can be identified in their relationship to urban culture: First, young Germans continue to migrate into metropolises, looking for education and job opportunities in thriving urban environments. Second, families no longer migrate out of the cities like they did before in favour of the quieter living environment of the hinterland, but instead remain in well developed neighbourhoods of the metropolis with direct access to the urban infrastructures (cf. Sander, 2014, pp. 229-230). And third, due to the concentration of overall media production in metropolitan centres, these cities again function as appealing frames of reference.

70 percent of the newspaper publishers in Germany have plans to launch target-group specific digital news products in 2016 or later in order to strengthen their journalistic brand among a widely unapproachable young audience and not necessarily to generate revenues (Schickler/BDZV, 2016, p. 14). The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford proclaimed that 2016 would become “*The Year of Audience Engagement*” (Newman, 2016, p. 33). This impression has been picked up by around ten publishing houses in Germany that launched new website or apps in 2015 with a strong emphasis on engaging young audiences. And with the new German market entries of international innovation leaders like *Buzzfeed*, *Vice* and *Huffington Post*, which have been especially popular with younger users, the pressure rose continuously. The first of the bunch of new websites was launched in July 2015 with *Ze.tt* in Berlin (which is pronounced like the first letter of its parent brand *Die Zeit*), targeting high-school graduates and junior employees. *Bento* followed quickly thereafter in Hamburg, a news website named after a Japanese term for takeaway food, operated by *Der Spiegel*, addressing the “*Generation hashtag*” between 18 and 30 years (Spiegel Group, 2015). The *Handelsblatt*, Germany’s best circulating financial paper, started *Orange* with the comparably youngest editorial team among the new platforms, based in the metropolises Düsseldorf and Paris. Axel Springer launched *byou* (pronounced ‘be-you’), which wants to attract teenagers between the ages of 14 and 18, as a part of the online activities of its tabloid *Bild* in Berlin. It is highly likely that Burda Media’s *BNow!*, an app by its people magazine *Bunte* for young smartphone users (slogan: “*cheeky, colourful, emotional!*”) which is also produced in Berlin, will not be the last approach in the German news industry to engage the presumably lost young reader- and viewership.

These new portals come along as snappy and snotty, easily digestible media affordances for an age cohort that is assumed to need orientation and companionship while coming of age, but do not have enough time or interest to engage in conventional news sources. German news publishers have had serious problems getting to the heartbeat of social media interactions for years, illustrated by the most shared news articles in social networks among which only a few originate from legacy news media (cf. social media news-charts at [www.10000flies.de](http://www.10000flies.de), March 2016). With their strategically developed portals for young audiences, news organisations have taken a big step to adjust their communicative orientation: Whereas German newspaper newsrooms are characterized by a rather high communicative distance to their readership, similar to the United States (cf. Ekdale et al., 2015; Kramp, 2015, p. 42-43), this changes decisively in their attitude towards young users. Audience engagement through approachability, levity and dialogue between journalists in the newsroom and the users outside is approved as being not only a relevant, but a crucial requirement to attract audiences for news who otherwise would not be reached. Whether the dialogue begins, for instance, in a ‘timeline’ on Facebook, under a Twitter hashtag, with direct messages via Whatsapp or with an inviting contribution on the respective news website is not a critical factor, but rather the way how engaging the dialogue is moderated by the journalists. For example, at *Spiegel's bento*, at the end of the working day, young journalists report on what they experienced during the day in a personal video message. Because the video messages are distributed via the messaging service Snapchat and are therefore self-destructing, they are regarded as a very natural, authentic and playful format to engage with the users, says Martin Giesler, head of the social media unit at *bento*:

This is a playground for us: We try to experiment a lot on Snapchat. Every morning we send out 3-4 news items that we deem important. And in the evening, each one of the journalists in the newsroom is allowed to record a snap and tell everybody where they have been, how it was in a museum or at the university in Vienna. By this, we want to get on eye level with our users. We also think about telling stories exclusively via Snapchat, but this is more complicated obviously ... This is very appealing to us because you can just give it a try: Tomorrow it's gone. You can simply talk freely about what's up in your mind. (cited in ZAPP, 2016, translated by author)

Here, the metropolis and its urban representation of youth culture not only serves as a scenery in front of which news is produced, but it also and even more importantly serves as a major supplier of topics and occasions to start the conversation with the users. This is also reflected by another innovative form of audience engagement that is practiced by journalists predominantly in urban environments with a lively cultural scene: ‘Live journalism’ on a stage in a theatre setting appears as a counter draft to the broad online initiative to engage audiences directly with news (cf. Jackmann, 2016; Sullivan, 2015). Whereas

online media enable publishers to engage audiences through their communication devices at home or on the move, ‘live journalism’ that takes the stage or is performed in the streets brings forth new perspectives for engaging the local community in their tangible lifeworlds.

Several projects in the United States have explored the potentials and dynamics this form of news presentation offers, ranging from guided tours, interviews, re-enactments or readings, to theatre plays on true stories. It can also take the form of a travelling show event like the ones offered by the journalists of the US *Pop-Up Magazine* who perform preferably in metropolitan centres to make journalism tangible – opening a direct view into reporting practices and newsroom workflows on the example of a news story (cf. Sillesen, 2015). This is not solely limited to metropolitan areas. However, also in Germany, this is where this ‘de-mediatized’<sup>5</sup> form of audience engagement is being mainly initiated. In Munich, the journalist collective *Affe im Kopf* [Ape in the head] produces and performs theatre plays on the basis of fully investigated news stories with the journalists as actors. In Berlin, an initiative titled “Urban Journalism” ([www.urbanjournalism.de](http://www.urbanjournalism.de)) tries to do completely without media and rather stress the performative aspects of journalism in public space, engaging citizens face-to-face in their urban environment. The Berlin initiative is intended to be a network in development, bringing together ideas how journalism in a metropolis can be brought together with a seemingly unmediated experience of the urban social world.

Both the number of different online approaches to engage the attention of young media users and the – rather sporadic – face-to-face encounters on stage represent two distinct takes in the recent urge to engage audiences, to interact with them and to lower the communicative distance to users that are otherwise difficult to reach. They reveal that metropolitan journalism creates or shapes *patterns of interaction* with audiences and engagement that might be of basic or wider relevance, but are closely linked to metropolitan contexts.

#### 4 Conclusion

The United Nations are convinced that continuing migration into metropolitan areas will push urbanization forward so forcibly, that in the year 2050 circa 66 per cent of the world population is expected to live in cities (compared to 54 per cent in the year 2014) (cf. United Nations, 2014, pp. 7-8). This will lead to more metropolises and so-called megacities – the largest of the largest – on all continents. This will not only challenge administrations and infrastruc-

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5 ‘De-mediatization’ is used here as a notion of communicative practice where media play a less dominant role or are not a precondition.

tures, but also journalism. Picking up and altering a question that was posed by Hutchison and O'Donnell (Hutchison/O'Donnell, 2011, p. 2), this chapter discussed the factors, mechanisms and dynamics of a metropolitan domination in journalism transformation not by looking at circulation or viewing figures, but rather at distinct journalistic approaches that arise in a metropolitan context.

The proposed conceptualization of metropolitan journalism draws on socio-geographical specifics and related political, economic and cultural frames of relevance in which journalism is practiced in a metropolitan area. This makes it possible to study journalism in a metropolitan setting as a distinct form of journalism practice that – under specific conditions – functions as a precursor in the overall transformation of the journalistic profession and its approaches to reach audiences. The examples presented here suggest that metropolitan journalism is characterized by specific patterns that derive from the aforementioned metropolitan contexts. By adopting a figurational perspective, the interwoven dynamics of communicative practices, actor constellations, institutional transformation and changing preferences of media use become recognizable. By analysing certain actor constellations that engage with certain communicative forms within certain frames of relevance in a metropolitan media environment, the figurational heuristic offers valuable insights on the transformational dynamics of journalism in a metropolis that impact and involve both individual journalists and news organisations in attracting volatile audiences.

The figurational approach helped to identify four exemplary patterns of journalism transformation in German metropolises, underlining the dominant role of metropolitan journalism in transforming journalism practice at large: the exchange with the flourishing interactive digital media industry creates structural patterns of idea flows and collaboration across sectors. The competitive metropolitan news markets generate new journalistic styles and formats that develop into patterns of communicating the news innovatively. Alternative news media with their focus on neighbourhoods and urban districts have laid the groundwork for a rediscovery of local community reporting in the form of news production with a '*hyperlocal*' pattern. And not least, metropolitan journalism turns out to be a literal playground for testing new forms of audience engagement to increase approachability, promote dialogue, and lower the communicative distance between newsrooms and audiences. The identified patterns lead to the assumption that journalism in metropolises is at the forefront of change, pushing the limits of journalism practice, journalism organisation, and the news business. As argued in the foregoing, the metropolitan context can be deemed to be a determining factor in this process. However, the manifold and polyphonic approaches, the wide dissemination of patterns and reverberations from elsewhere indicate: a metropolis might mould journalism, but it does not '*own*' it.

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# Negotiating creative autonomy: Experiences of technology in computer-based visual media production

*Julia Velkova*

## Abstract

Media production is today heavily computerised, and as a consequence of this, profoundly reliant on software. At the same time software does not represent a neutral artefact - it imposes certain affordances, logics, structures and hierarchies of knowledge onto the media making processes. This chapter explores the ways in which visual media creators negotiate the choices between multiple technological alternatives, and the ways in which these negotiations relate to the degree of creative autonomy experienced by cultural producers in their media practice. Combining perspectives from media studies of work in the cultural industries, and science and technology studies (STS), the paper suggests that choices of technology lead media producers to experience creative autonomy differently, by making them labour either within post-industrial technological frameworks that they do not have ownership or control over, or conversely, allow them greater ownership on technology and possibilities to mould their tools, bringing their practice closer to forms of pre-industrial craft production. Creative autonomy, I suggest, can therefore be negotiated by artists and media creators not only in relation to institutions of employment, or nation state politics, but also through deliberate choices of tools, the digital technical toolset that they select and embed in their practice; an approach largely inspired and practiced by some forms of hacker culture.

*Keywords:* creative autonomy, visual media production, free software, open source, experiences

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## 1 Introduction

The past decades have witnessed the gradual rise of a social movement of global outreach, one that has left lasting traces on the way that the Internet and much of the software infrastructure that underpins today's communication networks function; namely the Free and Open Source software (F/OSS) movement (Coleman, 2013; Kelty, 2008; Söderberg, 2012). Representing a specific form of hacker culture that is narrowly centred on the politics of technology, of "making things public" (Kelty, 2008, p. x), in which participants value and practice "craft autonomy" (Coleman, forthcoming) through writing and sharing computer code, this movement has become an icon, and a source of inspiration for a broad range of other actors from the fields of law, education, media and journalism, all of them eager to make the case for open access (Coleman, 2013, p. 197).

In this paper I discuss one major area of media production, that of digital visual media production, in which ideas and practices inspired by the F/OSS movement have more recently started to be brought in, but have remained overlooked by scholarly enquiry. For about a decade computer graphics artists, technologists and creators working in the domains of digital painting and illustration, 3D sculpting and animation film have started to adopt and collectively develop digital F/OSS tools for the professional production of visual culture. Among the software programmes that they employ are Krita for digital painting, Blender<sup>1</sup> for 3D animation and sculpting, and Synfig for 2D vector animation. These programmes represent the non-proprietary but licensed software alternatives for computer graphics and animation manipulation such as 3D Studio Max, Photoshop Element, Adobe After Effects, Anime Studio and Maya. These F/OSS programmes are also used today to a greater or lesser extent in a broad range of industries and media practices. The usage ranges from the more experimental type such as conceptual art, or designs for 3D printing, to ones where the programmes are used for the production of comic books, illustrations, special effects, games, animation, and simulations<sup>2</sup>.

My focus in this paper is on sketching out some of the trajectories that are leading media creators to adopt F/OSS tools for digital visual production. In particular, I am interested in the ways in which visual media creators negotiate

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1 Of these, Blender is by day the most well-known and broadly used free software programme for 3D manipulation and animation, with more than 3.7 million unique downloads per year, or about 300, 000 a month, see <http://www.blender.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Screen-Shot-2015-04-03-at-10.24.48.png>

2 The range of uses can be seen, for example, through the diversity of projects presented at the annual Blender Conference: <https://www.blender.org/conference/> or at Libre Graphics Meeting: <http://libregraphicsmeeting.org>

the choices between multiple technological alternatives, and the ways in which these negotiations relate to the degree of creative autonomy experienced by cultural producers in their media practice.

## 2 Creative autonomy and the media industries

Creative autonomy<sup>3</sup> in media work, and, in particular, within the creative industries, has for more than a decade, been an object of intense debate among scholars of media production. Studies of the computer games industry (Deuze et al., 2007), television production, music recording and magazine publishing (Banks, 2010b; Hesmondhalgh/Baker, 2010), radio production (Stiernstedt, 2013), as well as the Hollywood animation film industry (Stahl, 2010) have pointed to an inherent tension between autonomy and the control of creative labor embedded in capitalist, neoliberal systems of production. On the one hand, artistic and technical work within the media industries carries with it the allure of work that has both a high degree of creative autonomy and flexibility and which is sometimes manifested in an anti-corporate work culture, enabling creators on occasion to develop the reputation of being an “auteur” (Deuze et al., 2007). At the same time, the organisational frameworks of production are dependent on constant rationalization and effectivization of labour in order to accelerate production, thus constraining the autonomy of creators in order to adjust creative works to market demands. This tension may arguably result in a somewhat alienating experience for artists and media creators that stems from creative work being embedded in institutions of employment and regulatory systems of intellectual property. The latter allow artistic and other creative work to be treated as any other kind of work, thereby converting creators and their creations into an object of value extraction (Stahl, 2010). At the same time, they can also develop strategies to accommodate these tensions, such as through what Banks (2010a, p. 262) and Ward (2015, p. 215) refer to as forms of “negotiated autonomy”. The latter refers to processes of creating subjective meanings in creative practice in what Banks (2010a, p. 262) denotes as a “quodidian struggle to try to mediate, manage or reconcile the varied opportunities and constraints of the art - commerce relation”. The primary concern in this struggle, he argues, is to find meaningful self-expression within, rather than by directly confronting capitalism.

What I am proposing is that going beyond the scope of subjective meanings, creative autonomy can be negotiated by artists and media creators through their choice of tools, the digital technical toolset (including both software and hardware) that they select and embed in their practice.

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3 In the context of this paper I understand creative autonomy in the sense of the degree of freedom a creator has to define the aesthetic dimension of an artwork.

### 3 The politics of technology in digital media production

Contemporary media production is today heavily computerized, and as a consequence softwarized. The computer, together with the accompanying software, has become “the new engine[s] of culture” (Manovich, 2013, p. 21) through which media production, distribution and reception are channeled, integrating the logics of software into the core of most types of production, including that of media and culture. As Berry (2014) suggests, this has also arguably led to a reconfiguration of the role of the author, or creator of media - from one who has once been presumed to be the originating transmitter of a discourse to one standing in a mediating position “as just one among all those other managers looking upstream to previous originating transmitters – database or XML schema designers, software designers, and even clerical information workers” (Hayles, 2012, p. 201). In this sense, creators of media are not only integrated in structures of employment, or nation state politics, but also in the specific logics of technology with which they daily interact and in which they are embedded at multiple levels. As art critique Boris Groys (2013) argues, one of the consequences is that the post-industrial creative industries presuppose “the innovative, project-oriented and autonomous working process. But on the other hand, the artists, designers, or writers use the means of production that they do not own or control”.

Choices about technology, including ones relating to media production software, impose certain logics, structures and hierarchies of knowledge onto the media making processes and affordances (Berry, 2014, p. 16; Fuller, 2003, p. 15). In the process of so doing, these logics act as a form of power diffused through computer coded objects and computational devices (Allen-Robertson, 2015; Berry, 2014, p. 65). This power is not determining, but neither is it a neutral force (cf. Williams, 1974). It contains, rather, the politics of technical decisions, and questions about who can make these decisions, which makes software and hardware, just like any other technical infrastructure, a highly political issue (Frabetti, 2015; Star/Bowker, 2004, p. 154).

At the same time, tools and technologies are relational in their usefulness, and can make their political nature more evident for some and more seamless for others. For some, digital infrastructures such as software (or hardware) may represent an easy-to-use black box while for others, including visual media creators, they are an object of work, a daily struggle and a problem (Star/Ruhleder, 1996).

Below I will illustrate some of the considerations of visual media producers that lead to particular negotiations relating to the technical apparatuses they use. As will become evident below, these negotiations are conceptualized by most creators as oscillating between two poles, that of proprietary software and that of F/OSS. The material is based on the critical self-reflections of 35

digital artists, animators and programmers collected in the course of interviews and informal conversations, as well as drawing on public online material and participant observation of producers' creative practices that took place in the period 2013-2015. All of the individuals have been using or been involved in developing the three non-proprietary tools mentioned above: Blender, Krita and Synfig.

#### 4 Early-career negotiations

Already from their formative years, visual media creators are confronted with the need to choose from a range of tools and technologies in relation to which they develop their professional skills and specializations, a process that is typical of art and media production (Becker, 1982).

In the early stages of their practice, many of them adopt popular, "out-of-the-box" proprietary media production software manufactured by a small set of large corporations such as Adobe, Autodesk, Corel. Those who do not have the resources to buy their own software, resort to pirating it in the same way as has historically been practiced in many other types of artistic activity. As Becker (1982, p. 71) has observed: "Artists get materials and equipment through the mechanisms that society has for distributing goods [...] where the market economy does this allocation, artists buy, rent or barter [...] and those without money can steal".

The use of illegal versions of programmes usually works for a certain period of time, but at the point when creators of digital media start employing them in their professional work, they begin to recognize piracy as unethical:

When ... there was something I needed to do, I needed a tool for it - Photoshop, After Effects and all those, but they were very expensive... you had to either pay a lot for it, or just go and grab a pirated version somewhere around. That just didn't feel right. After a while I tried Linux and I switched to that (free-lancing 2D animator from Sweden).

The above considerations are related to the process of creating a professional identity. With this comes also the need to negotiate the economic aspect of software. This negotiation can manifest itself in the need to choose between continuing to use proprietary software and deciding whether to legally purchase all necessary programmes, or to move to F/OSS tools. For some, this moment comes rather early in their lives. A 3D modeller from Finland who has been using Blender in his work at Rovio, the company behind the Angry Birds franchise observes: "If you are 15 years old and want to start playing with 3D, you need to pay 5,000 dollars to buy software. You can't afford it when you are 15, and Blender is free".

In some cases, especially for creators who start their careers in non-Western countries the choices could also be related to technical accessibility:

I started using Blender because I wanted to do 3D. And I didn't have a CD-Rom, so I couldn't run the big packages like Max, Maya... A friend of mine had internet and he found this software called Blender for Linux. And he said, there seems to be a Windows version too. We put it on a floppy disk, it was only 1 MB or half a megabyte....and we were like, oh wow, you can do 3D! Awesome! So we started learning it (3D light designer and animator from Argentina).

Whereas the choices between proprietary and F/OSS tools tend to be initially anchored in pragmatic, economic and technical considerations in relation to their envisaged long-term use, the reasoning changes over time and becomes more concerned with the degree of agency possible to exercise on technology.

On the surface, what differentiates proprietary from F/OSS is the legal licence under which programmes are distributed. Yet, they configure creative autonomy differently. Proprietary software applies copyright law in a way which limits users' agency to act upon the software by legally preventing interference with the programme's source code - both through the licence agreement and through the distribution of programmes in binary, "pre-packaged" form. Proprietary software configures creative autonomy in a specific way - it allows creators to work within the scope of a technical framework created, owned and controlled by someone else other than the user - in the case of visual media production software, by corporations such as Adobe, Autodesk and Corel. Conversely, F/OSS uses "copyleft" licences that "reformat copyright law to prioritize access, distribution, and circulation" (Coleman, 2013, p. 1), configuring user agency in a way that allows producers to a greater degree "to labor within a framework of their own making" (ibid), or what Coleman (forthcoming) refers to elsewhere as allowing them to exercise "craft autonomy".

The difference between the two is experienced tangibly by visual media creators at later stages in their careers.

## 5 Negotiations in later stages of a career

French illustrator and digital comic artist, David Revoy, recalls how the upgrade to a newer computer and a newer version of a proprietary operating system caused all his legally purchased tools such as Corel Painter, Manga Studio, Photoshop Elements, CS2 and more to stop working on the new computer, and on the new version of the operating system that came with it: "I had to do a lot of horrible hack to make all my software run[ning] on it, but it wasn't stable as it was on Xp anymore. I had to reboot almost twice a day" (Revoy, 2013). From a tool that automates and mediates creative expression, media produc-

tion software can become an artifact with “agential” (Paasonen, 2015) rather than instrumental properties that may, for some time, leave the user powerless. Faced with the choice of either re-purchasing all programmes to match the new operating system and hardware, of reverting to the older computer and operating system, or of doing something completely different, Revoy (2013) chose to move to F/OSS:

I thought all of this circus couldn't work in the long term, and wasn't happy.... I switched my machine to a full open-source system around 2009 ... thinking, open-source could work on (in) the long term.

The result of this negotiation was not explained in terms of economic gain, but in the qualitative difference related to a new degree of creative, or craft autonomy gained:

I really like the independence I get from it: I can install it on laptops, every machine, upgrade, downgrade, fine tuning it. This independence is gold. The con is that I'm now dependent on hardware 'linux' compatible. Which is not easy to find, and not well documented.

Another moment of negotiation emerges in situations of anxiety over the inability to drive forward the development of software so as to adjust it to one's individual way of working. A former artist, now developer of Blender code, recalls a moment from his early professional life working for an industry that was a heavy user of proprietary software for computer simulation:

As a user, I was like – okay, you pay a lot of money, they give you a good product, this is fair, this is okay. There is no problem with that ... it works actually, I wouldn't be too dismissive of that... But software that your business relies on – it's complex and ... it has bugs. It's got problems. It is imperfect. (Blender developer, interview, 2014)

This imperfection is inherent in any kind of software, but the way imperfections are overcome differs substantially between F/OSS and proprietary software.

I tried to report bugs with those closed source guys and they were ... sort of ... in the position of pretending as if there was nothing wrong. Because they had sold you something. And if you told them that something was wrong, then they just tell you that this feature was never meant to work or something like that...and that's okay, fair enough. But with open source, the people who I dealt with were like..., oh, fella, really you found it [a bug], can you give us a file, and...yeah, that's fixed. And the number of problems I had fixed the same day that I reported them would be in the 50s probably. (Blender developer, interview, 2014)

Creators who use specialized software are dependent on its responsiveness. The degree to which they can intervene in the process of development, and in the re-inscription of software, its improvements and failures directly affects

their work processes. The greater the possibility to mould the production software to their needs, the greater their sense of creative autonomy becomes. A US-based animator and director had the following observation to make about this: “Free software matches very well with the artistic idea because no artist wants to be locked into what they can do - a lot of the process of making art is about making the tools” (Bassam, animation director, archived blog post, 2014).

The actual making of tools may not necessarily be performed by the creators themselves, who may not have the skills to do the programming, but is enacted through the mechanisms of F/OSS development based on “making things public” (Kelty, 2008, p. x) and the autonomy to act upon them:

I experienced the “ask for a feature—have it the next day” thing, which was really new to me. I was actually being part of the making of the tool... The Blender way really seduced me (an animator and digital painter from Costa Rica).

These experiences suggest that the distinction visual media creators make when negotiating between proprietary and F/OSS are in relation to the way technological power configures their creative autonomy. The “failures” of proprietary software are perceived in a way that resonates with philosopher of technology, Feenberg’s (2005, p. 49) proposition that power in industrial capitalism is configured “through designs which narrow the range of interests and concerns that can be represented by the normal functioning of the technology and the institutions which depend on it”. The way technological power is exercised through F/OSS could instead be seen as allowing one to *expand* one’s range of interests, and the possible applications of software independent of a single controlling body, thus adapting tools to individual creators’ work processes and momentary demands, and illustrating the possibility of exercising craft autonomy. As a French digital painter Timothée Giet shared with me: “It is more like the old painters who made their paint themselves. Mixing the ingredients and building their paint themselves”.

This sense of autonomy, also experienced in other practices of F/OSS development such as hacking (Coleman, 2014), often does not emerge immediately upon the first encounter with F/OSS. The first attempts of creators to produce something with a F/OSS tool such as Blender, Krita or Synfig are often disappointing. They often describe these early attempts as painful, full of a sense of powerlessness that stems from not having developed the skills to use these tools, and the failure to understand the social mechanisms in which they are embedded. Sometimes this drives creators to the point of emotional desperation. However, once these frustrations are overcome, visual media creators often experience a sense of freedom, independence, and autonomy. For many this comes as a revelatory moment of illumination in their creative practice. As

Manu, a 3D modeler from Finland puts it: “The transition to Blender has been one of these things that are a spot in your lifeline, when it starts moving your life in a different direction”.

This direction is related to the creation of a specific feeling of ownership developed in relation to the tools of media production that gives pleasure, and an experience of a high degree of creative autonomy (see Velkova, forthcoming). It can lead to further engagements such as becoming part of the core development of the tools, or of becoming employed in the production of visual media for organisations that have incorporated them into the core of their business operations and their creative practices (Velkova/Jakobsson, 2015).

## 6 Conclusion

User encounters with technology are caught up in a constant tension between control and powerlessness, between freedom and dependency, with networks, devices and software embodying different potentialities for action (Paasonen, 2014). The experiences described above, although not representative of the whole spectrum of possible encounters of visual media creators with technologies, illustrate some of the key trajectories of negotiations with respect to software tools used in creative practice. They also suggest a somewhat dichotomous distinction between proprietary and F/OSS as technological choices, one that excludes the wide range of other programmes existing in the “grey zone” between these two, such as freeware, or small low-cost applications that could be integrated into work processes. This could be due to the specifics of the production frameworks of some digital visual media, such as animation, games and illustration, and is an area on which further research could be profitably dedicated. The trajectories and considerations outlined above have been expressed in relation to what creators consider their “main” production tools and systems used in their practices. The way in which visual media producers reflect on the use of these tools suggests a craft-like attitude to technology, even in work related to producing “purely” visual media artefacts. This attitude could be summarized through the idea that: “you get the best out of the computer and its software if you are able to drive the tool rather than being driven by it” (Dormer, 1997, p. 146). In creative practices in which creators are dependent on increasingly complex specialized software tools, the degree to which one is allowed to mould, re-inscribe and extend their predefined functions can provide the experience of “good work” (Hesmondhalgh/Baker, 2010), and of creative autonomy. The latter is perhaps best described in the comment with which Krita’s founder, Boudewijn Rempt, concluded our interview: “*If you want to be free, you need to have all your tools free*”.

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## Biography

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# Conceptualizing consumption-critical media practices as political participation

*Sigrid Kannengießer*

## Abstract

Consumption-critical media practices are those practices which are either using media for criticising (certain) consumption or which are (consciously practiced) alternatives to the consumption of media technologies such as repairing, exchanging or producing durable media technologies. While the former can be found on the level of media content, the latter are practiced on the levels of production and appropriation. This article aims at conceptualizing the phenomenon ‘consumption-critical media practices’ by analysing examples on the levels of media production, appropriation and content. Moreover, consumption-critical media practices are discussed as political participation as they are aiming at shaping and changing society – often striving for sustainability.

*Keywords:* consumption-criticism, media practice, sustainability, political participation

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## 1 Introduction

The financial and economic crisis happening in Europe within the last years plus climate change have provoked a growing awareness regarding the social and environmental effects of consumer society. This awareness has led to changes in the consumption practices of more and more people. Transition Towns, Urban Gardening, Exchange Circles or Repair Cafés are projects with which people criticize the capitalist consumer society, its exploitation of natural resources and people. With these projects, individuals seem to have increasingly created collective ways to develop alternatives to dominant consumption practices by aiming at sustainability.

Media play a crucial role in these projects as people mainly use Internet media such as e-mail, weblogs, online forums or online networks, like Facebook and Twitter, to network and mobilize people. Participants use “old” media such as flyers or leaflets for the purpose of public relations and try to get the attention of mass media to advertize their projects and ideas. In some of the consumption-critical projects mentioned above, media are the centre of focus themselves as participants are aware of the socio-ecological effects the production, consumption and disposal of media technologies cause, and try to develop alternatives in the production and appropriation of media devices. These alternatives are consumption-critical media practices, which are the object of this article.

Consumption-critical media practices are those practices which either use media to criticize (certain) consumption or which are (conscious) alternatives to the consumption of media technologies such as repairing or exchanging media technologies or producing durable media devices. While the former can be found on the level of media content, the latter are practiced on the levels of production and appropriation.

This article aims at conceptualizing the phenomenon of ‘consumption-critical media practices’ by analysing examples on the levels of media production, appropriation and content. Moreover, consumption-critical media practices are discussed as political participation as they aim to shape and change society – often striving for sustainability. Therefore first, the research fields on political participation and consumption-criticism in media and communication studies are sketched. Then examples of consumption-critical media practices are analysed on the levels of media production, appropriation and content. Concluding the article, these consumption-critical media practices are discussed as political participation, pointing to the contribution these practices want to and could make for a sustainable society but also to the constraints of these practices.

## 2 Political participation and consumption-criticism in media and communication studies

The term participation is used in different ways, also in media and communication studies (see Carpentier, 2011, pp. 15-38; Barrett/Brunton-Smith, 2014). Political participation in this article is defined as voluntary practices by citizens, which aim at influencing and shaping society (de Nève/Olteanu, 2013, p. 14). The term political participation has to be distinguished from the term engagement: While participation refers to processes in which citizens *actively* take part, the term engagement rather refers to moments of interest and attention (Dahlgren, 2009, pp. 80-83; Barrett/Brunton-Smith, 2014, p. 6).

In a mediatised society, participation also takes place in and through media (Altheide, 1997). In media and communication studies, the discourse on media and participation has a long tradition (see Carpentier, 2011, pp. 64-131 for an overview). While participation *in* media deals with participation in the production of media content and the decision-making processes in media organisations, participation *through* media deals with mediated participation in public debate and self-representation (Carpentier, 2011, pp. 67-68). Both kinds of participation will play a role in conceptualizing consumption-critical media practices – mainly in the section dealing with the level of media content. In the parts of this article dealing with consumption-critical production and appropriation, a third layer of political participation becomes visible, which is rarely acknowledged in media and communication studies: What do people actually do with media technologies and in what way are these practices acts of political participation? Political participation in the production and appropriation of media technologies will be discussed below, focussing on the aspect of consumption-criticism.<sup>1</sup>

Consumption-criticism and consumption-critical campaigns are examined in media content analysis within the field of political communication (e.g. Baringhorst, et al., 2010; Micheletti/ Stolle, 2007). In media appropriation studies, analyses examine the reasons and kinds of non-consumption or “media refusal”<sup>2</sup> (Portwood-Stacer, 2012, p. 1042, see e.g. case studies in First Monday special issue edited by Baumer et al. 2015). Portwood-Stacer, for example, shows that people refuse to use Facebook because they want to “register dissent against the company’s specific policies or indeed against corporate media as a whole” (Portwood-Stacer, 2012, p. 1046). Here, a certain company is criticized by consumers, who refuse to participate in a certain medium.

1 Political participation dealing with media technologies may imply more meanings of political participation than consumption-criticism, another example would be media practices dealing with aspects of data security.

2 Portwood-Stacer defines media refusal as the „practice in which people consciously choose not to engage with some media technology or platform“ (Portwood-Stacer, 2012, p. 1046).

Sustainability and climate change (which are often reasons for people to avoid the consumption of media technologies, see below) are objects of media content analysis (e.g. Schäfer/Schlichting, 2014). Regarding the use of media and aspects of sustainability and climate change, studies ask for the perception of these issues by journalists and recipients of (mass) media (e.g. Brüggeman/Engesser, 2013; Adolphsen/Lück, 2012; Berglez, 2011). But media practices, which aim at sustainability, are rarely analyzed.

A small section of media technology studies focusses on the socio-ecological effects of the increasing consumption of media technologies, examining the production (e.g. Bleischwitz et al., 2012; Maxwell/Miller, 2012; Chan/Ho, 2008) and disposal of media technologies (e.g. Kaitatzi-Whitlock, 2015, pp. 71-73). These socio-ecological effects are often reasons for consumption-critical media practices, as the following remarks will show.

## 2 Consumption-critical production of media technologies

A first domain in which consumption-critical media practices can be observed is the production of media technologies. Here, initiatives can be found which try to develop media technologies that have been produced under fair working conditions with sustainable resources. In the following, two examples of consumption-critical media production will be analyzed. The first example is the Fair Mouse, a computer mouse developed by the German non-governmental organisation NagerIT (English: rodentIT), which should be produced under fair working conditions with (also) sustainable resources such as bioplastic (that is made out of wood leavings produced by the paper industry, see NagerIT 2015a). The association wants to “kick-start a fair trade electronics market so that one day caring customers have the possibility to choose the fair option for every product they need” (NagerITb). NagerIt itself is not a company but an association registered in Germany, which criticizes the big companies in the electronics industry for producing devices unfairly and for not being the initiators of better working conditions (NagerIT, 2015a). They blame companies like Apple for not being honest with their code of ethics or conduct (NagerIt, 2015b), and contrast them with their own ethics: “The goal of our project is to produce a mouse without damaging anyone who is involved in the production” (ibid.). Being a registered association and not a company, NagerIt is a political non-governmental organisation and not a profit-oriented enterprise.

The association uses its website for advertising, giving potential customers the option to order the Fair Mouse as well as pointing them to distributors (which are only 16 rather small computer shops or little shops offering fair trade products in Germany). They also make the production chain and their understanding of “fair” transparent on their website: their idea of fair relates to

restricted working hours (relying on the standards of the International Labour Organization), appropriate payment, health protection, social security, freedom of association, exclusion of exploitative child and forced labour (NagerIt, 2015b).

Similar to NagerIt and the Fair Mouse is the argumentation and self-representation of Fairphone – a smartphone and company based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The smartphone was developed in 2010, and 60,000 devices have been sold so far. Since December 2015 the second phone generation has been delivered (Fairphone, 2015a).

The company Fairphone aims at producing a smartphone which is manufactured under safe working conditions with fair wages and with (also) sustainable resources which are extracted in conflict-free areas (Fairphone, 2015, p. 1). It not only strives to offer a fair alternative to other smartphones but also tries to influence discourses (ibid.). The smartphone itself is personified on the website as having social values (Fairphone, 2015g). The company describes itself as a “social enterprise that is building a movement for fairer electronics” (Fairphone, 2015a). “Social” for them means that the company is not profit-oriented: They make the costs for the production of a Fairphone 2 transparent and claim that the 9 Euro profit per device is saved for unexpected costs or additional investments (Fairphone, 2015c). The company justifies using commercial strategies to maximize its social impact (Fairphone, 2015d, 1).

Fairphone 1 and 2 have been produced in a “crowdfunding” process (ibid.), meaning that both devices were only manufactured after the company had sold enough devices in advance to make sure that the production costs would be covered.

Similar to NagerIt, the Fairphone company uses its website to create transparency, advertise and allow for orders. In contrast to NagerIt, they also use Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/fairphone>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/fairphone>), and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/wearefairphone/>) to build a “Fairphone community”. People are invited to become part of the “Fairphone movement” by either buying the device and/or becoming part of the social networks used by the company (Fairphone 2015h): “Buy a phone, join a movement”, (Fairphone 2015d). The company tries to construct a community in Max Weber’s sense (Weber, 1972, p. 21): people *sharing the aim* of sustainability and constructing *a feeling of belonging*: “#WeAreFairphone” (Fairphone 2015h).

The company indirectly criticizes frequent consumption of new media technologies by trying to produce a durable phone, which is designed in a modular way and therefore repairable (Fairphone, 2015e, pp. 1, 3). Thereby, the company strives to change the “relationship” between people and their smartphones (ibid., p. 2), giving the consumers more control over their phone (ibid., p. 3).

The Fairphone as well as the Fair Mouse are not completely fair – as both initiatives admit on their websites: One third of the Fair Mouse should be produced under fair conditions (NagerIt, 2015c) and so far, there are only two minerals (tin and tantalum) included in the Fairphone which are actually produced under conflict-free working conditions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Fairphone, 2015f). The Fairphone company claims that “100% fair phone is in fact unachievable” (Fairphone, 2015e, p. 2), but both initiatives stress that they follow a “step-by-step process” trying to make their products more “fair” in the future (ibid.).

While both initiatives criticize bigger companies (directly, NagerIt or indirectly, Fairphone) and try to offer alternatives with their products, they still support the consumption of media technologies – framing it as “good” consumption. Therefore, not the consumption itself is criticized by the initiatives but the consumption of non-fair and non-sustainable media technologies and the non-fair production itself. Still, the initiatives can be characterized as being consumption-critical while the criticism mainly focuses on the production process.

### 3 Consumption-critical media appropriation

The consumption of media technologies itself is criticized by initiatives acting on the level of media appropriation. Here, people develop alternatives to buying media technologies such as smartphones, computers, tablets etc. regularly by e.g. repairing, exchanging or giving away their devices. The repairing of media technologies will be in the focus of the following section, as it has become more popular within the last years. While repairing itself is an old practice, it has been made visible and is politicized in Repair Cafés. Repairing can be defined as “the process of sustaining, managing, and repurposing technology in order to cope with attrition and regressive change.” (Turner/Rosner, 2015, p. 59) Repair Cafés are new formats of events, in which people meet to repair together their everyday objects such as electronic devices, textiles or bicycles, – media technologies being among those goods which are brought most often to these events. While some people offer help in the repairing process voluntarily and without charge, others seek help in repairing their things. The idea is not to provide a “free service centre” but to help people to help themselves.

The Dutch foundation Stichting Repair Café claims to have invented the concept of Repair Cafés in 2009 (Stichting Repair Café, without date). Whether the origin or not, Repair Cafés have spread all over Western-European and North-American countries within the last years.<sup>3</sup>

3 See a map for many of the locations at [www.repaircafe.org](http://www.repaircafe.org).

Repairing and public sites of repair are mainly analysed in design and technology studies: Repairing is analyzed as a process of negotiated endurance, stressing that the lifecycle of things is rather negotiated by the users in the appropriation process than planned ahead by the people who designed these things (Rosner/Ames 2014, pp. 319, 329), it is analyzed as art (Jackson/Kang, 2014), and it is analyzed in developing contexts (Houston, 2012; Jackson/Pompe/Krieshok, 2012). Also the gender roles, which are (de)constructed in public sites of repair are analysed (Rosner/Ames 2014, p. 8; Rosner, 2013). The political dimension of repairing and public sites of repair is touched upon in several studies: Repairing in public sites of repair is discussed as technical empowerment (Rosner/Ames, 2014). Rosner and Turner call Repair Cafés “Theaters of alternative industry” (2015), which are “meant to demonstrate the power of creative re-manufacturing to change the world” (ibid., p. 65). The authors stress that the participants of public sites of repair strive for social change, whereupon the change here is mainly seen in questions of egalitarianism and collectivity (ibid., p. 67).

In a quantitative study Charter and Keiller analyse the motivations of people getting involved in Repair Cafés. The top three reasons why participants engage in Repair Cafés were: to encourage others to live more sustainably, to provide a valuable service to the community, and to be part of the movement to improve product reparability and longevity (2014, p. 5). The authors draw the conclusion that the volunteers act altruistically and that their personal gain is not important to them (ibid., p. 13).

In a qualitative study I analyzed Repair Cafés in Germany following the research questions: Why do people participate in Repair Cafés? What do the Repair Cafés and the practice of repairing mean to the participants, especially when repairing media technologies? And which societal relevance do the participants see in the Repair Cafés?<sup>4</sup> When analyzing the motivations and aims of people repairing their media technologies in Repair Cafés, five main aspects were identified: conservation of resources, waste prevention, valuation of the apparatus, having fun to repair, and economic pressure, the former three being consumption-critical (Kannengießer, forthcoming).

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4 The study was conducted in 2014 and 2015. I used the qualitative approach of Grounded Theory to pursue answers to these research questions. As a sample, I chose three Repair Cafés which differ regarding their venues and the background of the organisers: I chose one Repair Café in Oldenburg (a small city in Northern Germany), which is organised by people working for the University of Oldenburg. A second case was a Repair Café in Berlin in the suburb of Kreuzberg, which is organised by an artist in her studio. The third case is organised by an elderly woman, who organises a Repair Café in a small town near Hannover in Northern Germany in collaboration with an organisation for volunteers of the town. I conducted observation at these events carried out 30 interviews with organisers, people offering help in these events as well as participants seeking help. The data was analysed using the three-step coding process of Grounded Theory. The quotes used in this section of the article are taken from this study. A deeper analysis can be found in Kannengießer forthcoming.

People involved in Repair Cafés are aware of the harmful production processes of media technologies: “I think especially the repairing of computers is important as they contain resources, because of which people in other countries die,” says one of the organisers in a Repair Café. Many organisers and participants of the Repair Cafés point to the harmful and pollutive circumstances and situations of war under which the resources needed for digital media technologies (such as coltan) are extracted.

A second dominant motivation for people to repair their devices is waste prevention: “We would have a better world if more people repair their things [...] because our planet would be less polluted,” tells one participant. Several interviewees point to the conditions on waste dumps in Ghana, where people (often children) burn the broken media technologies to get out reusable resources thus damaging their health and the environment with poisonous substances that end up in the soil and groundwater.

Having the socio-ecological effects of the production and disposal of media technologies in mind, participants of Repair Cafés try to avoid the production of new media technologies and disposal of existing ones by prolonging the life-span of the ones they own.

They stress the value of their existing devices and their personal relationship to the technologies they possess: “I befriended my smartphone,” tells one participant trying to repair his phone. A volunteer helping to repair media technologies underlines the amount of work which is invested in each apparatus: People inventing, developing and designing the products and others constructing them, which is a reason for him to value his goods and try to maintain them.

The repairing of media technologies can be defined as a consumption-critical media practice as the frequent consumption of media technologies is criticized, as well as the harmful and pollutive production and disposal processes of media apparatus. Active participants involved in Repair Cafés strive for a change regarding media practices in everyday life: they want to prolong the life-span of their devices to avoid buying new ones, and try to spread their consumption-critical ideas by repairing publicly and staging Repair Cafés as consumption-critical events. Repair Cafés are used as venues by the organisers and volunteers to debate consumption and consumption-criticism.

Repair Café communities (*Vergemeinschaftungen*) are formed in Max Weber’s sense (see above): People meet because of a shared aim and sense a feeling of belonging. One volunteer helping to repair computers explains: “People who are participating in something of this kind [Repair Cafés] have a different societal and political attitude. [...] For me, it is much nicer to get involved in something cooperative than in business, because there is a sense

of belonging. I do not belong to Saturn,<sup>5</sup> I buy at Saturn, but actually I do not give a shit about Saturn.” In Repair Cafés a consumption-critical community gathers.

#### 4 Consumption-criticism in media content

On the level of media content, people and organisations use media to spread consumption-critical opinions and ideas and network with like-minded consumption-critical people. Sigrid Baringhorst analyzes transnational anti-corporate campaigns in Germany, and stresses that these campaigns are mostly run by non-governmental organisations and not individual people (Baringhorst, 2010, p. 104). She claims that Internet media provide a rich information resource for consumers but that the consumer is still dependent on civil society organisations, and their gatekeeper and watchdog-functions because of the amount of information in the WorldWideWeb and the sources lack of reliability (ibid., p. 94).

One example of an initiative using Internet media to spread information about (critical) consumption is the limited liability company Utopia. Utopia claims to be “Germany’s website No.1 for sustainable consumption” (Utopia, 2015a). The company’s overall aim is to bring people, organisations and companies together that “want to contribute together with us to a sustainable development in economy and society.” It aims at “informing and inspiring millions of consumers to change their consumer behaviour and lifestyle into sustainable ones” (ibid.).<sup>6</sup> The company wants to consult people in their consumption (ibid.). To reach this goal they distribute information on their website and in their e-mail-newsletters, and they provide an online-network for “utopian people” (Utopia, 2015c, see below), who again give their opinions and tips on topics of sustainable consumption in forums and blogs on the website.

The website is structured along the categories “news”, “magazine”, “product guide”, “community” and “product tests” (Utopia, 2015a). In these sections, products and companies which are seen as non-sustainable by Utopia, are named and criticized, and companies and products as well as practices which are judged as sustainable by the company Utopia are introduced. Also sustainable alternatives on the media technology market are advertised, e.g. the Fairphone (see above), which is discussed as a sustainable alternative on the smartphone market (Utopia, 2015b).

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5 Saturn is one of the biggest stores selling electronic goods in Germany.

6 The quotes are taken from the company’s website, which exists only in German, and have been translated by the author.

Using an online-network, Utopia tries to construct a community among consumption-critical people, organisations and companies with itself at the centre. In the online-network more than 80,000 people are registered. Members create their own profiles, have their own “pin board” to write on, can write (publicly) their own blogs, can join different groups, and become friends or network with other “utopian people”. The membership is free of charge. Utopia invites people to become part of Utopia on the registration site: “Here is Utopia, Germany’s biggest community for sustainable life-style. Just fill in the following fields, and be part of it!” (Utopia, 2015c)

To login in to the online-network, you have to click the button “Set out for Utopia!” Utopia is the online-network which can be accessed by registering on the website. Registered members of the network are called “utopian people” by the company (ibid.). But there are no transparent criteria that characterize a “utopian person” nor has the company any access to reliable information about the registered members and their utopian ideas or practices.

The company claims to have an independent editorial staff (Utopia, 2015a), but it cooperates closely with companies in generating content. Therefore, the website becomes a platform for companies which Utopia judges as being sustainable to advertise. Utopia claims to be financed by advertising published either in banners, as advertorials (in which advertising is combined with editorial content) through product tests or promotion activities (e.g. testing fair jeans produced by a specific company). On their website, they explain their rules for advertising: those that are not allowed to advertise on the website include companies in the nuclear power sector and arms industry, enterprises producing biocide or doing genetic engineering, excluded are also companies which offend standards of the International Labour Organization, act against human rights and national as well as international climate conventions (ibid.). But how Utopia proves that companies advertising on their websites fulfil these criteria is not made transparent.

Utopia uses its website, e-mail-newsletter and online-network to influence consumer behaviour. These media are used to criticize practices of consumption or consumer goods (media technologies sometimes being these goods) and advertising as well as discussing alternatives which are classified as sustainable by the company. Utopia can be perceived as an example of consumption-critical media practices on the level of media content, whereby the consumption itself is not criticized. Rather, Utopia supports consumption by advertising for consumer goods and consumption practices, which the company classifies as sustainable.

## 5 Consumption-critical media practices as political participation

One aim of the article was to conceptualize consumption-critical media practices. For the level of media production, the Fairphone and Fair Mouse were described as examples of consumption-critical media products. The company Fairphone and the non-governmental organisation NagerIT produce these devices aiming at the development and distribution of fair and sustainable media technologies. Moreover, they try to influence the discourse on media technologies and sustainability. For the level of media appropriation, Repair Cafés were discussed as events in which consumption-critical media practices were performed: the repairing of media technologies can be observed as a consumption-critical media practice as people repair their media technologies to prolong the life-span of their devices and to avoid buying new apparatuses. By repairing, participants try to contribute to sustainability because they are aware of the socio-ecological effects that the production and consumption of media technologies cause. The repairing happens publicly in Repair Cafés, which are staged as public events to debate and advertise consumer-criticism and alternatives to consumption. Regarding media content, Utopia was introduced as an example of consumption-critical media practices, as the company uses its website and e-mail-newsletter to criticize consumption practices and consumer goods that it judges as non-sustainable, and advertises consumer goods and consumption practices that the company judges as sustainable. Moreover, the company offers an online-network for “utopian people”, in which registered members can meet, form groups and blog about their ideas and consumption behaviour.

These examples of consumption-critical media practices have in common that they use media (technologies) to criticize consumption, discuss alternatives to dominant consumption practices and offer alternatives for the consumption of media technologies. They are *media practices*, as they are *related to media* (technologies). Stressing the relevance of a paradigm which perceives media as practice, Couldry poses the question: “What, quite simply, are people doing in relation to media across a whole range of situations and contexts?” (Couldry, 2004, p. 119) The examples discussed in this text are therefore all media practices as people act consumption-critically with in *relation to* media: either by using media to criticize (certain) consumption or by developing alternatives to the consumption of media technologies while repairing, exchanging or producing durable media technologies (see definition at the beginning of this chapter). While Couldry uses the term media practices mainly for those practices related to media content, the examples discussed in this text show that the term has to be discussed in a broader way for all practices which are related to media – also to the devices themselves.

The consumption-critical media practices discussed in this chapter all try to make a contribution to sustainability and in doing so transform society. Defining political participation as voluntary actions by citizens aiming at influencing and shaping society (de Néve/Olteanu, 2013, p. 14, see above), the consumption-critical media practices discussed can be characterized as political participation. People voluntarily get involved in these practices with the aim to transform society into a sustainable one. The political participation in these consumption-critical media practices is either participation *in* and *through* media (Carpentier 2011, 67-68, see above, as the example for the level of media content shows) or participation by acting *with and on media* technologies themselves (as the examples for the levels of media production and appropriation show). The example of the website Utopia shows that here, mediated political participation takes place; registered members gain the possibility of taking part in the public debate and to represent themselves as “utopian people” in the online-network (participation *through* media). In forums and blogs members can create and shape media content (participation *in* media).

The examples of consumption-critical media production and appropriation point to a third level of political participation: People use media technologies to actively shape and transform society. By repairing media technologies and thereby prolonging the life-span of the devices as well as producing media technologies under fair and sustainable working conditions, people involved criticize dominant forms of appropriation and production, try to develop alternatives, and contribute to a sustainable society.

In the examples discussed, aspects of community-building became visible in Max Weber’s sense (Weber, 1972, p. 21, see above): Initiators like the companies Fairphone and Utopia strive to build communities among people sharing consumption-critical attitudes and in Repair Cafés the feeling of belonging to an “alternative” community was perceived. There are political reasons to form communities in the examples discussed, such as to empower the participants and to emphasize consumption-critical ideas, but there may also be economic reasons: the more members the “Fairphone community” gets, the more Fairphones are sold, the more members the online-network Utopia gets, the more attractive the website becomes for commercial advertising.

This thesis is already a hint to the constraints of consumption-critical media practices: When are these practices criticizing the act of consumption and when do they advertise again for consumption? This consumption might be an “alternative” one, but it would still need resources and energy and does produce waste. Resources are also needed by the consumers: e.g. buying a Fairphone requires a certain amount of money (the current Fairphone costs 525 Euros, see Fairphone 2015i). Moreover, being fair or sustainable also has its limits: e.g. not all resources needed for digital technologies can be currently extracted under fair and sustainable working condition. Finally, the consump-

tion-critical media practices have their limits regarding their influence on society and its transformation: e.g. the public debate generated on the website Utopia is restricted to this online-platform and in Repair Cafés only a small, although growing, section of the population participates.

These critical aspects in consumption-critical media practices have to be taken into account when analysing them in more detail. Nevertheless, the analysis of consumption-critical media practices is more than relevant, not only for contributing to the research field of political participation and consumption(-criticism) in media and communication studies. But also to discuss ways in which media technologies can be produced, appropriated and used in times of financial and economic crisis, as well as climate change.

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## *Biography*

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# Communication, generation and cultural memory: Insights from fieldwork in Vietnam

*Christina Sanko*

## Abstract

The chapter examines the complex relations of communication processes, generations and cultural memory in the socio-cultural setting of North Vietnam. It critically reviews present scholarly work in the flourishing, but scattered, field of memory research in communication and media studies, and discusses links to Mannheim's sociological concept of generations. The theoretical concepts of generation and cultural memory demonstrate several commonalities along the lines of time and space, experiences, perceptions and mediation processes as determining dimensions. The chapter presents an exemplary case study of a family in Hanoi and probes a respondent-centred empirical approach to describe these relations in terms of memory-related communication repertoires. The repertoire-oriented analytical framework proved to be an efficient tool to elicit and merge perspectives on memory and communication practices from the research material. The findings indicate on which occasions such practices can interlink, and how they contribute to the communicative construction of cultural memory and generations in Vietnam against the backdrop of individual biographies and perceptions.

*Keywords:* cultural memory, communication repertoires, generation, Vietnam

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## 1 Introduction

2015 was a year of anniversaries in Vietnam: the 85th anniversary of the Communist Party's founding, the 40th anniversary of the end of the war and the 70th anniversary of national independence. On such occasions the capital of Hanoi turns into an urban memoryscape: mass media, exhibitions and street banners often function as public reminders for historical events. They represent examples of the communicative means of the leadership's memory politics. Despite the dissemination of official historical narratives, however, "the past" remains a complex and contested issue within Vietnamese society (Tai, 2001a).

Such public phenomena for dealing with the country's past embody state-initiated constructions of collective memory – a "*generic term for all processes of organic, mediated and institutional nature that have a meaning for the reciprocal influence of past and present in socio-cultural contexts*" (Erll, 2011, p. 6).<sup>1</sup> Cultural memory represents the observable research object (ibid., p. 7) with "*historically and culturally diverse specifications of the theoretical concept of collective memory*" (Erll, 2003, p. 176). This chapter<sup>2</sup> explores these communicatively constructed specifications, not only advanced by state policies, but also by people's everyday practices. In Vietnam, cultural memory appears at the heart of tensions between continuity (e.g. relative political stability) and change (e.g. economic reforms "*Đổi Mới*"<sup>3</sup>). Particularly media change is relevant for the dynamics of cultural memory in contemporary Vietnam: a variety of communicative practices<sup>4</sup> such as sharing information on social networking sites, enabled through increasing internet access (Le, 2013), have become an integral part of urban life.

The object of research, communicative constructions of cultural memory<sup>5</sup>, includes interpersonal and mediated communicative practices and agencies, but also contents and processes of private and (partially) public engagement with the past. Moreover, the chapter examines remediation processes between generations, and therefore addresses the following research questions: In which way is (media) communication relevant for constituting cultural memory in Vietnam? How is it constructed within and across different generations?

1 All German quotations were translated into English by the author.

2 The research presented here is part of the author's PhD project on the "*Communicative construction of cultural memory in transforming societies: A case study on Vietnam and Vietnamese diasporic communities in Germany*" at ZeMKI, University of Bremen.

3 Since 1986 economic reforms called "*Đổi Mới*" (renovation) have led to the liberalization of the economy from a centrally planned economy towards a socialist market economy.

4 Communication practices in the context of this work are generally understood as habitualized forms of communicative action in the sense of social action. Thus, they are not used in the specific tradition of practice theory. Communication practices constitute elements of communication repertoires (Hasebrink 2015).

5 The chapter/PhD research follows a social-constructivist approach to communication (e.g. Berger/Luckmann, 1967) and thus assumes that cultural memory is communicatively constructed.

The chapter first discusses prior research and key literature of memory research in communication and media studies. Second, the concept of generation and its fertility in this field of research is elaborated. This review of scholarly work then provides the ground for an empirical case study on communications and cultural memory in two generations of a family in Hanoi. The exemplary study probes an empirical approach to memory research in communications and discusses its value for future research.

## 2 Memory research in communication studies

The dynamic field of memory research has constantly featured multi- and interdisciplinarity since it evolved (Pickering/Keightley, 2013, pp. 2-3). The complex relationship between history, memory and media is a relatively young academic debate (Garde-Hansen, 2011, p. 1) that was long lacking theoretical input from communication and media studies (Zierold, 2006, p. 5). The past decade, however, has seen an upsurge in studies in communication and media research, adding to prior scholarship in the disciplines of history, anthropology or sociology. These studies extend previous research perspectives by addressing questions of memory, public spheres and media events (Volkmer, 2006), media institutions and journalism (Zelizer/Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014). Other works have examined the role of mass media for cultural memory and memory politics after conflicts (Hoskins, 2004; Sturken, 2007) or looked at single media as memory agents (Kramp, 2011; Gray, 2013).

With the process of digitization, however, the scope of research has widened: media and communication scholars went beyond studying mass-mediated and public forms of memory by also investigating individual (partially public/private) practices of remembering, e.g. on weblogs (van Dijck, 2007, p. 53; Lohmeier/Pentzold, 2014), via smartphones or within virtual fan groups on the social web (Garde-Hansen, 2011, p. 120). With the advent of digital media not only does a binary distinction between interpersonal and mass communication become increasingly problematic, but the one between individual/private and collective/public forms of remembering also does. For this reason, José van Dijck (2007) suggests the more holistic theoretical concept of “mediated memories”, which considers categories of “*self*” and “*the collective*”, of “*past*”, “*present*” and “*future*”, of “*history*” and “*memory*” as continua in constant mutual negotiation. It allows for a joint examination of media, their use and appropriation, and their meaning for memory practices. This approach bears great epistemological potential for media research on memory, but is quite me-

dia-centric in its basic definition<sup>6</sup> and caters less to communication processes at large. Moreover, it does not yet take into account various generational locations (see 3.) in detail, and still needs to be probed further empirically.

### 3 Memory and the concept of generations

The concept of generation is a ubiquitous notion in vernacular terms, but a fuzzy one in academia. In his classical sociological writings, Karl Mannheim (1959) pointed out the significance of the “*social phenomena ‘generation’*” for the transfer of knowledge in the historical process:

[...] members of any one generation can participate only in a temporally limited section of the historical process, and (d) it is therefore necessary continually to transmit the accumulated cultural heritage; (e) the transition from generation to generation is a continuous process (ibid., p. 292).

In communication-oriented memory research the focus should be geared towards the communicative processes involved in inter- and transgenerational knowledge (re-)mediation, and in constructions of the past. In fact, Mannheim (1959) falls short in this aspect in his own work, as he insufficiently considered communication itself as part of biographical experiences, and as a decisive factor in transmission processes between and across generations (Mannheim [1972] 1998). Such transgenerational communicative processes include such practices as referencing to the past in interpersonal conversations among family members, watching history documentaries or keeping and sharing photographs.

Central to Mannheim’s sociology of generations is the argument that the unity of a generation is based on “*a common location in the social and historical process*” (Mannheim, 1959, p. 291) that might coincide with demographic characteristics, but cannot be deduced from it (ibid., p. 290). In her large-scale study on “*News in Public Memory*”, Ingrid Volkmer (2006, p. 6) points out the neglect of Mannheim’s theoretical work within the academic communications discourse. In their media-related memory research, Volkmer (2006) and colleagues regard common experiential locations as common media experiences, and thus define generations as particular media generations (print/radio generation, etc.) (see also Hepp et al., 2014). Following a non-media-centric approach, however, this chapter considers the entanglement of both, lived and

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<sup>6</sup> “Mediated memories are the activities and objects we produce and appropriate by means of media technologies, for creating and re-creating a sense of past, present, and future for ourselves in relation to others” (van Dijck, 2010, p. 21).

mediated experience of the past, as qualifying for shared generational locations; and against the backdrop of these experiences, the own generational location is situated in the present.

## 4 Empirical approach: The Vietnam case

*“Uống nước nhớ nguồn”* – *“When drinking water, remember its source”*<sup>7</sup> – the meaning of this popular Vietnamese proverb hints at the prevailing value of remembering in present-day Vietnam, conveying a sense of continuity and the sentiment of acknowledging cultural bonds with the past. Vietnam was selected for field research for two major reasons: (1) media and communication research still lacks empirical studies on non-Western phenomena (Grüne/Ulrich, 2012), particularly from Southeast Asia (Heng, 2002); (2) Vietnam is one of the few remaining socialist one-party states whose past was marked by major disruptions and transformations, and thus provides a dynamic field worthwhile to research.

### 4.1 Cultural memory and media in Vietnam

Most publications on cultural memory in Vietnam are concerned with the individual and collective commemoration of the Vietnam War. Margara (2012), Schwenkel (2009) and Tai (2001) elaborate on relevant places of memory of war times, and memory narratives in Vietnam. These are, on the one hand, official state (mainly North Vietnamese) narratives stated in most public reflections on the war, e.g. heroic narratives or narratives of the national struggle for liberation; on the other hand, the waiting wife, war trauma and restless souls are narrative elements of private individual memory (Margara, 2012, p. 79). This research points at the plurality and dynamics of memory, even within single families (Tai, 2001a, p. 14). The question of intergenerational relations has been addressed by Schwenkel (2011), who discusses the sentiment of *“moral panic”* in older generations – an anxiety that younger generations forget about history and values in the wake of an influx of consumer goods including media products. Based on fieldwork in North Vietnam, she concludes that although the urban youth might be reluctant to take part in or indifferent to state-initiated commemorative projects, they still adhere to traditional and *“revolutionary”* values (family support; development/ progress of the country) in different ways, while embracing the opportunities provided by economic reforms (ibid, pp. 135-136).

<sup>7</sup> Translation by Tai (2001b, p. 187)

The authors also argue that cultural memory in Vietnam has progressively changed and liberalized since “*Đổi Mới*”, particularly in literature, film, fine arts (Tai, 2001a, p. 6) and online (Großheim, 2008). Such liberalization and diversification tendencies have also evolved in the Vietnamese media system (Tien, 2002; Müller, 2008) despite prevailing, sometimes ambivalent state control (Cain, 2014).

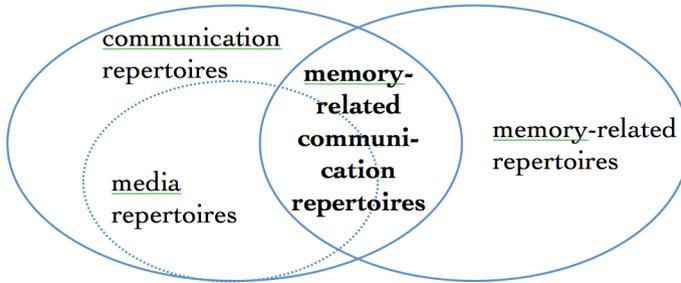
#### 4.2 Methodology and analytical framework

The methods applied in this case study include in-depth interviews, questionnaires and qualitative content analysis. The interviews covered topics such as personal biography, media use, intergenerational communication and various aspects of history (cultural traditions, holidays, mediated history, etc.). They were analyzed by means of qualitative content analysis (Nawratil/Schönhagen, 2009; Mayring, 2010).

Besides the techniques of summarizing, explicating and structuring content (ibid.), the case study utilized an analytical framework proposed by Uwe Hasebrink and Jutta Popp (2006). The concept of “*media repertoires*” refers to “*how media users combine different media contacts into a comprehensive pattern of exposure*” (ibid., p. 369) and allows for a flexible, but systematic analysis of how respondees make sense of their own media practices (Hasebrink/Domeyer, 2012). Repertoires consist of e.g. relevant components (media types, genres, topics, etc.), empirical indicators for (contacts, preferences, frequency, etc.) and relations between components (ibid., p. 760). Recently, Hasebrink (2015) extended this conceptualization towards “*communication repertoires*” (see fig. 1).

Analogously, I suggest a concept of memory-related repertoires, describing individuals’ reflected engagement with the past in present contexts. These denote a combination of e.g. biographical, cultural, (trans-)national, etc. information about the past (components) and preferred historical sources, and habits (empirical indicators) that are not necessarily media-related. The ground, on which communication and memory-related repertoires overlap, is where “*memory-related communication repertoires*” emerge. These can be understood as patterns of individual communicative means to construct and make sense of the past (see fig. 1). The analysis presented here focuses on components and empirical indicators of memory-related communication repertoires in two generations.

Fig. 1: Memory-related communication repertoires



#### 4.3. Memory-related communication repertoires: *Findings from fieldwork in Hanoi*

The findings are based on two selected cases of fieldwork in Hanoi conducted in January/February 2015. Interview respondents were Huong, a teacher in her mid-fifties originally from Central Vietnam, and her daughter Nhung,<sup>8</sup> a senior bachelor student.

##### 4.3.1. Components of memory-related communication repertoires

Components serve as a first indicator for how media users form their media repertoires and at which level they refer to them (in terms of media devices, genres, topics, etc.) (Hasebrink/Domeyer, 2012, p. 760). The same can be applied to components of memory-related repertoires and the levels on which individuals engage or refer to the past in a present context. Looking at overlapping references (to communication and memory in one context), namely the components of memory-related communication repertoires mentioned by the respondents, the complex entanglement of mediated and personally lived experience in past and present materializes clearly.

Huong's memory-related communication repertoire consists of watching a television music show with remakes of songs from the past, attending a commemorative event she learned about through mass media, involvement in Facebook groups with people she shared a time period of her life with (school; work abroad), family photographs and embroidered pictures decorating the walls, childhood memories of media experiences, including watching old

<sup>8</sup> Pseudonyms are used to guarantee the privacy and anonymity of the respondents. For the purpose of easier reading, the quotations were slightly changed from the original transcript.

movies, anniversary television programming and finally, dinner talks with the family about the past. The latter represents an example of non-mediated face-to-face communication considered potent for intergenerational communication processes and “*communicative memory*” (Assmann, 2008).

Nhung’s repertoire is composed of historical movies on television, television music shows about and songs of the past in general, attending a commemorative event she learned about via Facebook, childhood memories of media experiences, conversations about the past with family members, teachers or tourists, family photographs and anniversary television programming.

The two cases show great parallels in the subcategories of components derived from the interview material (although differences in detail occur). One reason might lie in the same spatial, social and biographical context mother and daughter share, but another reason might emanate from methodological side effects, as some topics such as “media memories” are part of the interview guidelines. These parallels, however, also provide a common ground for comparison along the lines of these subcategories. Both, for example, mentioned conversations about food at the table with family members, connected with narratives of hardship in the past and appreciation in the present. In contrast to her mother, Nhung, being an undergraduate student in her final year, brings in her present experiences as a student:

I think the story that comes (up) a lot in my family even now is about the hunger (at) that time. Like every meal when we show it on the tray. When me and my brother [...] don’t want to eat that dish, [...] my mom and dad always said that when they were young, they (didn’t) don’t have that kind of thing to eat, so they just come back with the time they were in hunger. [...] And even with my lecturer, he was born in 1949. And I just had class with him yesterday. And every week, when I have class with him, he always talks about that time, the hunger time that he experienced. (Nhung, 22, Hanoi)

This example demonstrates how the same component of “*face-to-face conversations about hardships of the past*” can be situated in different everyday social contexts (Hasebrink/Domeyer, 2012, p. 760), but still conveys similar meanings of the past. The fact that this narrative has also become a component (even though from the perspective of a recipient) of Nhung’s own memory-related communication repertoire represents an incident of inter- (conversational) and transgenerational (transfer) knowledge transmission about the past. It also shows the blurring boundaries between communicating personal and institutionalized (university setting) memory.

#### 4.3.2. Empirical indicators of memory-related communication repertoires

In the repertoire-oriented approach, empirical indicators mark references to frequency of media use, preferences for and attitudes towards certain media products (Hasebrink/Domeyer, 2012, p. 761). The adoption of these categories by memory research is useful in terms of exposure to, involvement in and opinions on memory practices such as participating in commemorative events.

Both respondents mentioned several times having very little free time when not working or studying, so that habitualized media use and memory-practices combined, which derive e.g. from cultural traditions (such as visiting historical pagodas), are not necessarily everyday practices. This differs from the above-mentioned conversations about the past embedded in everyday contexts. Concerning media products related to the past, both mention a preference towards Chinese historical movies because of the better quality of production, the selection of actors/actresses and the movies' moral messages. One of Hương's favourite movies is "Tây Du Ký" ("The Journey to the West") based on a classic Chinese novel:

It is shown every year and we never get bored with it because of the beautiful actress, [...] and very talented actor. [...] When I was a child, I saw it. I like it because the monkey is very intelligent, the pig is very funny. But now, when I become old, I see it with many comments in mind. They are not only very funny characters but they are very intelligent [...] the film teaches us about behavior and we learn a lot from the film. For example, when I was a child, I dreamed of becoming a soldier. Why? Because then in the war, so many soldiers lived in our village, I admired them, I respected them, I wanted to be a person like them. (Huong, 55, Hanoi)

The memory-related communication dimension in this quote is three-fold and again illustrates complexity: Hương's talk on this movie includes (1) childhood/youth memories of the movie as a historical artefact, (2) transnational memory regarding historically rooted Sino-Vietnamese relations and transcultural influence and (3) childhood memories during war times that she used as reference point to explain how perceptions and attitudes change in the life course, also regarding media experiences.

Nhung, who at that time was currently watching the television drama "The Empress of China", focused her review on the aesthetics and production, but also the historical authenticity of the story. Assumed inaccuracies in the representation of history are condoned as long as the basic story line matches history and the visuals are high quality. In her view, Vietnam cannot compete with China in historical television production.

For Vietnam, both noticed an upsurge in historical media products on special occasions such as anniversaries. Although they did not explicate their own use of such content, they voiced a strong opinion on media's memory politics with respect to national history:

[...] it is not enough for us if we use only papers or magazines to repeat, or revise history. [...] we have to use propaganda<sup>9</sup> in the media to remind children to remember the past. [...] we often say about it, for example, it's nearly Điện Biên Phủ victory, so we, on television, in newspapers say many things about it, but it is not enough. (Huong, 55, Hanoi)

Huong's standpoint on how memory practices in the media should work cannot be explained by her own personal media use or preferences alone, which is the limitation of media-centred research. But the biographical information provided reveals her personal attachment to this historical period, namely her parents who devoted their lives to the revolution.

Nhung shares her mother's thoughts about the need for the transmission of historical knowledge and its improvement and creates many concrete scenarios about how this can be done, from online campaigns on Facebook to cooperation with celebrities visiting historical places. Her ideas compared to the mother's statements are very precise and address the young urban youth she herself belongs to. The youth, as described by Schwenkel (2011) embrace new opportunities in post-reform-Vietnam, but still preserve traditional values. On several occasions Nhung even expresses a perceived obligation to remember the past.

#### 4.3.3. *Generational aspects of memory-related communication repertoires*

The previous paragraph already touched upon different generational views concerning remembering, e.g. how to tackle a perceived decreasing interest in national history by the younger population, or the nature of intergenerational conversations about and the transfer of past lived experience.

A quite new media phenomenon on Vietnamese television, the show "*Giai điệu Tự hào*" ("*Proud Melodies*"), addresses different generational viewpoints on newly interpreted songs from war times. Both respondents know and have watched the show together. Huong described "*a generational gap*" and where-by her children are largely detached from her past life.

We have two ideas too, one is for, one is against (laughing). My daughter and my son are young, so they are for the young people and me and my husband are the same here (laughing). So we stand in the generation of the adults, the older generation, and we talk about it. I say "I like it" but my children say "I don't like it". (Huong, 55, Hanoi)

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that the term "propaganda" is not necessarily negatively connoted in Vietnam.

Huong described the perceptions and conversations during the joint family media experience in very clear-cut dichotomous terms. That narrative goes in line with Schwenkel's (2011) anthropological observations of elderly people in North Vietnam worrying about the youth's growing distance to traditional roots (often meaning the spirit and values from revolutionary times). However, Nhung's views on the show are more differentiated and more in tune with her mother's opinion than expected:

I agree more with the older generations. [...] Maybe with this song they do it better but most of the songs are [...] a little bit better in the old version. Because it's like the thing that I always have in my mind when I listen to that melody, listen to that voice. I know this song comes from that time and how they feel about it. And I feel like I can get through that time. I can really experience that time with them. But now, when the youngsters [...] do it in a new way, they don't really experience that time. They don't really know it. They just sing it maybe using their voices. They don't really have feelings about it. (Nhung, 22, Hanoi)

This quote coincides with Nhung's childhood memories of listening and singing along to the music of her parents. So again, the music had a previous place in the personal biography, some emotional attachment, and thus had more appeal in its authentic version to her, a quality criterion she seems to value in media products.

In terms of the Mannheimian definition of generation as communities of shared experience, this example raises questions for future elaboration: Although both do not belong to the same experiential location with respect to music, Nhung agrees more with "*the older*" generation whereas her mother distances herself from "*the younger*" generation. From what both say, it also seems that the staged debates within the show are quite confrontational. Thus, generational differences are also communicatively constructed and contrasted within the television show. The example shows on the one hand, diverging perceptions of belonging and identity, both of oneself and others concerning the memory-related communication experience and on the other hand, the potential of past communication experiences and a particular socialization to create generational overlaps. It illustrates that shared common experiential locations and thus generations are not a sequence of consecutive entities with clear-cut boundaries as genealogy suggests.

## 5 Brief conclusion

Communication processes are key to the construction and the transfer of knowledge about the past in specific socio-cultural settings. They also account for different perceptions of the past over time and thus may result in the tran-

scendency of generations and continuity across them. They do not exist in isolation, but need to be explored against the backdrop of mediated and biographical experiences. It is such communicative processes that need further investigation in research on communication, generations and cultural memory. The concept of generations as communities of common experiential locations is fertile in this research context, as it parallels conceptualizations of cultural memory, particularly in regard to transmission processes and the relations of “self” and “the collective”.

The proposed analytical framework of memory-related communication repertoires provides flexible, but systematic analytical tools to empirically detect and describe such entangled relations, and allows for a respondent-centred interpretation of results. It represents an interdisciplinary effort that goes beyond a limited focus on media practices. The repertoire-oriented framework, however, still needs to be probed on other research material and within other socio-cultural settings. As future research, the PhD project will expand the analytical procedure by applying it to more cases, and will add further comparative perspectives by including fieldwork conducted in South Vietnam and Vietnamese diaspora communities in Germany. The aim is to further examine communication processes accountable for the construction and mediation of “the past” between and across different experiential locations, and how related practices are embedded in everyday life.

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# Section Three



Photo: François Heinderyckx



# Communication in the public space: Attention and media use

*Julia Roll*

## Abstract

Using media is an everyday phenomenon. Cell phone and smartphone usage, in particular, have been the subject of much research. When referring to this, media appropriation research shows that negotiation processes concerning proper media usage in different contexts are not exclusively limited to innovations; they also take place within well-established daily media practices. A frequent research topic deals with how media users either pay attention to their mobile communication devices or their surrounding environment. In this context attention is not only a psychological but also a social matter. However, the literature review unveils that this duality is widely neglected by psychology and sociology. Drawing on Goffman's (1963, 1974) public interaction order concept, Hoeflich's (2003) media frame approach and the Mobile Phone Appropriation Model (Wirth/von Pape/Karnowski, 2008), a multistage research design was conducted in order to explore how smartphone users deal with their attention in different contexts in the public space. Containing guided interviews, media diaries and sketches of everyday life practices of media users, the results show how the integration of different disciplines enables new insights into changes in everyday media practices. Smartphone usage in public places is highly context specific, but also influenced by cross-context factors like habitualized media usage patterns.

*Keywords:* mobile media use, public places, attention, involvement, qualitative approach

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## 1 The relevance of attention for mobile media usage in public places

Looking at everyday activities, it becomes obvious that media usage plays a crucial role. Thus, using mobile media in the public space is an everyday phenomenon. A public space is characterized by the fact that one can encounter other people – both known and unknown – at any time (Hoefflich/Kircher, 2010, p. 61). Furthermore, even if there is no verbal communication between people who coincidentally meet each other, they act as if they are in a communicative situation (Goffman, 1963, p. 17). This means that they control their actions in order to adjust them to the different situations and settings within the public space. Furthermore, settings may not only change spatially (a marketplace vs. a church), but also temporally (night vs. day) and socially (number and proximity of co-present people). That is, the same place may have different settings in different times within the public space (Barker, 1968, p. 18).

The findings of media research which widely focuses on mobile media like cell phones and smartphones (e. g. Hepp/Krotz, 2014; Ling, 2012), suggest that mobile media usage and the meaning of places as well as their different settings mutually influence each other (e. g. de Souza e Silva/Frith, 2012, pp. 9). Moreover, the literature review unveils that a frequent discourse topic is how media users focus their attention on either their mobile communication devices or their surrounding environment (e. g. Turkle, 2011). In this respect, attention is not only a psychological (Allport, 1987; Styles, 2006) but also a social (Goffman, 1963) matter.

However, this duality is widely neglected by psychology and sociology. An exception is Goffman's (1963) concept of "involvement" (p. 43), which directly addresses the duality of attention: "Involvement is the capacity of the individual to give, or withhold from giving, his concerted attention to some activity at hand - a solitary task, a conversation, a collaborative work effort." (ibid.).

While such a Goffmanian approach to mobile phone and smartphone use is not new (e. g. Humphreys, 2005; Ling, 2012), research most often focuses only on one or few places or settings (for restaurants see Ling, 1996) and on phoning (Cumiskey, 2005). An integrated and comprehensive view of everyday smartphone use in different contexts is still missing.

Starting from this point, I chose an empirical approach in order to investigate the question: How do smartphone users deal with their involvement in different contexts in the public space? The goal is to analyze similarities and differences in media-related involvement management in public places, whereby a smartphone is defined by access to the internet via a touchscreen (Garrett, 2006, p. 164).

In the next section, I will outline the relevant theoretical aspects of my study. The second part deals with the methodical implementation and provides an overview of my approach. Third, the main findings will be illustrated. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion concerning social conventions within a world where media usage is an everyday practice.

## 2 The Nested Frames Model

According to Goffman, two persons principally have expectations of each other, e. g. how the other should behave in a certain situation and also which amount of attention is adequate. The latter aspect is called “involvement” by Goffman (1963, p. 43).

Goffman’s approach refers to a Constructivist approach like Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969). Symbolic Interactionism considers communication as only then successful when two persons are referring to a common set of symbols with which they can exchange information as symbols. Taking each other’s role and mutually adapting actions enables people to become self-aware and to build up a common idea of (a constructed) reality (pp. 2). In connection with attention mechanisms, a communicative interaction is based on the aspect that both interactive partners apply a minimum amount of their attention consciously to the exchange of information. Psychological research suggests that attention is limited. That is, concentrating on one aspect also means neglecting other things at the same time (Allport, 1987, p. 397; Styles, 2006, p. 1).

In order to comply with expectations of involvement and adequate behavior, people have to find out “what is going on” (Goffman, 1963, p. 50). They also have to define the “frame” (ibid., 1974, p. 9) of a situation. A frame serves as a scheme. It is used in social situations to adjust mutual behavior and contains both interpretation and action guidelines. Within communication processes, frames are developed by negotiation, implemented, but also changed. However, the implementation of frames in everyday communication practices is said to be mainly unconscious (ibid., pp. 9).

How could such frames in public places be characterized? On the basis of a common attention focus for information-pickup, Goffman (1963) distinguishes three interaction<sup>1</sup> scenarios. The interaction scenarios are characterized by different frames. The first is the scenario of “unfocused interaction, that is, the kind of communication that occurs when one gleans information about another person present by glancing at him, if only momentarily, as he passes into and then out of one’s view” (p. 24). The second scenario of a part-focused

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1 As derived from the perspective of communication in the public space used in this paper, the terms of interaction and communication are used as synonyms.

interaction includes at least three people: While two persons build up a common attention focus (e.g. in a conversation), other present people are excluded. Nevertheless, the people within a focused interaction frame simultaneously adjust their behavior to the actions of the other present people and vice versa. Therefore, both a focused interaction and an unfocused interaction frame exist at the same time (*ibid.*, pp. 151). Third, the focused interaction scenario is “the kind of interaction that occurs when persons gather close together and openly cooperate to sustain a single focus of attention, typically by taking turns at talking” (*ibid.*, p. 24). Here, the frame of focused interaction applies to all persons present. This theoretical basis has to be extended by two aspects.

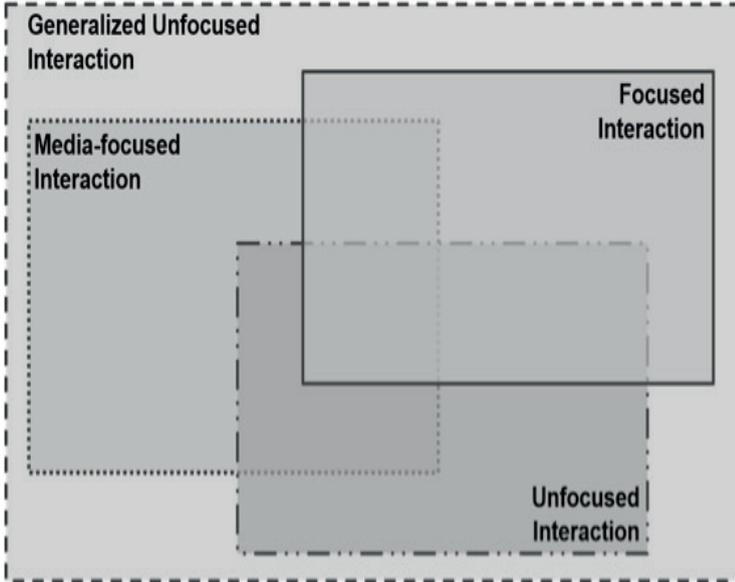
First of all, although Goffman’s (1963, 1974) concepts are based on face-to-face communication, frame analysis can also be widened towards media usage as Hoeflich (2003) explains. He introduces a distinctive media frame. It is characterized as follows:

[...] a media frame eventually consists of common rules of adequate usage (procedural rules of media etiquette), a standardized usage of a medium (which medium should be used for what purpose), including strategies for using the medium (to convince, to lie, to flirt, to gossip and so on). (p. 36).

Hoeflich’s idea of a media frame is integrated into the model as a frame of media-focused interaction which refers to all kinds of media-related communication and usage.

Second, Goffman does not emphasize explicitly that people also adjust their behavior to a potentially present person. Therefore, by following Hoeflich’s (2011) suggestion that being in public places means to be always in a communicative situation because of the potential of mutual interaction (p. 43), a frame of generalized unfocused interaction has to be taken into consideration. Consequently, it can be assumed that independently from the three interaction scenarios (where others are present), people consider such a distinct frame. Illustration 1 shows the Nested Frames Model.

*Illustration 1: Nested Frames Model (own representation, based on Goffman, 1963, 1974; Hoeflich, 2003, 2011)*



To understand everyday mobile media usage from a Constructivist perspective (Blumer, 1969) both the 'inner' and 'outer' views of media usage need to be considered. Both subjective evaluations and their manifestation in mobile media use are subjects of the Mobile Phone Appropriation Model by Wirth, von Pape and Karnowski (2008). Moreover, this model emphasizes that media usage has - besides the mere usage of the device - a symbolic dimension (pp. 600). As Goffman (1974, pp. 9) did for proper behavior, the authors suggest that negotiation and appropriation processes with respect to adequate media usage in different contexts are not exclusively limited to innovations; they do also take place within well-established daily media practices (Wirth, von Pape/Karnowski, 2005, p. 19). Thus, it is possible to use their model to derive the relevant categories of the subjective evaluation and implementation of everyday mobile media use.

Drawing on the literature review and the theoretical model, I have two research questions. The first question concentrates on media usage habits in order to identify typical media use patterns:

*RQ1: Which cross-contextual everyday media usage patterns can be detected?*

Furthermore, in order to understand context-based media-related involvement management, the second question is:

*RQ2: Which involvement attributes and specifications characterize media usage in different contexts within the public space?*

Concerning cross-context habits of mobile media use, the Mobile Phone Appropriation Model (Wirth et al., 2008) mainly serves as a general framework and heuristic. The analysis of context-based involvement management is mainly guided by the Nested Frames Model.

### 3 Methods: A multistage triangulation of qualitative questioning forms

Since the intention of this study is to investigate subjective meanings and conceptualizations as well as habits, a qualitative approach provides appropriate research methods (e. g. Flick, 2013, p. 12). Therefore, a grounded theory methodology (Glaser/Strauss, 1967; Corbin/Strauss, 2008) for orientation, a complex multistage qualitative research design was conducted between April and July 2014.

In the first step, a sample of 12 German adult smartphone users (sampling by academic context and gender, average age of the eventual sample is 26.7 years) were asked to keep a media diary containing their mobile media usage in the public space for one week. When they used their mobile media devices, they were instructed to fill in their diaries as soon as possible afterwards. Here, the media diary serves as a tool to make media usage more reflexive. However, such an approach enhances the risk of shaping usage routines. That is why the participants were additionally asked to draw a sketch of their everyday activities. The second and third steps contained guided interviews analyzing the everyday media-related cross-context and context-based involvement management. The last step included guided interviews with persons who are affiliated with the adult smartphone users, for example family members and friends. This provides a supplementary insight into the living environment of the participants. In sum, 18 affiliated persons participated in the study. All persons in the study were acquired by a snowball sampling (Berg, 1988).

The qualitative content analysis of the material followed the theoretical coding. Here, constant interaction with the data and literature serves to identify the main concepts and categories of the research subject (Corbin/Strauss, 2008, pp. 159).

## 4 Results

The illustration of the empirical findings is divided into two parts: First (4.1.), the main results concerning the cross-context everyday media-related involvement management are presented. The second part (4.2) deals with a context-based view on media usage in public places.

### *4.1. Characterization of cross-context everyday media-related involvement management*

Looking at the everyday media usage of the participants, the smartphone is seen as a very personal device where private information is stored. Its usage is firmly anchored in the interviewees' daily routines and mostly used sub-consciously. The persons also express that they typically use their mobile devices everywhere regularly and for a short time. In these cases, they normally pay more attention to their devices than to their surroundings. An analysis of personal and social constraints concerning smartphone usage reveals that some of the interviewees feel a kind of pressure which, however, at the same time, they have under control:

Yeah, for me, I can say that there exists a kind of addictive potential, although I only look at my smartphone about five times a day.<sup>2</sup> (Female 4, interview I)

[...] one time, I decided for myself: No, I do not need to be reachable via smartphone all the time. [...] It is important for me to stick to that doing. (Male 4, interview I)

Asked for the motives of smartphone usage, understood as “reasons behind a person’s behavior [...] words, societal members use to make sense of their behavior and the behavior of others” (Leiter, 1980, p. 202), the participants claim that they use their smartphones mainly for pastimes (such as playing or reading news) and interpersonal communication. Especially text-based applications like WhatsApp are used intensively. Additionally, they normally communicate only with people they know well.

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<sup>2</sup> The quotes were translated from German to English.

Following the statements of the participants, the smartphone is less mobile than expected because half of the persons use their mobile devices mainly at home.

Another main result is the importance of information access. The interviewees see information access as almost equally important as the reachability for people close to them. Furthermore, the interviewees describe numerous examples that point to a symbolic use of their devices. This also expresses de Souza e Silva's and Frith's (2012) idea of "mobile interfaces" (ibid.) which describes that mobile media is used in order to control communication processes:

[...] If there is an unpleasant question [interviewee demonstrates non-verbally faked smartphone use], I only answer: Wow, that is cool – what did you say?! [...] The person did not ask a second time [giggling]. (Female 3, interview I)

Sometimes, being with others, I feel myself as being a little bit redundant. I feel unsure. Then I use my smartphone. This pretends confidence in action. (Male 6, interview I)

While sociodemographic variables rather seem to influence the motives of smartphone usage (for example, the females highlight the security factor), a relevant difference between the smartphone usage patterns cannot be detected. Smartphone usage patterns are rather influenced by context factors.

#### 4.2. *A context-based view on media usage in public places*

As a first finding, the existence of a frame of generalized unfocused interaction can be determined by the participants' answers concerning a guilty conscience when not paying enough attention to the surroundings:

Sometimes, I focus my attention more to myself and my electronic device than to the other people around me. That is not optimal [...] (Female 2, interview I)

The context-specific analysis points out that short, occasional and silent mobile media usage is not accepted everywhere. During the focused interaction of watching a film in the cinema, the participants express their irritation. Besides that, inadequate media use can result in a media user losing his or her 'right' to be present. This applies both to focused (e. g. watching a film in the cinema or attending a theatre or opera performance) and unfocused interaction scenarios (like doing research work for oneself in the library or visiting a church or museum alone).

Moreover, the persons seem to have an intuitive feeling for adequate mobile media usage, because they do not report any serious disruptions resulting from mobile media usage in public places. However, specific media practices which are seen by the study participants as seriously annoying can be identi-

fied - though they happen rarely according to the interviewees' statements. For the unfocused interaction scenario it is inattention in the context of media use which leads, for example, to jostling other people or dangerous situations in traffic. Within the part-focused interaction scenario the interviewees say that it is most annoying when a person in a conversation does not clearly show his or her focus of attention either on the media device or the ongoing conversation. The focused interaction scenario contains the prohibition of volume, e. g. through phoning or ringing of the smartphone. Concerning mediated communication, the daily routine of the communication partner should not be disregarded; in particular, mediated communication mainly involves familiar people and is mostly about topics which do not need an immediate response:

Phoning means that you must focus all of your attention on the conversation. Everything else has to be neglected. That is not always possible in everyday life. Sending a message is more flexible, because I can decide for myself when to answer. Normally, communication via smartphone is about topics which are not really urgent. So, I can answer some hours later. (Male 1, interview I)

## 5 Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the everyday media appropriation in public places with a view to the duality of attention. Starting from the point that using mobile media in public places is an everyday phenomenon, and that psychological and sociological research neglects the duality of attention, it was possible to show that an integrated view gives new insights into how everyday media practices are changing.

As a contribution to communication science research, this study offers a deeper understanding of how people use their mobile media devices. Media-related involvement management is highly context-specific, but also influenced by cross-context factors like habitualized media usage patterns. The findings suggest that smartphone usage has the status of "taken for granted" (Ling, 2012, p. viii). Therefore, it cannot be confirmed that mobile communication is seen as a disruptive factor in the public space (see for an overview de Souza e Silva/Frith, 2012).

The empirical data also show that both a cross-contextual perspective with the help of the Mobile Phone Appropriation Model (Wirth et al., 2008) and a context-based perspective through Goffman's (1963, 1974) interaction order and Hoeflich's (2003, 2011) media frame approach have to be taken into consideration when analyzing media-related communication processes in public places. However, it has also become obvious that the term 'involvement'

contains more than Goffman (1963, p. 43) described. For example, it does not only concern attention focused on other people, but can also belong to the context itself or to specific actions.

In a broader context, for sociological research, it provides new insights for social communication practices. In other words, the analysis unveils how new media affect social conventions which are based on the duality of attention. One example for such a social convention is Goffman's (1963) concept of "civil inattention" (p. 84). In Goffmann's words, civil inattention means

[...] that one gives to another enough visual notice to demonstrate that one appreciates that the other is present (and that one admits openly to having seen him), while at the next moment withdrawing one's attention from him so as to express that he does not constitute a target of special curiosity or design. (ibid.)

According to the findings in the study, a short conscious glance at the contents of the media usage of others (e. g. a text message) is acceptable. On the other hand, people also break the rule of civil inattention just as they do in non-media-related communication situations, as Goffman (ibid., pp. 85) describes. This could be an indication that the disruptive behavior of media users is not always judged as annoying.

A further example is Sennett's (1976) notion of civility. Sennett detects "tyrannies of intimacy" (p. 337) when people unveil personal information which is not appropriate to strangers respectively people they do not know. According to mobile media usage, the participants distinguish visual from auditive information-pickup of media contents. Looking away is seen as more controllable than listening the other way. This could be an explanation for the phenomenon that intimate topics (sex, conflicts) are not accepted as well as speaking loudly when phoning.

This study has taken a step in analyzing everyday media practices by considering the duality of attention. However, it did look at a narrow sample. Therefore, the new insights mainly refer to the living environments of the study participants. A quantitative approach could provide a strategy to explore in what way general assertions can be made. Furthermore, using a sample with different age groups, cultural as well as lifestyle background or different media use intensity could provide insights into specific involvement management patterns.

Another issue is that of media contents, which were widely neglected by the study. From media effect studies it is known that media contents influence attention and therefore communication processes. An extended perspective on "media as technological objects, symbolic environments and individual texts" (Hartmann, 2006, p. 80) in the form of a "triple articulation" (ibid.) could be fruitful to investigating media-related involvement management in more de-

tail. For future research a focus on the change of a media-related involvement management is of enduring relevance. The reason for this is that, as a limited factor, attention constitutes a constant within the media usage dynamics.

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## Biography

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# On barricades

*Ilija Tomanić Trivundža*

## Abstract

Social movement literature has for a long time criticised a tendency of the mainstream media to reduce the complexity of protest events and negatively cover the activities of social movements which challenge the established socio-political order. According to the protest paradigm, as this tendency is referred to, the media will tend to focus on protest action, conflict and violence and through this obscure the issues being raised. The protest paradigm is generally supported by a limited set of visual motifs, mostly negative images of masked, violent protestors, of the destruction of property etc. or the reduction of protest to carnival. But there is an alternative to the protest paradigm. The uprising paradigm – as I propose to call it – is not merely an inversion of the protest paradigm, although it to a large extent relies on inversion of its conventions and motifs. What distinguishes it from the protest paradigm is that protestors are not presented as threatening masses but as “the masses” transforming themselves into “the people”. In this sense, the uprising paradigm, especially as it was used in the mainstream media since the 2011 Tunisian Revolution, is linked to the ideological project of defining democracy as a variation of western-style liberal democracy and serves to reinforce media’s role in facilitating democratic civic life. Like the protest paradigm, the uprising paradigm is visually supported by a limited set of photographic motifs and this chapter analyses the symbolic meaning of one of its most potent images – that of (the citizens on) the barricades.

Keywords: masses, crowd, public opinion, press photography, protests

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## 1 Introduction

It is a rather haunting image. A young boy is squatting behind a robust wooden palette, supporting it in the upright position with his left hand. In his right hand, he holds a stone waiting to be thrown. In the photograph, however, he is frozen in a moment when he is looking at us across his shoulder. From the narrow opening between a white dust mask that is covering his mouth and nose, and black plastic Guy Fawkes mask covering the top of his head, his eyes are piercingly looking at us. It is a clear demand to return the gaze, to stay squatted behind the improvised wooden shield that blocks out most of the scene captured in the frame of the photograph. The framing and composition of the photograph draw us inwards, into the frame – all that we need to know about the event, the raging street confrontation between the protesters and Turkish riot police in Taksim Square on 1 June 2013, is contained in the frame. To me, the haunting effect of the image does not come from looking at the fragile young body hiding amidst an improvised urban battle, or from the smoke-covered, sinisterly dark sky. It comes from the discrepancy between the accumulated frustration of the young protester and the miniscule “firepower” of the small stone that nestled in the palm of his hand. To me, the punctum of this image, as Roland Barthes (1981) would term it, is the smallness of the stone, and the realization of the miniscule “punctum” it can cause if thrown. With the benefit of hindsight regarding the aftermath of the Gezi Park protests, it is almost inevitable to read this image as one that symbolizes the powerlessness of an individual against the State and its ideological and repressive apparatuses. The photograph is also, one must admit, a somewhat (all too) familiar image.

The second image comes puts the viewer into a state of rapture. A ripped-out telephone booth and a smashed silver sedan form a provisional barricade along with scaffolding, construction pipes and metal plates. Apart from the barricade, the alley is completely deserted, abandoned, and you can almost hear the eerie silence of the scene. The silence is, as a Slovene saying goes, so thick that you could cut it with a knife. Again, the image has a haunting effect, but for completely different reasons. We are left standing in front of a familiar and potent political symbol, a barricade. But it is a deserted symbol. There are no protestors to claim it. There are no policemen to contest it. Is an abandoned symbol still a symbol? Or does it, if left unclaimed, becomes a mere structure, a physical object, a masterpiece of makeshift architecture (or a pile of rubble), a quintessentially postmodern “object”? The photographs are printed on palm-sized stickers and as I go through the small batch that I was given, photographer Barbaros Kayan notes that he already got into trouble for posting them around Istanbul. No wonder, we laugh, his name and website are printed on the side of the stickers. The images come from his series on the 2013 Gezi Park

protests that was exhibited as part of the 2014 Helsinki Photography Biannual.<sup>1</sup> I compliment him on the image of the barricade, to which he replied: “Oh, but I have a whole series on them.”



Picture 1: Istanbul 2013, (c) Barbaros Kayan, courtesy of the author



Picture 2: Istanbul 2013, (c) Barbaros Kayan, courtesy of the author

<sup>1</sup> In 2014, Kayan also received the 2014 Guardian Witness Award for this series.

## 2 Return of the masses in the era of thinned hegemony

Amidst the lamenting talk about the declining political participation and growing apathy of citizens that marked the turn of the new millennium, there is increasing evidence of the return of a repressed political subject – the masses — who had been relegated to the political backstage at the turn of 1980s in Western Europe and a decade later in former Eastern Europe. Let there be no mistake – this should not be taken as a grandiose claim that we now live in the age of masses, such as Hardt and Negri’s (2004) hyperbolic proclamation of the age of *multitude*. The return of the masses onto the political stage is of course neither universal nor triumphant – it is at best sporadic, limited to short-lived localized episodes of collective action, which might or might not lead to social and political change. This return of the masses is also highly unpredictable, often triggered by marginal events or the actions of political elites, such as the suicide of a street vendor (Tunisia), a rise in public transport fares (Brazil), or of the installing of speeding cameras by a local mayor (Slovenia). Of course, not all of the popular uprisings and mass protests we have witnessed over the past decade and a half have been triggered by such unexpected events, but these unpredicted “snaps” indicate how contested the political sphere actually is under the seemingly dormant surface of clicktivism and declining voting turnout, and how quickly seemingly unpolitical issues can become radically political. It also indicates how thin the current hegemony of the dominant order actually is and to what extent its security depends not on ideological but on the repressive state apparatuses, and their continuous policing of citizens. This thinned hegemony of (socially and environmentally) the unsustainable global neoliberal economic order, upheld by increasingly refeudalized political elites, is not so much sustained by the ideological “vailing” of reality but rather, it is the outcome – to a large extent linked to new communication technologies – of what John Tagg (2016) describes as a “society of open secret”, a society where citizens know that the system is unjust or that politicians are corrupt, and in which power-holders know that the citizens know. Under conditions of open secret, the absence of popular rebellion seems to be increasingly dependent not on any party-aligned ideology but on the system’s ability to sustain a sufficient level of personal wellbeing and (perceived) personal freedom.

It would also be an overstatement to claim that we live in the era of popular uprisings, but one can certainly argue that we live in an era in which imagining solving political issues through a popular uprising – even if only at the level of unattainable political fantasy (see e.g. Carpentier, 2014) – has become more prominent and popular, as recent examples following the initial success of the so-called *Arab Spring*, the *Facebook protests* in Croatia in spring 2011 or the *People’s uprisings* in winter 2012-2013 in Slovenia, or the May-August 2013 Gezi Park protest movement in Turkey, the Brazilian April-July 2013 *Re-*

*volta do Vinagre*, the winter 2013-2014 *Euromaidan* in Ukraine and the Hong Kong *Umbrella Revolution* of late 2014,<sup>2</sup> to name just a few, seem to indicate. Regardless of the different triggers and resolutions of these popular uprisings, they do indicate<sup>3</sup> that politically active “masses” have again become important political imaginary, that the summoning of “the masses” who transform into “the people” is again an important political image.

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- 2 In Croatia, the so-called Facebook protests started in February 2011 as a reaction against government corruption scandals and deteriorating economic and social situation in the country. The protests organised through social media, which brought together very diverse social groups, lost support after a few months without achieving the common goal – resignation of Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor. All Slovenian People’s Uprisings in Slovenia started as protests against the mayor of Slovenia’s second largest city in November 2012, but were soon transformed into nation-wide (and Facebook-coordinated) demonstrations against political corruption and the austerity policies of the government of Prime Minister Janez Janša. The protests ended in March 2013 after a vote of no confidence for Janša’s cabinet and the forming of a new coalition government. In Turkey, the Gezi Park protests, which started in May 2013 were initially aimed at an urban redevelopment plan in Istanbul, but gradually grew into nation-wide protests against the authoritarian policies of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The protesters rallied against the encroachment of the country’s secularism and political freedoms, such as freedom of expression and freedom of the press. As in the aforementioned cases, the protest movement had no centralized organisation and brought together very diverse social and political groups. The protests, which gradually ceased in August 2013, were on several occasions brutally suppressed by police (11 deaths, 8000 injuries, over 3000 arrests). In Brazil, the demonstrations, which lasted between April and July 2013, were triggered by an increase in public transport prices but evolved into protests against the inadequate social policies, political corruption and police brutality. As with previous cases, social media played an important role in the organisation of what became the largest nation-wide protests since 1992. Although the protests were on several occasions brutally cracked down on by the police (resulting in at least 10 deaths), the government did implement a series of acts and social reforms that addressed the claims of the protesters. Ukrainian *Euromaidan* protests were a series of demonstrations which began in November 2013 in Kiev in support of greater integration of the Ukraine with the European Union, and which evolved into protests against the administration and corruption of President Viktor Yanukovich, who fled the country in the aftermath of failed and bloody attempts to crack down the protests. The numbers of casualties are still disputed (over 100 protesters and 18 policemen) and the aftermath of the *Euromaidan* protests has been the prolonged political crisis and military confrontation (Russian annexation of Crimea, war with separatists in Donbas region). The *Umbrella Revolution* is a name for pro-democracy protests that took place in Hong Kong between September and December 2015. The protesters demand for universal suffrage were not met by the authorities and after 79 days of protests, the police cleared out the protest area (in total 955 people were arrested during the protests).
- 3 Important indicator of this shared horizon of expectations is the prominent “cross-referencing” between the protests. Journalists would often refer to new mass protests as “another Tahrir”, or “inspired by the Arab Spring”, or simply proclaim *Et tu, Zagreb?*, as *The Economist* did in relation to Croatian protests ([http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/03/protests\\_croatia](http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/03/protests_croatia)). Such cross-referencing can also be found on protest posters.



Picture 3: Kiev 2014, (c) Barbaros Kayan, courtesy of the author.



Picture 4: Kiev 2014, (c) Barbaros Kayan, courtesy of the author.

### 3 Poverty and a cornucopia of protest images

The choice of the word “image” in the last sentence is deliberate. Every political protest is not merely a communicative act in itself, but also a communicative act aimed at being mediated. In any protest or uprising, large segments of population will not physically participate in the demonstration, and for them, the protests will exist *in* and *through* mediated communication. This is not only to say that communication about the protests in mainstream media and/or on social networks is constitutive for the building of societal awareness about the protests, or as Bart Cammaerts (2012, p. 119) put it “to mobilize political support, to increase legitimation and validation of their demands and to enable them [the protesters] to widen the scope of conflict beyond the likeminded.” Communication about the protests is constitutive for participating protestors as well – if protests are large in scale or geographically dispersed, they too will rely on a mediated “picture” of events to make sense of the whole. And as we have witnessed in the past years, communication technologies through which the protests are reported are, to a large extent, also communication technologies that facilitate the very organisation of the protests themselves.

What I would like to argue is that in this process and in an increasingly convergent communication environment, visual imagery such as video and photography play an important, though often overlooked role. Photography in particular has been instrumental in these struggles, although its prominence – particularly in the mainstream media – is not due to its role of supplying visual “evidence”, or due to the detailed descriptive power the photographic image possesses. On the contrary, their significance for collective struggle is in their power of symbolic depiction and articulation of popular sentiment through visual symbolism. As Michael Griffin claims, photographs can serve as “ideological memes, transcending the depiction of specific events, times and places to symbolize abstract, mythic concepts such as nationhood, heroism, collective struggle, or selfless sacrifice.” (Griffin, 2012, p. 164) If one looks at the images of political protests in the mainstream media, the argument in favour of their symbolic value is clear. The repertoire of images that are used with news stories is rather limited and generally includes depiction of symbolic acts, such as the handing of flowers to the police, masked protestors with clutched fists, protest paraphernalia, and conflict between protestors and the police. But such symbolic condensations are of course not the domain of images alone. Social movement literature has for a long time criticized a tendency of the mainstream media to reduce the complexity of protest events and negatively cover the activities of social movements which challenge the established socio-political order. According to the *protest paradigm*, as this tendency is referred to, the media will tend to focus on protest action, conflict and violence and through this obscure the issues being raised. The reports will simultaneously

be contributing to the marginalization of the movement by presenting the actors involved as socially deviant or normatively different from the non-protesting audience (Chan/Lee, 1984; McLeod/Hertog, 2001). The protest paradigm is generally supported by a limited set of visual motifs, mostly negative images of masked, violent protestors, of the destruction of property etc. or the reduction of protest to carnival. But there is an alternative to the protest paradigm, which could, for the sake of analogy, be called the *uprising paradigm*. The uprising paradigm is not merely an inversion of the protest paradigm, although to a large extent it relies on inversion of its conventions and motifs. What distinguishes it from the protest paradigm is that protestors are not presented as threatening masses but as “the masses” transforming themselves into “the people”. In this sense, the uprising paradigm, especially as it has been used in the mainstream media since the Tunisian Revolution, is linked to the ideological project of defining democracy as a variation of western-style liberal democracy and serves to reinforce the media’s role in facilitating democratic civic life. Like the protest paradigm, the uprising paradigm is visually supported by a limited set of photographic motifs, such as the ones in Figure 1 and images that show how protestors come from all walks of life. Within this repertoire of visual images of resistance, one of the most potent images for signalling that the legitimacy of the existing socio-political order is being questioned is undoubtedly the image of citizens on the barricades.

#### 4 Acropolis of the good, the bad, and the ragged

The image of citizens on the barricades is of course not a contemporary visual icon of resistance – it is part of the political and visual heritage of the “long nineteenth century”, as the period between the French Revolution and the First World War was called by Eric Hobsbawm. But this historical pedigree does not in itself explain the symbolic capital and mobilizing potential of this image for contemporary political struggles. Its mobilization potential does not stem from the fact that we have already seen it, in history textbooks under chapters on the 1848 Spring of Nations, or in one of countless reproductions of Delacroix’s *La Liberté guidant le peuple*, or between the lines of Victor Hugo’s novel *Les Misérables*. Its mobilising potential – and by extension its value for contemporary mainstream media – lies in the fact that it visually articulates the fiction of unity of the people, of citizens, that the image captures the (unattainable) fiction that a unified political body and that its potential for political participation and collective action to bring about a more just, democratic world exists.

Mark Traugott (2010, p. 223) points out that the moment of construction of the insurgent barricade marks a moment when the underprivileged section of citizens came to realize that the socio-political conflict is so great that it

can only be resolved through direct collective action. According to Traugott, traditionally the primary functions of the barricade were to demarcate territory, protect the protestors, enhance the sense of belonging to insurgent group and mobilize support from bystanders (*ibid.*). Since in most instances, contemporary insurgent barricades no longer provide the level of security or enduring protection of protestors as they did on the cobbled streets of 19th century revolutionary Paris – their endurance against planned attacks by modern police or military machineries is in most cases merely temporary<sup>4</sup>. The fact that they are still being erected is indicative of their primarily symbolic role. In the face of their limited protective role, the importance of barricades lies in the fact that they represent a spontaneous and visible rejection of the monopoly of the State over territorial control and excretion of violence on that territory. Traugott (2010, p. 222) claims that “the transformation of the barricade from a utilitarian instrument into a ‘collective memory’ may even have enhanced its ability to mobilize individuals and given it the power to galvanize otherwise inchoate groups into concerted action.”

Unlike demonstrations, barricades are not a routine element of political struggles and the symbolic power of the barricade stems precisely from this rarity. Put differently, they are not routinely erected at demonstrations and therefore signal a particular turning point, a point when “the masses” sense the potential to become “the people”. Barricades also act as a kind of special signifier which connects the present with the past, linking current questioning of the legitimacy of the existing social, political and economic relations with the history of radical socio-political uprisings, or in other words, of (democratic) revolutions. Traugott’s account of the contemporary symbolic function of the barricade is worth quoting at length:

In time it [the barricade] would achieve iconic status, implying a still higher level of abstraction in which memories and associations had been so tightly compacted that the mere mention of the barricade or the display of its silhouette functioned as a surrogate for the revolutionary tradition as a whole. This recasting of the meaning of the barricade worked in the realm of political rhetoric and iconography a bit like a literary synecdoche, in which a part (the barricade) is taken to represent the whole (revolution). (Traugott, 2010, p. 223)

For Traugott, the image of the barricade becomes a nonverbal equivalent of revolutionary slogans, condensing “a complex reality into a readily comprehended and easily communicated story.” (*ibid.*).

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4 Admittedly, some insurgent barricades still succeed in seriously limiting the advance of police and military, as, for example, in the Euromaidan protest in Kiev, but it has become much more likely today that successful temporary barriers are not erected by the protestors but by the repressive apparatuses of the state (e.g. Egyptian army barricading access points to Tahrir Square).

But the mobilizing capacity of the image of citizens at the barricades should not be reduced to its role of legitimizing (and historicising) the claims of protesters. Equally important is its role of granting the legitimacy to protestors as a social category. The idea of democracy as the rule of “the people” has traditionally been torn between the positive image of “the people” and a negative image of “the masses”. The masses are not a static concept and have undergone a number of naming exercises. As Stefan Jonsson has shown, the idea of mass evolved from an initially neutral term that designated a “quantity” of citizens, to a term reserved for the poor and the destitute: “the masses”. After the Spring of Nations, the term became associated with the organised labour movement and the proletariat, only to acquire yet another meaning – as a pathological element, as an “illness characterized by the regression of the rational faculties<sup>5</sup> to the effect that the primitive instincts were set loose.” (Jonsson, 2008, p. 8) In an alternative narrative which can be found in the literature on public opinion, the distinction between these two social categories was theorized as the distinction between the *public* and the *crowd*. The public was characterized as rational (Bentham, 1994[1791]), educated and bourgeois (Mackinnon, 1828), connected by common interest in the exercise of public reasoning through the mediating channels of the press (Tarde, 1969[1898]), their connectedness being based on the kinship of ideas. They were a social category that, as Tönnies (1998[1922]) put it, never did or could meet in person. The crowd stood in sharp opposition to the public, its interconnectedness deemed as short-lived, immediate, based on physical contact and visibility (Tarde, 1969[1898]). The crowd was defined as irrational (Mackinnon, 1828), intolerant (Tocqueville, 1900[1840]), anonymous and susceptible to authority (Le Bon, 2002[1896]), even animalistic, as, for example, in Park’s (2007[1924]) account of the crowd’s changing mood, which he compares to the milling of a herd of cattle. But regardless of the differences between these definitions, the crowd was in all accounts a dangerous, destructive social category, whose uncontrolled outbursts could lead to a stampede. For Tarde (1969[1898]), one of the greatest dangers to democracy was for the spatially dispersed public to degrade itself to a physically present crowd, and the negative treatment of demonstrations within the media’s protest paradigm seems to be a response to similar fears. Within the protest paradigm, images of citizens on the barricades are the prime signifiers of the much feared stampede, but within the context of the uprising paradigm, they are precisely the opposite – they hold the potential to signal the transformation of the irrational, intolerant and potentially destructive crowd, the masses, into a community, into demos, and thereby reinforce the political

5 The lack of rational reason or autonomous will is often emphasized by representatives of the endangered political elite. An illustrative example of this is the designation of protesters as “zombies” by the leading political party during the 2012-2013 People’s Uprising in Slovenia. For more on this see Tomanić Trivundža (2015).

mythology of the ultimately triumphant power of the united people. *¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!* They also signal the essentially undemocratic nature of repression of such demands, a mythology mainstream media are so eager to promote because it also enables the constitution of the good (“the people”), the bad (“forces of evil”, dictators etc.) and the ragged (the underprivileged other constitutive of the ethos of liberal citizenry).

## 5 The sublime power and a deserted signifier

From the perspective of photography and photographers, the allure of the barricade goes beyond its symbolism. Before it becomes an image, the barricade as a photographic motif is a physical object which is always improvised, a “violently” constructed structure made out of a fairly limited number of urban elements: paving stones, bricks, construction metal, boards, vehicles, fences, furniture, car tires and a variety of available “containers”, such as, e.g., garbage cans.<sup>6</sup> It is an architectural construction, a sublime aesthetic object, which comes from the unusual, unexpected, surreal amassing of everyday objects. The objects that make up the barricade, the elements and signifiers of existing social order, are torn out of their original (physical and semantic) context and presented in a new arrangement, subjugated above all to the logic of physics and statics. The barricade is a kind of monument to the failed social order, whose still recognizable constituent elements are piled one atop another, but the logic of this “new order” is still undecipherable – and this is what Jonsson (2008) claims, is the origin of the sublime effect of the barricade. Analyzing Victor Hugo’s description of the Saint-Antoine barricade in *Les Misérables*, he contends:

Refusing to enter language, evading the grip of rational concepts, the barricade, like all things sublime, allows only for a contemplative viewing, as it instills in the spectator a sense of fear and admiration related to religious experience. (Jonsson, 2008, p. 50)

It is no surprise that Hugo called it the “Acropolis of the destitute”. However, when one looks at media accounts of the popular uprisings since the Tunis Revolution, the images of barricades have been curiously absent or marginalized. Even in images published by the protesters, the barricades are most often reduced to but one element of *mise-en-scène*, to visual background noise. They have not become the iconic representations of the democracy in the making. Is this because of their rhetoric of the sublime? Or is it because the “violent” reconstruction of everyday objects that make up the barricade is too close to the

<sup>6</sup> The etymology of the barricades is in fact linked to such “containers” that were a necessary component of early barricades. It is derived from the French word *barrique*, which indicates a particular type of a barrel.



Picture 5: Midyat 2016, (c) Barbaros Kayan, courtesy of the author.



Picture 6: Midyat 2016, (c) Barbaros Kayan, courtesy of the author.

*Description of the project:* Barricades is an ongoing project by Turkish photographer Barbaros Kayan that simply aims to form topological relations between the barricades that were formed due to political and economical situations and the materials that were used in forming them. Barbaros Kayan was born in Turkey in 1982. He is a graduate in Visual Communication Design with honors in Istanbul (2010). Kayan is a documentary photographer and a multimedia artist. He focuses on social events, state politics, being in motion and streets in his works. He uses reality as a means. <http://www.barbaroskayan.com>

concept of the crowd, the unruly masses, the mob, rather than “the people”? Put differently, is the mental horizon of the uprising paradigm also demarcated by the ultimate fear of a revolution?

Contemporary media accounts of popular uprisings through the uprising paradigm seem to be based on a premise of non-violent collective action, which includes renouncement of damage to (private and public) property. Like the protest paradigm, the uprising paradigm is essentially a liberal concept. While it does acknowledge that within the increasingly asymmetrical power relations that characterize contemporary society, the (rational) public occasionally needs – and should be allowed to – transform itself into a physically present mass of citizens (i.e. that merely voicing public opinion no longer has the sufficient efficacy to influence the decreasingly accountable political elites), it also supports the view that the democratization of the social, political and economic order should only be obtained by non-violent political action. The people are allowed to become martyrs, but not to rebel. The uprising paradigm thus delegitimizes anger and frustration within the existing order as motives for legitimate political action, or rather, insists that anger and frustration cannot have their origin in the rational reasoning of individuals and publics. If barricades are indeed erected, as Traugott argues, in the moment when it seems that the democratization of existing social, political and economic relations requires a *radical* break, then the failure to place the barricades in the foreground in mainstream media coverage of the popular protests should not come as a surprise.

Looking at Barbaros Kayan’s series of photographs of the barricades undoubtedly evokes the uneasy feeling of admiration and fear of the sublime that Jonsson so aptly describes. But there is another dimension of sublimeness that strikes me when looking at them, and it is precisely this dimension that to me makes them emblematic images of contemporary political struggle. Kayan presents them as deserted physical objects. In his photographs, the barricades become these giant, deserted (and sublime) signifiers, waiting to be claimed, silently reminding us that the political struggle entails not only struggle *with* the symbols but also struggle *for* the symbols.

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## Biography

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# Photography and the construction of family and memory

*Şahika Erkonan*

## Abstract

Photography, since its invention, has played an important role in aiding the construction of family image and family memory while also evoking a certain sense of belonging for the members towards their families. The aim of this chapter is to understand with the aid of ethnographic techniques the constitutive role of photography within family life. Using these techniques, involving in-depth interviewing, participant observation and informal conversations, during the very act of looking at photographs, researchers have a chance to examine how family images and memories are hitherto constructed. Researchers can also look into aspects of photography-induced memory recall through photography. Within this framework, I conducted the fieldwork with five families living in Ankara, Turkey. They were selected as examples of middle and low socioeconomic class families; this enables the researchers to compare different dynamics possibly deriving from social class variations in the family image and memory construction processes. The case study in this research includes the issues of producing photographs, displaying photographs, (re)ordering photographs, using photographs and reshaping or destroying photographs related to families. The analysis shows that photography plays a significant role in family life, and provides a visual way of influencing family image as well as its memory along with the cultural aspects of social class, which co-determine the practices of photography and the way the construction process might commence.

*Keywords:* photography; family memory; family images; ethnography

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## 1 Introduction

Apart from an ordinary, domestic or personal image, we can also define a family photo as a constructed image of the family and of its memory. Even though family-produced images resemble each other culturally, family photographs are considered to be a unique medium that addresses the everyday lives of families. Prior to researching family images, I had already familiarized myself with family photography through the works of Jo Spence (1988) and Annette Kuhn (1995). During the period when my family relationships were changing, our family photography practices also showed alterations. Observing those alterations while I was still a part of my family made me wonder what this strong relationship between family and photography was about. Indeed, how was I supposed to define my family through photographic images? These questions might mostly be personal but whenever I look at family photographs there appears to be a difference between my memories and the images themselves. The nuclear family might be a simple notion, something we are ‘just’ in, but it truly remains a highly complex structure. Whether we feel happy with our families or not, when we look at family albums or a single family photo, we are prone to enter a constructed visual family world where many inevitable questions appear: Does photography reshape the family and its memory? Or, simply, what is family? Every family seems to resemble each other when constructing their family images and family memories. Besides, every family also seems to be in conflict with this construction.

According to Julia Hirsch, family photography “describes the family as a state whose ties are rooted in property; the family as a bond of feeling which stems from instinct and passion” (from Marianne Hirsch, 1999, p. xv). Family is not a simple social institution: there are emotional ties connecting its members. Therefore, family photography could not be well understood only as a cultural or a social element. For Jo Spence, these visual representations of family “privilege the nuclear family by naturalizing, romanticizing and idealizing family relationships above all others” (1988, p. 136). In the book of Family Secrets Annette Kuhn states that “the family photographs are about memory and memories: that is about stories of a past, shared (both stories and the past) by a group of people that in the moment of sharing produces itself as a family” (1999, p. 19).

This chapter draws upon family photographs with ethnographical techniques to try and explore the construction of family memory and family image. First of all, I will describe the fieldwork and the methodological approach of this study. Following the subsequent description of the method, I will then focus on elaborating the theoretical framework of the research with respect to current studies in literature. Finally, using a case study, I will analyze data obtained from the fieldwork. This research was based on five families - twen-

ty-one interviewees- who live in Ankara, Turkey. The case study involves issues related to producing photographs, displaying photographs, (re-)ordering photographs, using photographs and reshaping or destroying photographs. The first three issues are camera, frames and albums, and they are to be analyzed as photography practices and instruments of family. The last two issues, in contrast to the question of 'camera', are more closely related to the relationships between family and photography.

## 2 Looking at the family photographs as an ethnographic technique

According to Patricia Holland, the photographs themselves play a role in confirming and challenging the identity and history of their users. Then, she goes on to distinguish between the users and readers of photography (2008, p. 117): "Users of personal pictures have access to the world in which they make sense; readers must translate those private meanings into a more public realm" (Holland, 2008, p. 118). The concept of a *reader* of a photographic image becomes clearer when we also take into account the concepts of Roland Barthes, namely, the *studium* and *punctum* (2000). For Barthes, *studium* means that the spectator of a photographic image is involved within its cultural context, while *punctum* is a piercing moment derived subjectively from the photographic image by its viewer (2000). The representation of family and family memory through photography in a cultural context is always possible; yet, given the perspective from within the family construct itself, there also appears to be some degree of impossibility regarding family representation. Therefore, in this fieldwork, I also paid attention to the interviewer's *punctum* moments while they were talking about their family photographs. The reason for this is my assumption that the *punctum* moment would emphasize the notion of being a family, possibly being observable through family members' communication. To make this clear, I can refer to John Bernardes' suggestion of a simple yet bright formula: "Ask people to show you their family albums and provide a commentary. Pay attention to explanations of family relationships and events" (2002, p. 91). Photography looks like a silent medium but when the photographs are shown, and when they are provoked into being recalled, they can produce meanings. That is to say they can regenerate meanings within such a family construct again and again. Following the general consensus that a difference exists between the analysts interpreting photography and the users of photography interpreting photos themselves, I preferred to do fieldwork focusing on the latter, namely, the family members. With the aid of ethnographic techniques, researchers can understand how family memory and family image are constructed, and how the family members remember such constructions

through photography. In the article entitled *Interpreting Family Photography as a Pictorial Communication*, Richard Chalfen (1998) emphasizes that family interviews hold significant importance as:

They surface personal meanings that family members attach to their own photographs- the ideas they interpret as significant in their own photographs. In short, the construction process continues. We get a first hand view of how people make meanings with and from pictures, and how the construction process is indebted to the knowledge that viewers bring to the making of their interpretations. Information gathered on 'local knowledge' from 'the native's point of view' and the 'beholder's share' clearly makes a difference- 'outsiders' would never get it (1998, p. 204 – emphasis removed).

On the other hand, a very important point which I had to keep in mind throughout the whole fieldwork was the notion of the presentation of self in everyday lives, as had been discussed by Erving Goffman: “when the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behaviour as a whole” (1956, p. 23). Within this context we could think that family members may show the performance of an ideal family image during a researcher’s fieldwork observation. These arguments can also be considered valid for the construction of a family image, yet we should not forget that family memory as a concept can still continue to be worked upon during the fieldwork. Annette Kuhn argues in her article entitled *Photography and Cultural Memory: A Methodological Exploration* that:

Personal and family photographs figure importantly in cultural memory, and memory work with photographs offers a particularly productive route to understanding the social and cultural uses and instrumentalities of memory. (2007, p. 285).

I conducted the fieldwork for this research during April, May, November and December in 2013. Drawing on ethnographic methods, I used in-depth interviews, participant observation and informal conversation methods to gather data, which were analyzed using qualitative methods to better understand how family members were relating to the photographs and reinterpreting such photographs to construct their family images. Within the scope of this research plan I conducted the fieldwork with five families. Participants were not restricted by their age. For comparison purposes, though, I chose families for this case study with respect to their social class differences, as social class is an important dynamic that affects the process of construction (Bourdieu, 1984). Motivations for constructing the past and being an ideal family appear to show variations amongst different social classes. Also, accessibility to photographic instruments varies from middle class family contexts to low class family contexts.

I have used anonymized names for the families that participated in the research, to protect their privacy: the middle class family names are Ardiç, Kayın and Sedir; and the lower class family names are Meşe and Defne. I preferred interviewing family members in their houses as I assumed that an atmosphere like that would probably make it easier to access family memories.

### 3 Theoretical framework

In the theoretical part, I will discuss the construct of family memory as being reflected upon through the role of photography. Family photographs do not only allow us to observe records of the past and images of people involved within that past, but also let us take a closer look at the construction of those specific families and their histories. According to Marianne Hirsch, “as photography immobilizes the flow of family life into a series of snapshots, it perpetuates familial myths while seeming merely to record actual moments in family history” (2002, p. 7). How do we understand the construction of family and memory through photography? In this chapter I want to elaborate on the notion of constructing a family concept through the memories associated with it. In addition to this, I also want to question the way the photographic medium plays its role in this very construction process by drawing upon the case study. As was mentioned above, families selected for the fieldwork were representing nuclear families from both the middle-socioeconomic class and lower-socioeconomic (following Bourdieu’s discourse on social class relations influencing construction of family and its memory).

Astri Erll states that “cultural memory studies address the question of how the past is created and recreated within sociocultural context”, and later enquires into the role of family memory in his studies (2011, p. 303). Halbwachs (1992) proposes the term *collective memory*, which can be defined as the memory of an individual being constructed within the context of a social group. In his book *On Collective Memory*, family is perceived to be one aspect of collective memory. Halbwachs thinks that if we conceptualize memory only within the scope of individuality, then we are bound to fail in our understanding of how family memory can be reproduced (1992). After Halbwachs developed the collective memory term as referring to a social context, Jan Assmann suggested considering memory to be situated within a cultural context (2001). Assmann proposed two concepts of memory: *cultural memory* and *communicative memory* (2001). He stated that cultural memory is constructed by customs and rituals; hence this kind of memory appears to be long lasting and as a result cannot disappear easily. Communicative memory, on the other hand, is defined as a comparably limited memory. Cultural memory involves communicative memory yet communicative memory refers only to the near

past: it is primarily perceived within a single generation; and so when that generation fades away, the constructs of that specific type of memory would inevitably be prone to disappear (Assmann, 2001, p. 62). Focusing on the notion of family memory as being examined within the broader field of memory studies, Erll states that:

Family memories belong primarily to the field of communicative memory, with its focus on everyday life, face-to-face interaction, oral communication, and its restricted time span of about three to four generations. However, communicative memory is linked to cultural memory and cannot be separated from the latter's myths (2011, p. 312).

It appears natural to refer to the possibility inherent in the notion of family memory, that past experiences of specific families might very well include different dynamics like separation issues, immigration necessities or traumatic events. Family memory therefore differs from other constructs in some specific ways, while photographic family images tend to resemble each other. According to Erll, "family memory is not simply "there" – it is not a mnemonic content stored in a family archive- but that, instead, versions of the familial past are fabricated collectively, again and again, in situ, through concrete acts of communication and interaction" (2011, p. 313).

To be able to construct the family concept with its inherent past, photography needs to become rather a proof of family memory and of a family image representing belongingness. Thus, creating a family image becomes an important aspect of the construction process while photography itself provides the means for such an endeavor, encompassing different time frames both of past and regarding future. According to Katherine Hoffmann:

Family images may provide some sense of immortality of bloodlines; family images may call up pleasant and/or unpleasant memories or current situations. But there can always be a "journey" to "see a newer world" that may be clearer and richer as a result of having looked at and been moved by images of others and thereby to understand our own individual identities and the families we are a part of or close to (1997, pp. 1-2).

Family memory is reshaped and constructed by the narration emerging from family photographs. Memory is also a practice where family members work with the photographs, collecting them, ordering them and changing them. However, this reconstruction process starts with the production of photographs prior to their narration. Photographs need to be produced through another set of practices, which requires the presence of photographic instruments to engage in photographic production. Owning a camera helps the construction of family and its memory. Memory is one of the most important reasons to own camera equipment of some sort; yet the other side of the coin is related to the income of the household, or, the socioeconomic class. According to Bourdieu, "ownership of a camera is closely related to income which [...] allows us to

consider cameras as pieces of equipment comparable to cars or televisions, and to see the ownership of such a commodity as nothing but the index of a standard living" (1990, p. 14).

We must mention Jo Spence and Annette Kuhn here again, who are pioneer writers interpreting the notion of family autobiographical memory with respect to family photography. With the help of personal images, these writers deconstructed family memory as well as family image in order to question family as a construct within the sociocultural context. Jo Spence suggested that "we could [...] [consider] family as an ideological sign system" (1998, p. 136). Kuhn also stated that "family photographs are quite often deployed (shown, talked about) in series: pictures get displayed one after another, their selection or ordering as meaningful as the pictures themselves. The whole, the series, constructs a family story in some respects like a classical narrative" (1995, p. 17). Photographs play a part in the naturalization and replication of the ideology of family (Bull, 2010, p. 89). According to Hirsch, photographs "locate themselves precisely in the space of contradiction between the myth of the ideal family and the lived reality of family life" (2002, p. 8). Similarly, Gillian Rose argues that "family photograph is an image that has to look like a family photo but also has to be treated like one" (2010, p. 23).

Within the sociocultural context, family images appear to get repeated again and again for many years. Looking through the internal dynamics of the family, we can also see that family members tend to pay attention to continuing their idealized family image both for their own and their society's unity. Therefore, we can state that family images initiate the construction of family memory and family memory, in turn, selects the images to reconstruct itself in an ideal way. Ideal family images and family memories are not fixed entities, though: family memory can be reshaped in visual space with the help of photographs depicting marriage, separation, birth or death of family members. In these conditions family photography would be considered to have gained an important function for the reconstruction process. For instance, the death of a family member affects the family household in a way to make it more likely for them to display the photo of that person within their house. Another example might be when a separation occurs within a family. Family members might prefer to remove the photographs of the one who left; hence the member would then be termed as 'of the past'. In these and various other similar ways, family memory and ideal familial image might be reconstructed in visual space again. Steven Edwards informs us of the steps regarding the relationship between memory and photography:

Firstly, it seems that memory emerges when the image is used in a particular social network in this case, a family gathering. Memory connects the image or 'sparks' from it: 'Who is this?' Secondly, these narratives are not unstructured. It is worth observing that while it is

usually men who take family pictures, women typically act as the gatekeepers of family memory. Thirdly what is omitted from this collection is as important to these structured memories as what is included (2006, p. 122).

Through this theoretical framework, we can state that (1) family memory as a communicative memory becomes structured as the family members remember it. (2) Cultural photography practices and usages of family as a construct might be restructured within this memory framework. Finally, (3) social class plays an important role in the photography practices and how photographs are used in both economic and cultural ways.

#### 4 Family memory in the five Ankara families

Now I will provide an analysis of data obtained from the fieldwork. Following the fieldwork I categorized data with respect to the constitutive role photography has had for both family members and their family memories. “*If one instrument helped construct and perpetuate the ideology which links the notion of universal humanity to the idea of familiarity, it is the camera and its by-products, the photographic image and the family album*” (Hirsch, 2002, p. 48). To better understand the more apparent aspects of the construction process, I drew upon (1) families’ photography practices and their photographic instruments. First of all it is possible that *producing photographs*, supported by camera ownership, initiates the (re)construction of family image and its memory by supporting the recollection of their past. Secondly, *displaying photographs* in the living room of families’ households can demonstrate the way in which each family presents its family memory and family image. Thirdly, another important practice related mostly to the construction of family image and its memory, appears to be the *ordering and reordering of photographs* in photography albums that support creating a shared family past.

Talking with the family members about their memory and about being a family through their photography reveals important details regarding (2) the families’ attitudes towards the photographs. As was mentioned in the method section above, *punctum* moments appeared during the interview and showed how the family members were sometimes drawn apart from the constructed family narration. Hence, one other, fourth, aspect of the construction is *using photographs* to narrate the family image and its memory. Analyses using photographs also show the importance of referring back to a family image as a way of remembering the family’s ‘good’ past and supporting the projection of its continuity into the future. Surely, we consider the fact that families have a chance to reconstruct their memories and family images through their visual space as well as through the re-ordering and re-selecting of their photographs. The fifth and last component of the analysis then is to be about the

*reshaping and destroying of photographs* by removing one's image from the photographs, or burning and throwing away the photographs that are unwanted images of the past.

#### 4.1 Families' photography practices and their photographic instruments

Each member of the families that participated in this research experienced different technical and cultural periods of photography. Data obtained shows that producing photographs, underlines the importance of owning a camera and is crucial to a family's self-image. According to Marianne Hirsch, since the invention of Kodak, the camera "has become the family's primary instrument of self-knowledge and self-representation" (1999, p. xvi). The camera assumes a central role in constructing the family and its memory. Kodak's invention "was bringing a revolution in ways we were perceiving the immediate domestic world, and in redefining who had the right to record that world" (Holland, 2008, p. 115). Following this statement, we could argue that owning a camera gives the right to the owner-family to visually reconstruct their family world and their family memory.

Every family that participated in this research project had a digital camera. Owning a camera has expanded the utility of family photography; we can say that families have become more independent with a camera since they are no longer dependent on a photographer to create their visual media. In this way, the subjectivity of constructing their memory and images has since substantially increased. Memory is one of the most important reasons to have a camera; yet, one important factor could be the family's financial means. Lower-class families were less able to buy a camera; however, this situation did not reduce the importance of photography for them even though it significantly altered the practices by which they could produce their family photographs.

In addition to this, *displaying photographs* is the observable photography practice that refers to the framed photo(s) situated within family households. According to Drazin and Froelich, "a framed picture on the wall has been marked out as having a very visible personal value" (2007, p. 62). For these authors, this is the way that memory is materialized, as it is rearranged in space (2007, p. 64). There also were frames in houses I visited and in particular, frames were situated in the living rooms. One important aspect of the living room is that such a place regularly becomes a (semi-)public space, as visitors come by. Frames on the walls within a family household are related to the underlying idea of family memory. It should also be noted that participants involved in this research were especially sensitive to framing those photographs which had significant value in relation to their family memories, such as the photographs that remembered a deceased member of the family, or

that expressed respect towards another. The exact nature of the value showed variation between families of different socioeconomic backgrounds, though. For example, participants with lower-class families displayed photo frames out of the feeling of respect towards a passed away family member; while, on the other hand, participants of middle background families preferred to frame photographs of their children or grandchildren, demonstrating disinclination towards displaying the passed away members' photographs:

Father: We do not keep the photographs outside... When I see them, I remember old days. I do not want to remember some things. They do not disturb me but when I see photographs of my parents, I enter into deep thoughts... (Ardic Family)

Mother: Whenever I feel like it, I sit down and open the family albums and look at them for hours. I watch them... I live those moments... If they stand there (on the wall) I never look at them! I really do not look! It is more effective when you miss. For example; there were some moments a picture on the wall seems like it is not able to affect you anymore. You are accustomed...(Kayn Family)

Interview data emphasize that remembering can sometimes become significantly sorrowful for the family. Below is an example of such an observation. It refers to the display of the framed photo of a recently passed away family member:

Child: We would hang them on the wall after a month. This is our tradition. They were removed from the wall after a year, maybe. After that these questions appeared: Did we forget? Does he think that we forgot? Does he feel it still? (Mese Family)

If a family is not constructed in the traditional cultural sense and, hence, when its members do not especially focus on memories involving their parents, they tend to restrict their photo frames to the display of their nuclear family members. Middle class families in the research project prefer to display frames that particularly emphasize the present time. In lower class family households, on the other hand, mainly the photographs of the couple's parents were displayed. Framed photos are significant instruments and practices in the construction of the family image and family memory; and socioeconomic class differences can influence whose images are to be framed and displayed in the household.

Another important practice is the (re)ordering of photographs. According to Kuhn, "the family album is one moment in the cultural construction of family" (1995, p. 17). For Hirsch, "a family album includes images on which family members can agree and which tell a shared story" (2002, p. 107). The most structured photographic instrument is the family album as it serves as a visual narration of family memory and demonstrates the idealized family

image. Images of family members are exclusively selected for these series of photographs and related images of the past tend to correspond with the good and ideal past within that family's specific sociocultural context:

Mother: I want them [the photographs] to be arranged. When we look at them, I want to see the images arranged. (Mese Family)

Mother: After the birth of my son, I said that I needed to buy a photography album. I thought I had to buy it immediately and then I began to prepare... I felt this emotion... I did not want to be late (Sedir Family)

Father: Previously, I used to prepare the family albums but now I quit. I got bored. Now it is a waste of time (laughing). Of course they are valuable but everybody takes their images from here (Defne Family)

Daughter: My uncle prepared this album. One day he sat down with my father the whole the day to prepare it... I remember that day... We drank tea... the only thing my uncle wanted was to arrange a family album. A year later, he died (Ardıç Family)

According to this fieldwork, preparing an album appeared to be strongly related to the cultural context of the socioeconomic class in terms of the selection of photo albums and the arrangement of photographs. We can understand, by reflecting upon family albums, that family memory is under reconstruction with regards to the display of, and values attached to, the family photographs from past and/or present.

#### *4.2. The families' relation with the photography*

Apart from the above-described photographic practices (and the importance of access to its instruments), families' emotional relationships, their thoughts regarding family photographs and their narratives about being a family are closely related and equally important factors to be taken into account when discussing the construction of family image and memory. Considering these factors, we can deepen our understanding of the construction of family memory and the ideal family image that needs to be constructed, while also taking into account how families prefer to be rooted in their past, projecting their family image into the future. Assmann (2003, p. 36) states that the past can be reconstructed through memory recall and for him, one's remembering always involves emotional relationships, cultural reshaping and a conscious relationship that has links to the past (Assmann, 2003, p. 39). The objects of memory recall are always certain individuals, yet they are dependent on the framework that constructs those memories (Assmann, 2003, p. 40). Both the avoidance of forgetting them and eagerness to continue family memories are the main issues

for the family internal relationships. Thus, *using photographs* to narrate family memories underlines that the relationship between the family and photography is vital to the reconstruction process.

Remembering the past with a certain degree of curiosity and yearning was evident in the fieldwork when families looked at their photo albums. All family members stated that they preferred to reinforce their family relationships with the aid of their family photographs:

Mother: Some memory comes to my mind and then I want to look at the album. When I finally close the album, there is melancholy in me. I think of my age and remember past times (Ardic Family).

Looking at photographs allows for the retrieval of the past and provides memory recall, hence it becomes an important medium for family memory. Photography freezes the moment but that frozen moment reconstructs the very memory with its local time perspective:

Father: pictures are an emotional issue... that is, remembering makes your emotion revive. You catch yourself saying "let's look at the picture". This is what comes to your mind. When you look at the photographs again, you remember the time you were doing those things that the photo shows. (Defne Family).

Family memory is affected by members remembering emotional moments of the past and, again, the family image is the ideal image, the object of these acts of recall. Remembering through photography is important for family unity.

I asked family members whether a family should own a family photograph album. This question was answered in similar ways regardless of the class distinctions amongst families. As I mentioned before, different families of different socioeconomic backgrounds have different chances of obtaining photographic materials; however, they all agreed about the necessity of possessing a family album:

Father: Absolutely! This is not even a valid question! (Ardic Family).

Mother: It is important. Some photographs remind me of bad things that I do not want to remember, but I do not want to forget the beautiful things (Mese Family).

Particular situations might be reflected upon through family photographs. One of the participants tried to describe her emotions of loss after remembering the incident through recalling the event depicted on a photograph. No matter how disturbing emotions might be, she stated that these photographs should always be in their house. The mother of Ardic Family emphasized that these media are

very important, also as they depict the origins of the family, in addition to their procreation. She stated that her daughter is supposed to do the same thing when she creates her own family and she should bring her past to her new family.

Middle class families in this research project showed strong emotionality regarding the reconstruction of their family memories. This observation, on the other hand, had come together with its inherent observational limits. Within the scope of this fieldwork the kind of family memory we mention that involves photography albums is the communicative memory. The father of Defne Family sadly stated that:

Father: I wish we had [photographs]. The past of a family... My father, my mother, my mother in law... I wish we had a photo altogether. But we did not have a chance. Now, we are without them. Our children would take our pictures.

Family past is a complicated field for doing ethnography, as there might be some privacy stemming from an underlying family intimacy while talking about their past. Therefore, families sometimes require feeling emotionally safe when facing the researcher. Of course, there could also be some undesired or shameful past memories appearing during the fieldwork. These need special focus on how to commence the research so as not to make families feel anxious, as familial representation would still be continuing during the fieldwork.

During the interviews family histories were discussed as we went through their photographs. I wanted to learn their thoughts concerning their families' past. All of the participants, especially elder ones, were eager to talk about their past and hence family photography could provide them this opportunity. Middle class families showed significant sensitivity regarding their family past and they expected the same emotionality, mainly loyalty feelings, from their children as well. According to these members if there is something wrong about their family it should be kept secret. Lower class nuclear family members in the research project, on the other hand, did not show this restriction. Their family histories also appeared not as strongly constructed as middle class families' histories.

Another issue related to photography is the *reshaping and destroying of photographs*. For instance, divorce can cause a reshaping of the images in affected families. This can be a cultural practice or can be related to members' feelings with their family images. A semiotic perspective draws attention here to reshaping the images as means of legalizing the situation within the context of the family image. In this fieldwork, especially a few photographs drew my attention as they had been cut, and when few other photographs depicted images of an unwanted past or person of family's past, current members tended to mention the reshaping process of their photographs:

Father: Not every picture is put in a family album (Ardıç Family)

During their album display, Kayın Family's mother put away an old photograph from the album. I asked her why she was putting it away. She was silent for a while, as perhaps she did not like to tell me, but then she told me that that photograph belonged to the ex-wife of her son. She was sensitive regarding the new family of her son. She emphasized that there was a past life experience between them and that she just wanted to hide the photograph, not burn or throw away but only to hide it. In Defne Family, they threw away photographs depicting their aunt's husband after a divorce. The mother stated that they felt rather being set free of him.

Reshaping family photography is as important as preparing a family album. This is related to how members of the family take a role in constructing their family memories. Cutting or burning a photograph does not only mean to forget a moment or person, but it also means to construct a new memory. Members of family in this research were not supporting shaping, cutting or burning a photograph, except in particular dramatic cases.

## 5 Conclusion

In the light of this analysis we could see that photography plays an important role in the construction of the family image and its memory. This is helping to visualize an idealized familial image both for families' feelings of cohesion, and for the broader cultural structures of the related society. As a social document related with structured family lives, framed by social norms, family photography provides information regarding family lives, gender and social class variables. There exists a complex crossroads of public and private spaces of family lives; and the institutionalized family life shows itself to be supported through photography. Photographic media draws upon visual influences to help define the social construct of family. Sociocultural aspects of the family structure support the construction of family memory and its cohesion as a family, with the aid of photography.

Therefore, we can put forth the assumption that being a family is very closely related to owning family photographs. When families draw upon their past, they use good memories to feel rooted. Photography can aid this process. The construction of family image and its memory, as we saw in the case study, requires an idealized family vision. In line with the data obtained from the fieldwork, this diversity of (re)construction practices and usages of photography demonstrate the socioeconomic class differences regarding the role of photography. In spite of these cultural and economic differences, all of the families that participated in this research emphasized the importance of photography. They volunteered to show their good past while were also reluctant to talk about unwanted memories of their past. To conclude, we can say that

in this construction process families have the means to create a family past with the aid of photographic instruments; yet, there also are sensitivities and concerns regarding the reconstruction process of their family memories which motivate them to protect their ideal family images.

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*Biography*

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# Remaining divides: Access to and use of ICTs among elderly citizens

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## Abstract

The ambition to make all kinds of societal services, public as well as commercial ones, more effective and accessible via online applications is reoccurring all over the western world. To a large extent, such ambitions hold the promise to make citizens' everyday lives easier, but they are, however, also problematic in that they presuppose a number of important prerequisites. They presuppose widespread access to ICT-applications of a standard that is fast and solid enough to manage to make users actually make use of these services. They further presuppose that all citizens and consumers, who are the inscribed users of these applications, have enough competences and skills to make use of them. Hence, there is an obvious risk that people who do not have access are being left behind in the transformations of these services from analogue to digital.

In this chapter we attend to these risks by paying attention to contemporary patterns of access to, and use of, digital applications. The chapter is inspired by domestication theory and looks into and analyses different patterns of ICT access and use among Swedish senior citizens, with the following questions in mind: What ICT-devices do various groups of senior citizens have access to? To what extent do they make everyday use of them? For what purposes do they use these devices? The empirical material has been derived from a pilot survey which was conducted from August to September 2015.

*Keywords:* ICT-access; ICT-use; senior citizens; domestication; pilot study

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## 1 Introduction

According to international statistics, Sweden is one of the world's most Internet-connected nations (World Internet Project, 2013). This has in fact been the case ever since the 1990s, when computers with Internet connections started to become widespread in people's everyday lives all over the western world. The most recent statistics reveal that approximately 90 per cent of all Swedes have online access through various devices, such as computers and mobile phones (Findahl, 2014, p. 10).

The fact that online access is widespread has been interpreted as a very useful opportunity in different contexts. Among governmental agencies, it has been referred to as an opportunity to make public services more effective (Abalo et al, 2012). By offering citizens online access to information and services is thought to make citizens better able to take care of their own matters, which – in turn – would save both time and money for governmental agencies, such as the social insurance agency and the tax agency. In the Swedish context, these processes have been referred to as “*E-governance*” (ibid.). Healthcare has also become a part of this. With the advent of online portals for health information and communication, Swedish healthcare agencies hope to be able to provide better services, but also to make their contacts with care seekers and patients more effective (SKL, 2014).

With reference to the widespread access to and use of online devices these are reasonable ambitions. Why would it not be an attractive offer better – and cheaper – services with the help of online applications? The ambitions are, however, also problematic, both as visions and in practice. The ambition to make all kinds of social services, public as well as commercial ones, more effective and accessible via online applications presupposes a number of important prerequisites. It presupposes widespread access to ICT-applications of a standard that is fast and solid enough to make users actually make use of these services. It further presupposes that all citizens and consumers, who are the inscribed users of these applications, have enough competence and skills to actually make use of them. Hence, there is an obvious risk that people who do not have access are being left behind in the transformation of these services from analogue to digital. The same equally holds true when it comes to citizens without the necessary competence and skills to make use of such online based services.

In this chapter we attend to these risks by paying attention to contemporary patterns of access to, and use of, digital applications. More specifically, the chapter looks into and analyzes different patterns of ICT access and use among Swedish senior citizens, with the following three questions in mind: What ICT-devices do various groups of senior citizens have access to?; To

what extent do they make everyday use of them?; For what purposes do they use these devices? The analysis below is founded on a pilot study with survey data (n = 310) on the elderly and ICTs.

## 2. ICTs, senior citizens and everyday life: Theoretical considerations

Research into the everyday use of ICTs among senior citizens has not only been an area of interest for scholars specialized in media studies. The research field has instead had a great deal of influence from a large variety of disciplines, which have in common an interest in how elderly people make use of, and understand, digital technologies and applications. As a consequence, previous analyses within the area have, for instance, often been derived from medical and health sciences, which have had a specific interest in ICTs as resources for elderly people as patients, or potential patients (Torp et al, 2008; Harrefors et al, 2010; Berner et al, 2013). Very often these analyses start from an overarching ambition to better understand how specific digital applications can be made use of in order to improve health care. The field of informatics has also brought empirical insights to the area, for instance, with analyses of how and to what extent senior citizens manage to make use of the conversion of analogue services into digital ones (Choudrie et al, 2013).

Within the field of media studies Olle Findahl's research into access to, and use of, ICTs is an ambitious attempt to map access to, and use of, digital devices (Findahl, 2011; Findahl, 2013), which is also of importance for our understanding of the position of elderly people. These studies reveal, on the one hand, that Swedish households are among the world's most digitalized: 89 percent have home access to the internet, 65 percent have smart phones, more than one third of Swedish households have access to electronic tablets. On the other hand, they also reveal that elderly people are less likely to have access to – and use – these ICTs. They are also more likely than other groups to have a sense of themselves being left outside of the so-called “*information society*”.

These reports reveal interesting overall trends, but cannot offer much detail regarding variations within the specific group of elderly users (and non-users) due to their ambition to offer a lot more overarching data on access to and use of ICTs among all age groups. Hence, it is of importance for research within the area to test and develop new explanatory factors and variables in order to nuance and complement our understanding of the to which elderly people have access to and make use of ICTs in everyday life.

The ambition to test and develop new explanatory factors and variables is inspired by established research concerned with domestication of new ICTs. Domestication research can be perceived as a media studies branch of research

on the social shaping of technologies (Williams, 1974; Mackenzie/Wajcman, 1999). To put it simply, it is based on a specific analytical interest in what becomes of ICTs in everyday life, i.e. how they are made sense of, used, and become parts of daily routines. Domestication research had its big take off in the early 1990s (cf. Silverstone/Hirsch, 1992; Lie/Sørensen, 1996), and during the initial phase domestication research was dominated by its interest in television as an everyday technology (Silverstone, 1994). However, the approach has been under continuous development and has come to include analyses of emerging media technologies such as computers/the internet (cf. Bakardjieva, 2005; Berker et al, 2006; Olsson, 2006) and mobile phones (cf. Green/Haddon, 2009) and further, its analyses of users' social and cultural shaping of these technologies as everyday artefacts and communicative opportunities.

As the everyday ICTs have become technologically more complex, users' competence and skills have become increasingly important when trying to understand how users domesticate them. Within research inspired by the notion of domestication this was made evident earlier, when home computers started to become common elements in western households. It immediately became apparent that both access to, and use of, home computers were related to factors such as people's income and level of education. These insights were usefully conceptualized by Murdoch et al. (1992), who suggested that the ways in which people access and make use of ICTs could be conceptualized with reference to people's (and their households') degrees of access to three categories of resource – material, social and discursive resources (see Olsson, 2007 for further elaborations). The concept *material resources* refers mainly to economic resources – and according to Murdoch et al. (1992) – they are important predictors of access to ICTs. Which devices does the household have (everyday) access to, and what are their standards? In this conceptualization of resources the notion *social resources* refers to the user's social network. What is the quality and intensity in various users' networks with family, relatives, friends, and what is the participation in associations, etc.? A more specific angle to the concept in this context is that it also incorporates ICT competence in the network. To what extent do individual users have access to help with ICT-related matters within their social networks? The notion of *discursive resources* pays attention to the users' varying access to intellectual resources (educational, cultural, language) and how such resources – or the lack of them – help shape people's access to and use of ICTs.

### 3 Methodology & data material

The empirical material has been derived from a pilot survey which was conducted from August to September 2015. The design of the questionnaire was preceded and informed by eight, hour-long, interviews with course instructors at *SeniorNet* in Gothenburg, Malmö and Växjö. *SeniorNet* is a non-profit organisation in which the elderly train other elderly persons in ICT-skills.

Survey data were collected by e-mail and by telephone interviews. The questionnaire was distributed by e-mail to members of *SeniorNet* Växjö (a city of about 60,000 inhabitants in southern Sweden). *SeniorNet* Växjö has at least 550 members. 210 members answered the questionnaire, which means a 38 percent response rate. In order to get a sample that also includes non-members, 100 randomly selected persons, living in the city, 65 years or older, answered the very same questionnaire in telephone interviews.

In total, 310 responses were registered. The sample as a whole is obviously not a correct, simple random sample, and not representative of the older Swedish population. Firstly, neither *SeniorNet's* register of e-mail addresses, nor the telephone directory, are optimal sampling frames. Secondly, neither the members nor the non-members correspond to the elderly Swedes of the same age in general.

The respondents are, for instance, slightly better educated than average. 32 percent have studied at university level (compared to 26 percent of the same age group in Sweden). The telephone interviews revealed that people without ICT, or with limited digital competence, are less willing to participate. Moreover, 96 percent have Swedish as their mother tongue, indicating a low proportion of foreign-born participants (15 percent in the country as a whole). It may be added that the respondents' ages vary from 63 to 89, only 8 people are younger than 66. The average age is 73.2 years, and finally, 59 percent are women and 41 percent men.

Overall, we can conclude that the sample as a whole consists of people who are somewhat better educated than the age group at large. They are, in addition, through their membership and their willingness to participate in the survey probably more interested and skilled in digital technology than average. The figures that we report, therefore, must be considered as relatively high (in terms of access, use, etc.) in comparison to the population of elderly Swedes in general. When we, for example, claim that 94 percent have some kind of technological device, as we will do in the next paragraph, then this should be interpreted with caution. An actual value would probably be several percentage points lower.

Hence, it is important to repeat that the figures presented in this chapter are not representative for Swedish senior citizens in general. That is not our intention with the pilot survey, as it has been conducted in order for us to test

and develop indexes and measures that will be applied in a forthcoming, large scale Swedish survey (national SRS) covering ICT access, use and literacy among senior citizens. Nevertheless, even this sample offers some analytical opportunities as it allows for comparisons between people within the sample.

#### 4 Results and analysis

If we, to begin with, look at the sample as a whole, we can state that 94 percent of the respondents use some form of technological device which potentially gives them access to the Internet. In fact, the vast majority, 70 percent, have two or more devices, which means an average of 2.3 devices per person. The distribution between different types of technology looks as follows:

*Table 1. Technological devices, access (percent), years (mean)*

|               | access  | years |
|---------------|---------|-------|
| Laptop        | 71      | 2.9   |
| Smartphone    | 54      | 1.8   |
| Tablet        | 45      | 1.8   |
| Desktop       | 39      | 3.9   |
| Smart TV      | 16      | 2.4   |
| E-book reader | 6       | 2.5   |
|               | n = 310 |       |

*Percentage refers to the proportion of the sample with access to the technology in question. Mean indicates how old the devices are, calculated from the date of purchase.*

The table reveals that nearly three out of four respondents have laptops, 71 percent to be precise. Slightly more than half of the sample has smart phones, 54 percent, and almost half of it has electronic tablets, 45 percent. 39 percent are noted for desktops, while relatively few hold Smart TVs, and very few e-book readers, 16 and 6 percent respectively.

The table also specifies how old the devices are. These data can – apart from informing us that most of the equipment has relatively recently been purchased – also be utilized as a form of trend indicator. They would then suggest that the desktop, with a mean age of 3.4 years, and maybe the laptop, mean:

2.9 years, are in a downward trend, while the tablet and the smart phone are in an upward trend.<sup>1</sup> Finally, we can add that 72 percent of the respondents have a wireless network installed in their homes.

Furthermore, the devices are regularly used: 86 percent state they use the Internet five to six days a week or more often. The average use is 6.2 days a week (standard deviation, 1.68). Thus, altogether our data seems to suggest that assumptions saying that varying resources structure the access to, and use of, ICT, are less plausible. At least at a first glance, the data rather support the idea that digital technology has become a part of nearly everyone’s daily life; additionally, we could emphasize the fact that non-use must not necessarily be understood as involuntary exclusion, it may also be the result of individual’s conscious choice (cf. Sourbati, 2009; Weaver et al, 2010; Hakkarainen, 2012).

However, before we reject the initial idea that users’ varying access to material, social and discursive resources influence ICT access and use (cf. Murdoch et al., 1992; Warschauer, 2002;), let us first take a closer look at the material, and put it in relation to three different resources. In Table 2 below, material resources has been operationalized as level of income, social resources as family relationships, and discursive resources as level of education, which gives the following results:

Table 2. Resources and Access to Devices. Percent. Mean.

|                           | No device | One or more | Two or more | Three or more | Four or more | Mean | (n)   |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|------|-------|
| <b>Material resources</b> |           |             |             |               |              |      |       |
| -income                   |           |             |             |               |              |      |       |
| low                       | 12        | 88          | 50          | 27            | 5            | 1.7  | (67)  |
| medium                    | 4         | 96          | 75          | 42            | 26           | 2.4  | (129) |
| high                      | 0         | 100         | 78          | 56            | 33           | 2.7  | (72)  |
| n=268                     |           |             |             |               |              |      |       |

1 Our analysis here is also informed by our interviews with SeniorNet-instructors, who claim that beginners, unlike five years ago, rarely buy PCs; they instead prefer smart phones and/or tablets. Furthermore, SeniorNet’s range of courses has changed in the same manner. Today, SeniorNet offers fewer conventional PC courses; smart phones and tablets are prioritized.

|                                       | No device | One or more | Two or more | Three or more | Four or more | Mean | (n)   |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|------|-------|
| <b>Social resources -relationship</b> |           |             |             |               |              |      |       |
| single                                | 10        | 90          | 58          | 31            | 10           | 1.9  | (198) |
| couple                                | 3         | 97          | 87          | 48            | 21           | 2.5  | (98)  |
| n=284                                 |           |             |             |               |              |      |       |

|  | No device | One or more | Two or more | Three or more | Four or more | Mean | (n)   |
|--|-----------|-------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|------|-------|
| <b>Discursive resources -education</b> |           |             |             |               |              |      |       |
| low                                    | 15        | 85          | 54          | 34            | 12           | 1.9  | (74)  |
| middle                                 | 4         | 96          | 69          | 40            | 19           | 2.3  | (126) |
| high                                   | 1         | 98          | 77          | 48            | 20           | 2.6  | (95)  |
| n=295                                  |           |             |             |               |              |      |       |

Income: low  $\leq$  200.000 SEK/year, medium = 201.000-400.000 SEK/year, high: > 401.000 SEK/year.

Relationship. Single: Widow, widower, single. Couple: Married, cohabiting.

Education: according the standard of Statistics Sweden cf. Gilljam et al (1988).

Access to device, per cent: Tau-c < .005 regardless resource.

Number of devices, mean. Material and discursive resources, one way anova: .99.

Number of devices, mean. Social resources, Independent-samples T-test: .99

Differences in access to devices may at first glance seem small, but if we draw attention to material resources and the low-income group, we can note that twelve percent are completely lacking ICT and access to the Internet. In the middle income group only four per cent, one-third as many, have been registered in the category of non-users, and finally, in the high income group, everybody, 100 percent, has at least one device. We can also note that one in three in the high income group, 33 per cent, has four devices or more, whereas the corresponding figure for the low income group is only five percent. Formulated in another way, on average, those belonging to the low income group has 1.7 devices, while those in the high income group have 2.7.

Moreover, social resources<sup>2</sup> also affect access, and in a somewhat paradoxical way. Limited social resources could be assumed to increase the willingness to have ICT, however, the data rather suggest the opposite. Ten percent of the singles are lacking devices, which is slightly three times more than those who are in a relationship, three percent.

Finally, of the three types of resources, discursive resources, operationalized as education, appear to have the greatest impact on the propensity to have or not have a device. 15 percent of those with lower education levels lack devices, in the middle group only four, and in the group with the highest educational level, only one percent state that they do not have access to any devices.

One objection near at hand is that age may be an underlying variable, as those who are older generally, and, in particular, women who have not been gainfully employed, have a little less income/pension than those who are younger. The oldest also have on average a lower educational level. But the differences in age between the groups are negligible. For the entire population the average age is 73.2 years, and in all groups in Table 2 (above) the average age is 72 or 73 years. Thus, it seems more than reasonable to argue that material, social and discursive resources affect the propensity to both have digital technology and the number of devices.

The next step is to investigate usage. For this reason, non-users have been excluded from the analysis, and we will from now on only look at those who have digital technology. To get a comprehensive picture of use – and statistically significant results – an index has been constructed. The index consists of 15 items that capture the frequency of five different aspects of Internet use, that is, Internet use for *consumption*, *communication*, *production*, *mass media consumption* and finally internet use for *welfare service*<sup>3</sup> (cf. Hartmann 2010). The index ranges from zero to fifteen. A respondent who reports the maximum frequency of use for each particular item, receives 15 points on this scale, while, a respondent with no registered use, does not receive any points at all. The higher the score, the more frequent and varied these uses are, and vice versa.

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2 The operationalization of social resources used here, may seem simple, but has proved very effective in our tests of various measures of such resources (these other measures have included items such as “participation in clubs and associations”, “meeting with friends and family”). If we assume that all individuals have about the same number of social relationships, it means that the number of relationships increases when individuals become couples, although some relationships are partly overlapping.

3 Consumption includes items covering: information search about products, price comparisons, buying of goods and services. Communication includes items covering: SMS, e-mail, Facebook. Production includes items covering: photography, blogging, web forum writing. Mass media includes survey items: radio, TV, news. Welfare service includes items covering: Swedish Pension Agency, Social Insurance Agency, Health care.

Table 3. Resources and Usage-Index

|     | Material resources income |        |      | Social resources relationship |        | Discursive resources education |        |       |
|-----|---------------------------|--------|------|-------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------|--------|-------|
|     | low                       | middle | high | single                        | couple | low                            | middle | high  |
|     | 4.1                       | 5.0    | 5.4  | 4.4                           | 5.2    | 4.2                            | 4.5    | 5.4   |
| n = | (59)                      | (124)  | (72) | (88)                          | (180)  | (62)                           | (77)   | (139) |

Cronbach's Alpha: .810. Material and discursive resources, One Way Anova: .95 resp. .99. Social resources, Independent-samples T-test: .95,

The first impression is probably that the spread between the groups is limited. But this is only a result of how the index has been constructed; with higher values, differences became larger. Nevertheless, the main purpose is to discover a pattern and reveal whether there are significant differences between the groups in the sample. And as Table 3 reveals, we can state that this is the case: with reduced resources, follows a lower degree of use, in frequency and variation, no matter whether we are considering material, social or discursive resources. Thus, even if those with lower resources acquire ICTs, a gap or a divide persists between groups with varying degrees of access to material, social and discursive resources.

Finally, we can display a table showing figures of non-use. Table 4 is based on the same items that were included in the index. None of the items are statistically significant per se, but as they are parts of the index we have used (which is significant), they reveal insights into the index, and also show some overall trends within our sample. They also help anticipate trends that probably will be revealed (or at least searched for) within our forthcoming, larger survey (including 2000 respondents).<sup>4</sup>

Table 4. Resources and proportion of non-users. Per cent.

|                     | All | Material income |        |      | Social relationship |        | Discursive education |        |      |
|---------------------|-----|-----------------|--------|------|---------------------|--------|----------------------|--------|------|
|                     |     | low             | medium | high | single              | couple | low                  | middle | high |
| E-mail              | 4   | 10              | 3      | 0    | 8                   | 3      | 10                   | 7      | 1    |
| SMS                 | 8   | 14              | 7      | 6    | 8                   | 8      | 10                   | 9      | 7    |
| News                | 12  | 20              | 11     | 10   | 15                  | 11     | 16                   | 15     | 10   |
| Product information | 14  | 23              | 16     | 7    | 22                  | 11     | 25                   | 30     | 21   |

<sup>4</sup> With a larger sample the expectations for significant data are much higher.

|                   | All | Material income |        |      | Social relationship |        | Discursive education |           |           |
|-------------------|-----|-----------------|--------|------|---------------------|--------|----------------------|-----------|-----------|
|                   |     | low             | medium | high | single              | couple | low                  | middle    | high      |
| Photography       | 20  | 25              | 21     | 14   | 24                  | 18     | 24                   | 23        | 15        |
| Web-TV            | 22  | 22              | 23     | 19   | 27                  | 20     | 32                   | 22        | 20        |
| Price information | 23  | 35              | 25     | 13   | 33                  | 20     | <i>15</i>            | <i>21</i> | <i>12</i> |
| E-commerce        | 30  | 51              | 27     | 20   | 38                  | 27     | 44                   | 37        | 22        |
| Facebook          | 43  | 51              | 43     | 34   | 42                  | 44     | 49                   | 45        | 40        |
| Web-radio         | 46  | 56              | 48     | 39   | 53                  | 43     | 39                   | 58        | 44        |
| Pension Agency    | 57  | 68              | 59     | 48   | 63                  | 53     | 52                   | 60        | 55        |
| Health care       | 58  | 75              | 56     | 52   | 75                  | 53     | 58                   | 57        | 61        |
| Social insurance  | 71  | 77              | 69     | 71   | 76                  | 69     | 73                   | 74        | 68        |
| Web forum         | 74  | 77              | 78     | 69   | 79                  | 74     | 81                   | 82        | 70        |
| Blogging          | 93  | 92              | 95     | 89   | 92                  | 94     | 87                   | 96        | 95        |

All: n=240-286. Material resources: n=216-260. Social resources: n=223-264. Discursive resources: n=223-271.

If we look at the left column, which reports all respondents, and compare it with the three columns for those with the lowest resources, we can again see that with the column covering limited resources, with very few exceptions (in italics), has the largest proportion of non-users.

It is also worth noting that the kinds of usage that we relate to as e-services, especially public ones (social insurance, pension agency, health care), have a specifically large share of non-users. This is an important fact to bear in mind for a society that aims at increasingly basing such services on online applications – this is obviously not elderly users' preference, as they are expressed through their practices. The share of non-users is also large for applications such as web forums and blogs, which is a specifically interesting observation

as both commenting and blogging position the users as content producers. It is rather evident that such practices are not among the most common ones among the elderly users in this sample.

## 5 Conclusion

In light of data and analyzes presented above, we can return to the research questions. On the question “*What ICT-devices do various groups of senior citizens have access to?*” the answer is, that a large share of the respondents has access to at least one ICT-device that allows them to connect to the internet, and that laptops and smart phones are the most common devices. Meanwhile, we also have to conclude that access to ICT-devices varies according to the senior users’ resources. Hence, users with a higher income (material resources) generally have access to more devices than users with less income. Nevertheless, the difference between groups of users becomes particularly obvious with reference to education (discursive resources) – better educated users are better equipped with ICTs than those with lesser education.

The second question – “*To what extent do they make everyday use of them?*” – generates similar results, suggesting that material, social as well as discursive resources are important in shaping senior users’ ICT-practices. Overall, user groups with larger resources (material, social, discursive) have a more frequent and multifaceted Internet use than user groups with less resources.

This is also related to our third research question: “*For what purposes do they use these devices?*” The overall most common practices are e-mailing, texting (SMS) and news consumption. These are very widespread user practices among all groups of users. Nevertheless, also in this regard, users varying access to material, social and discursive resources has a big impact. With very few exceptions, users with larger resources appear to be both more frequent and varied ICT-users than users with lesser resources.

Such differences between groups of senior ICT-users potentially matters in terms of who gets “included into” or “excluded from” increasingly digital services – both public and private ones. These patterns need further analyses. As the data presented here are drawn from a pilot study, we are so far only talking about tendencies within a small sample, but these tendencies need further elaboration with the help of a larger and representative sample.<sup>5</sup> In our view such data are becoming increasingly vital as ever more public and private services are being offered mainly online. The ICT access and capabilities, as well

5 This is in fact also the case as we – during the autumn/winter 2015/2016 – conducted a survey based on a nationwide sample of elderly Swedes (+ 65 years). With the help of data from this sample we will be able to substantiate our observations regarding the role played by material, social and discursive resources in shaping access to use of ICTs.

as willingness to use these devices, among different groups of senior citizens will become decisive for the extent to which they are able to benefit from the development, both as consumers and citizens.

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# Researching the young radio audience

*Maria Gutiérrez*

## Abstract

In 2008, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) proposed some guidelines to radio broadcasters designed to activate the recovery of younger listeners. They did this after observing that radio's penetration among the youngest sectors was in decline. According to this report, the key to halting this decrease was to join forces with the Internet, since the latter accounted for the main lack of interest in radio among this particular demographic, especially as far as music radio was concerned. The main focus of the guidelines was therefore on the online environment. What was recommended was that attention should be paid to website development and promotion with particular emphasis on the issue of interactivity. However, taking these steps might not in itself be enough to halt young people's loss of interest in radio. Understanding and interpreting this disaffection also requires the use of methodological research tools—including the study of quantitative data provided by audience measurement companies, organisations that analyze the listening habits and expectations of young people. In this chapter, the methodological tools designed to address this communicative issue will be examined in some depth. The findings confirm that a new approach is needed for the study of radio audiences.

*Keywords:* radio consumption, young, audience, Internet, methodology

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## 1 Introduction

Young audiences have become a problem for the radio broadcasting industry. In fact, the report published by EBU in 2008 was a public confirmation that radio broadcasters had finally begun to notice the effects resulting from young listeners' disaffection. This state of affairs was common to both public and private operators, all of whom were observing how music radio stations were beginning to lose their influence over those who so far had been their main listeners. The streaming services with music content such as Pandora (Meneses, 2012) or Spotify, and platforms such as YouTube have emerged as significant providers for young listeners. Apart from other important features, these music providers have allowed users to create customized playlists that they can carry in their pockets thanks to the new digital music players such as MP3, MP4, iPod (Berry, 2006; Ferguson, Greer, Reardon, 2007) or the mobile phone (Ling, 2007).

But, was the reason for this disaffection among young listeners exclusively related to technology and the Internet? Was implementing new services linked to radio station websites the best strategy to entice young audiences? This was the key question for the industry. However, a researcher should consider other issues that, on the one hand, go further than what is obvious (Huertas, 2002) and, on the other hand, help to interpret the quantitative data provided by audience studies. These studies have a commercial goal and they are used as a reference point for the negotiations between operators and advertisers since this is how radio broadcasting companies are positioned in the market (Martí/Monclús/Gutiérrez/Ribes, 2015). Thanks to these reports, the operators have been able to discover more about the socio-demographic structure of their audiences, the equipment that they use in their homes, their media consumption habits and their lifestyles. This will, however, still not give them key information to help them understand the underlying reasons for the disaffection of the young audience. What is clear is that, without this information, radio stations will not be able to develop any kind of successful communications policy.

The aim of this chapter is, therefore, to analyze how these methodological tools can contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between programme providers and their young listeners based on research projects developed in Spain.

## 2 Defining the problem: the young audience

Why has music radio lost one of its traditional roles as an advice giver? How does radio attempt to appeal to young listeners' collective imagination? How is their media diet structured? How and for what purposes do they use new tech-

nologies? As mentioned above, the EBU in its report has highlighted an issue that operators have been aware of for quite some time. For example, in Catalonia-one of the most complex regional broadcasting markets in Spain- the average age of the listeners to music radio in 2008 was 38 years old an increase of 3.5 percentage points since 2001 (Martí, Ribes, Gutiérrez, Martínez, Monclús, (2011, p. 143). This piece of information alone shows that the industry has a serious problem. Generally, the various stakeholders addressed the decrease in radio penetration among young listeners by resorting to the same strategies as they had previously used. However, the context had changed and the audience at that moment had different characteristics.

When the researcher is focusing on factors that involve reception, certain criteria must be applied in order to produce clearly defined samples. The approach to specific radio broadcasting markets allows an in-depth study based on its own characteristics. Although the EBU's wake-up call was directed at its members, each radio broadcasting ecosystem operates under different conditions; so even though the issues are global, the approach has to be local. In Spain, the radio's decreasing penetration among the audience in the 14 to 19 age range was less pronounced than in Catalonia. The cause of this difference might be related to emotional bonding. A closer look at the radio stations surveyed in this research shows that the trend with listeners in Catalonia is that they consume generalist and music radio content produced in their region and language by both public and private providers.

Viewed more generally, young people's disaffection towards this medium makes a kind of sense. These young people, also known as digital natives, have always been considered to have natural skills when using digital devices (Prensky, 2001). It is obvious that their media experience is different to that of previous generations. The fast-paced technological evolution is responsible for turning the @Generation into the #Generation, one that is connected at all times and one that is adept at using social media tools (Freixa, Fernández-Planells, 2014).

Developments in the digital environment have modified the media consumption habits among the young population (Livingstone, 2002; Pronovost, 2006; Arbitron y Jaccobs Media, 2007; McClung, Pompper, Kinnally, 2007; FUNDACC, 2008; Tabernero, Sánchez-Navarro, Tubella, 2008; Aranda, Sánchez-Navarro, Tabernero, 2009; among others), and they have especially affected radio. This is a global phenomenon but the approach to a well-defined sample by geographical criteria introduces inherent characteristics of the subject group and its own context. Studying reports that provide insights into sociocultural habits is a necessary stage in any audience research. These studies offer contextual data regarding the social and cultural environment that contribute to interpreting the results according to additional methodological tools.

For example, in the case of young Catalans between 14 and 24 years old, according to the data from El Baròmetre de Catalunya (FUNDACC, 2008)<sup>1</sup>, *listening to music* (97.1%) was their favourite cultural practice, while *listening to the radio* (54.3%) was behind ‘*surfing the Internet*’ (64.1%) or ‘*going to the cinema*’ (59.5%). But what kind of music content do young people tune into and how do they consume it? Gutiérrez, Ribes, Monclús, (2011, p. 313) concluded that the main downloaded product was music (96.9% young people questioned in the survey) obtained from P2P networks such as eMule, eDonkey or Kazaa. Only 19.7% bought music over the Internet while 32.8% had never done it. For the majority of respondents, the network made available a significant amount of data that they did not have to pay for. Films (63.6%) and IT programs (50.4%) were also part of this content to which they had free access<sup>2</sup>. In fact, the Internet has supported this form of consumption and it is a characteristic inherent to the @Generation’s DNA.

### 3 Radio programming for youngsters: Analyzing the content

A review of relevant audience studies allows operators to know which are the most popular programs [...], improve the offer but also to increase their income from advertising. (Portilla/Herrera, 2004, p. 162). Due to the high level of competitiveness, the formats of music radio in Spain have lost their traditional identity in order to attract bigger audiences<sup>3</sup>. This strategy evidences that broadcasters have forgotten that music formats define the brand so that audiences can recognize it easily.

However, music brands need to give the structure to a story based on the creation of its own sound (Moreno, 1999). Combining different elements results in a specialized offer that should allow each listener to choose the most satisfactory music style for them (Country, Classic Music, Pop, Adult Contemporary, Hits, among others) and that, generally, has a specific target.

An analysis of the content allows one to take a closer look at the music formats as well as to find out what kind of content radio stations are offering young people. By adopting this method, one can detect the changes made to formats between 1999 and 2008 in the music offered on the radio in Catalonia (Table 1). Firstly, one can observe the appearance of new formats such as

1 El Baròmetre is an audience study developed by the Fundació Audiències de la Comunicació i la Cultura (FUNDACC). This organisation has been supported by most of the Catalan media from the very beginning since they thought the results from the national studies did not reflect the complexity of the Catalan media ecosystem.

2 These results are part of the research project Youth and Radio. Current issues and future trends conducted by the Observatori de la Ràdio a Catalunya (l’OBS, 2009) and sponsored by the Associació Catalana de la Ràdio. 1,002 youngsters were interviewed

3 Nowadays, some music stations combine different music contents such as Top 40 and Hits or Easy Listening music in the same schedule.

Crossover, Oldies or Non- Commercial Music and, secondly, the resurgence of AC and Dance. The latter is undoubtedly the music style that is closest to the preferences of young adults in the 14 - 24 age range.

Table 1: Music and thematic networks and stations' evolution in Catalonia, concerning the broadcasting format

| 1999  | 2008   |
|---|--|
| <b>MUSIC LISTS</b>                                    |  |
| 40 Principales, Hot 70, Radio Club 25                 |  |
| <b>ADULT CONTEMPORARY (AC)</b>                        |  |
| M-80, Flaixbac, RKOR, Ona Música, Cadena 100, RAC 105 | M-80, Ràdio Flaixbac, Cadena 100, RAC 105, Europa FM, Kiss FM, GUM FM, Styl FM, Pròxima FM |
| <b>CROSSOVER</b>                                      |  |
|   | 40 Principales (Music lists and AC)  |
| <b>OLDIES</b>   |  |
|   | Èxits FM   |
| <b>FOLKORE</b>  |  |
| Cadena Dial, RM Radio, Radio Tele Taxi                | Cadena Dial, RM Radio, Radio Tele Taxi, Radiolé  |
| <b>CLASSIC MUSIC</b>                                  |  |
| <i>RNE Radio 2, Sinfo Radio, Catalunya Música</i>     | <i>Radio Clásica (RNE), Catalunya Música</i>   |
| <b>DANCE MUSIC</b>                                    |  |
| Flaix FM  | Flaix FM, Màxima FM  |
| <b>BEAUTIFUL MUSIC</b>                                |  |
| Ràdio Estel   | Ràdio Estel  |
| <b>NON COMERCIAL MUSIC</b>                            |  |
|   | <i>iCat fm</i>   |
| <b>MIXED FORMATS</b>                                  |  |
| <i>RNE Radio 3, Catalunya Cultura</i>                 | <i>RNE Radio 3, Catalunya Cultura</i>  |

Note: Public stations in italics.

Source: Martí/Monclús (2008)

The analysis of the audience data and programme schedules does not provide enough elements to understand the music stations' change of strategy as reflected on Table 1. Qualitative research is needed to discover the elements that have influenced the specialized format migration towards formats designed to appeal to a heterogeneous audience.

#### 4 Delphi technique: The operator's perspective

Despite the declining number of young radio listeners, operators have kept applying the same traditional parameters of the radio business to their digital context. Most of the studies on the disaffection of the young towards radio have focused on the consumption habits or the offer of contents within the digital context. Nevertheless, this approach is exclusively restricted to one of the actors involved. The exception is L'OBS (2009), which considered it essential to include the industry's point of view by organising a Delphi<sup>4</sup>.

At this point, the researcher must decide what the best option is: a semi-structured interview or a Delphi. In both cases, the participation of the industry is essential since it is responsible for designing the schedules and it should deal with the issues the researcher has raised. Each methodological tool has its own strengths and weaknesses. With the interview, the researcher can get to know each operator's point of view and compare the answers, whereas with the Delphi there are many points of view put together in the same session and, as a result, there is debate and reflection.

Having in mind that disaffection among young listeners was a global problem, the OBS (2009) decided to organise a Delphi in which six professional experts on music radio in Catalonia participated (Gutiérrez, Ribes, Monclús, 2011, p. 312). Which new findings were forthcoming from this session? During the Delphi, all the music content managers agreed that special attention should be paid to the following points:

1. The industry had ignored the audience in the 14 to 24 age range because it was the segment of the population with the lowest spending power. It was the least interesting commercially speaking.
2. Music radio broadcasts very few new music releases each week. The programmers admitted that the number of weekly releases had decreased from 15 to 1 or none. The renegotiation of the agreements with the music industry was a difficult matter to deal with because of the crisis they were also going through due to the appearance of music repositories such as Pandora or Spotify, among others.
3. The strategy of recycling content generated repetition; a situation that the hot clock structure<sup>5</sup> emphasized even more. The variety was obtained by recovering hits introducing formulas similar to Crossover or AC.
4. Adapting to the digital environment was regarded as the best strategy for regaining the interest of young listeners, provided that there was new content and services.

4 The Delphi method is a qualitative research technique based on structural surveys to expert panels. It is also a useful tool to evaluate current matters in the communication process.

5 It is a clock diagram that organises the music play list during the day.

## 5 The youth point of view: Quantitative and qualitative techniques

As was discussed above, most of the research work focused on carrying out a full survey of the radio consumption habits of youngsters in the 14 to 24 age range. To do so, quantitative methods such as surveys and samples were used which were constructed according to demographic criteria and which aimed to be representative.

This kind of exercise is complex due to the fact that it requires a sufficiently large number of subjects that respond to criteria of proportionality. A common trend among researchers is to create samples amongst the university population. This option is easier to implement in a practical sense but the results only reflect the behaviour of one part of the young population. Table 2 shows the main features of the samples in 3 pieces of research that focused directly or indirectly on the relationship between youth and radio.

Table 2

| Features    | OCENDI          | L'OBS                                 | Publiradio      |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| No. Surveys | 956             | 1,002                                 | 521             |
| Target      | 18-20 years old | 14-24 years old                       | 18-24 years old |
| Education   | University      | High School, Professional, University | University      |
| Selection   | Planned         | Planned                               | Random          |

Source: Compiled by authors based on López, Gómez, Redondo, 2014 (OCENDI); Gutiérrez, Ribes, Monclús, 2011(L'OBS); Perona, Barbeito, Fajula, 2015 (Publiradio).

L'OBS (2009) shows the most complete sample since it covers a wider spectrum of the population and introduces new indicators such as education or profession, among others. With regard to gender, in all 3 cases the proportionality found in the Spanish and Catalan society was paralled.

What should also be taken into account is how the questionnaire was set up. The mixed structure allows for closed questions, which result in quantitative data, whereas the more open questions offer a qualitative vision. Among the quantitative data, three of the most important studies about young people and their relationship to radio highlighted the fact that the although youngsters declare they were radio listeners (Gutiérrez, Ribes, Monclús, 2011; López, Gómez, Redondo, 2014; Perona, Barbeito, Fajula, 2015), this information does not correspond to the medium's penetration rate found in audience studies.

But, was this the reason for their relative lack of interest in radio? Different studies point to other factors that directly or indirectly could explain the disaffection of young people towards music radio:

1. The net and the new mobile devices allowed them to create customized playlists where the main content was the music they had previously selected and downloaded to listen to it anytime, anywhere, anyway (López, Gómez, Redondo, 2014, p. 53).
2. The hot clock structure generates repetitive or monotonous music choices interrupted by low quality ads (Book/Grady, 2005 in Albarrañ, 2010, p. 106).
3. The absence of emotional bonding towards a radio brand is a result of the listener's detachment and it leads to a loss of loyalty. (Martí, Gutiérrez, Ribes, Monclús, Martínez, 2010, p. 77)
4. Book and Grady (2005) highlight that one of the main reasons for dissatisfaction is the feeling that radio DJs speak too much. (Albarrañ, 2010, p. 106).

In the L'OBS' study (Martí, Gutiérrez, Ribes, Monclús, Martínez, 2010) youngsters are asked to write down the titles of three radio programmes they usually listen to. Only 208 interviewees out of 1,002 were able to provide the correct titles. After discounting different variables, it was concluded that young adults listen to the radio sporadically and for a very short period of time, between 15 minutes and 1 hour at any one time. The survey was made in a context where radio stations considered consumption of less than one hour as representing a crisis factor. Furthermore, it was established that multitasking is a feature inherent to the @Generation, so this could also explain how difficult it might be to maintain a high level of attention on one single topic. Taking into account the fact they listen to the radio while carrying out another activity, it is understandable that one cannot presuppose an attentive audience.

From this perspective, the L'OBS team decided to do some further research into the determining factors around radio listening: what content was the favourite, which brand was usually listened to, what was the title of the programme, for instance. This kind of information was key to understanding in the phase before consumption habits had changed, that is why listeners were asked to recognize brand and programme. The results were uneven but very interesting to the industry<sup>6</sup>. In aspects such as where they used to listen to the radio, the approach of the three pieces of research coincided.

In order to complement the questionnaire, the use of focus groups is an interesting methodological technique. A key part of the thematic design of the survey was its use of the results. Organising a survey is already a difficult task, but organising a focus group increases the level of difficulty. Firstly, the participants must meet the selection criteria, and secondly, they all must agree

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<sup>6</sup> Audience studies are based on memory experience so to know the right title of a programme is relevant.

on a specific place and time to be present. The focus group as a qualitative technique allows one to detect new elements that can generate new research questions as well as confirming the data obtained through the questionnaires. This qualitative research can only point out certain trends since the way in which it is conducted means the results will never be representative. Regarding the issue of disaffection, the discussion groups in the L'OBS study<sup>7</sup> revealed that radio was considered to be an obsolete medium used by parents or grandparents, and with little chance of being further developed on the Internet.

## 5 Concluding remarks

An existing communicative problem was used as the starting point for this piece of research and for considering the particular issues that each methodological technique has for the results. The purpose did not involve an assessment of the analyzed research studies. From the methodological perspective, the goal was to describe their contributions to the analysis of young audiences.

The researcher must deal with a number of limitations imposed by the very object of study. At this point, the design of a good methodological tool is essential and it should not create new obstacles in the course of the research. There is no correct way of determining which technique, the quantitative or the qualitative, is better. However, the key is to use the most convenient tool to be able to answer the questions raised or to verify the hypothesis postulated at the start of the research process. Whereas the quantitative techniques can correct the ambiguity found in the qualitative tools, the latter can confirm or refute the figures and open new perspectives. Now the question is: How can a new image of radio be created for young audiences?

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7 There were two groups: one with 14 to 18 years old youngsters and another one with 19 to 24 years old young adults.

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### Biography

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# Watching socialist television serials in the 70s and 80s in the former Czechoslovakia: A study in the history of meaning-making<sup>1</sup>

*Irena Reifová*

## Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to map out and analyze how the viewers of the communist-governed Czechoslovak television understood the propagandist television serials during so-called “normalization”, the last two decades of the communist party rule after the Prague Spring. It strives to show peculiarities of the research on television viewers’ capabilities to remember the meanings and details of hermeneutic agency which took place in the past. The role of reproductive memory in remembering the viewers’ experience buried under the grand socio-political switchover is also illuminated and used to coin the concept of “memory over dislocation”.

*Keywords:* popular culture, television serials, Czechoslovak normalization, life-story research, collective memory, post-socialism

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is a shortened version of the article “Watching socialist television serials in the 70s and 80s in the former Czechoslovakia: a study in the history of meaning-making” published in *European Journal of Communication*, 30(1).

## 1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to challenge a tacit assumption that instrumental and interpretive autonomy of media use can only be looked for in the democratic environment. It turns the time back to the 1970s and 1980s in state-socialist Czechoslovakia and strives to illuminate how the television viewers understood the socialist television serials, the Czechoslovak legendary television of the period. Its goal is to map out the meaning-making processes stimulated by television programmes that packaged ideological credos of the Communist Party as popular television narratives. What is even more important, though, is to show that these programmes sensitized viewers' meaning-making potential, and that the spectators did not simply swallow the propagandist hook without any modification or re-appropriation.

This is not an attempt to pulverize or relativize the goals and methods of the Communist Party's propaganda. The chapter rather argues that production and reception were "linked but distinctive moments" (Hall, 1980, p. 107) even in the circuits of culture within undemocratic society in Communist Party governed Czechoslovakia.

The existing conceptual apparatus of audience studies derives predominantly from the research that was done on media audiences in democratic, capitalist circumstances. Unregimented, liberal media culture seems to be a primary condition for meaningful enquiry into the audiences as it is exactly political freedom and market operations which allow scholars to assess the audiences either as citizens or as consumers, the two most examined subject positions in contemporary audience studies (Dahlgren/Sparks, 1991; Blumler/Gurevitch, 1995). Nonetheless, the audiences in undemocratic conditions were never made part of this narrative.

## 2 Methodological considerations: History, memory and meanings

Methodologically speaking, this research is a study in the history of meaning making processes. It has two main points of departure. Firstly, it proposes that totalitarian popular culture was used in a hermeneutically prolific way, and seeks to examine political readings of the socialist serials by the television audiences of the period. Secondly, it differentiates between actual historical meaning making processes and the retrospective reconstruction of these processes. It assumes that viewers' memory of how they understood propagandist television in the socialist past is massively affected by the drive to re-evaluate the past in post-socialist collective memory.

The research is grounded in analyzing respondents' memories of watching the socialist serials collected by the focus group interviews. The sample was composed of 40 narrators in seven focus groups (one in-depth interview with a specific respondent was also done). The selection of narrators was controlled for age, active viewing of the socialist serials during so-called "normalization" and declared attitude to the state-socialist system in Czechoslovakia. The narrators in the study were born in 1955 or earlier; only people who were at least 20 years old in 1975, when the first propagandist television serial was aired, were selected. The narrators were grouped according to their attitude towards the communist system into six groups with no specific attitude and one group with an oppositional attitude. Interviewing was done in a semi-structured fashion according to a prepared list of topics. The interviews took place during 2012 in the central part of the Czech Republic (including Prague) and in Brno. The interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes each, and video samples taken from the three socialist serials were used as artifacts and incentives. The focus groups were recorded and transcribed. 'Normalization' is the name commonly given to the period between 1969-89 in Czechoslovakia, following the curtailment of reforms stemming from the 1968 political liberalization movement, which would become known as the 'Prague Spring', and the subsequent restoration of totalitarianism. It was characterized by the restoration of the Communist Party rule prevailing before the reform period led by Alexander Dubček.

Normalization, which brought about the re-establishment of an unadulterated totalitarian regime, is mostly studied in terms of specifying the power of the state socialist structures. Human agency is overlooked as a quality which naturally atrophied under the pressure of the tyrannizing structures. Looking for the indices of autonomous hermeneutic agency within the conditions of normalization brings a new stimulus into academic writing on non-democratic audiences, which has been for a long time preoccupied with the power of structures and indoctrinating effects of propaganda (Otáhal, 1994; Fidelius, 1998; Kabele/Hájek, 2008; Jareš et al., 2012).

### 3 Memory over dislocation

The overall methodology of this research could be defined as the sociology of the past based on life-story research. It analyzes the extracts of life-stories that respondents produced when they were invited to talk about memories of their watching political scenes in the socialist serials.

The most contested aspect of the studies grounded in life-story methodology is the nature of memory work. This type of research has been notoriously criticized for working with something as biased and unreliable as memory although memory studies scholars tend to anticipate potential criticism

themselves. Alistair Thomson enlists multifarious doubts about memory as a data-mining tool. According to Thomson, memory deteriorates in old age, gets affected by nostalgia or influenced by the narrator's and interviewer's personalities – and above all – it is replaced by reconfigured versions of the collective or retrospective memory (Thomson, 2011, p. 79). Jerome Bourdon in his account of memory as “the double agent” also stresses that “memory is reconstructive; it constantly re-elaborates the past” (Bourdon, 2011, p. 63).

Distortions and reconstitutions of memory are by and large accepted as indisputable facets of memory work which apply to all remembering subjects in all circumstances. Nonetheless, this research still requires a more nuanced perspective which allows us to understand that the intensity of reconstructive tendency is crucially connected to dis/continuity of memory. The discontinued memory which has to handle a transformative rupture, dividing the life course into incompatible parts, is necessarily even more reconstructive, and certainly reconstructs the past in a specific way. Such a memory can be defined as a memory over dislocation. It is exactly this type of memory which is dealt with in this research. The past of which narrators talked is separated from the present by the political and social switchover in 1989 – in other words by “dislocation”. Jakob Torfing defines it as a total fracture of all familiar social dimensions, as “a destabilization of a discourse that results from the emergence of events which cannot be domesticated, symbolized or integrated within the discourse in question” (1999, p. 301). Memory is even more fragile and agile if it stretches over dislocation and such specificity has to be taken into account in the phase of interpretations.

## 4 Qualitative analysis of focus group interviews

The main goal of the research was to find out how the viewers reflected on the socialist serials in the period of normalization, and whether they used these politically engaged narratives to connect to the themes of public relevance. Did this genre stimulate viewers (who were members of a generally de-politicized population) to sink deeper into the surrounding political realities and give precision to their political opinions?

### 4.1 *Cognitive reactions*

In the memories of the narrators, watching socialist serials was fully deprived of any cognitive processing. Watching these serials is remembered as a thing that occurred automatically, without reflection, as an element of an everyday routine. To watch or not to watch was not the dilemma for the majority of the

narrators; they watched the serials automatically, but with minimum intellectual involvement. Josef's account is a good example of this prevailing reaction: "I wasn't thinking while watching the serials because it simply didn't interest me. It is like having something else in your head. I paid no attention to the scenes from political meetings where the Bolsheviks decided that this cow has to give more milk".

The two main arguments that narrators used to explain their cognitive absenteeism in watching the serials referred to the sociopolitical background. The first one can be labeled "political anaesthesia". The narrators revealed that staying tuned into the flow of the regime's persuasive communication was difficult because it thoroughly penetrated all social communication. The result was lowered capacity (not speaking about desire) to perceive the messages, incapability to discern separate arguments within the surfeit of propaganda and general insensibility towards the political discourse.

The second reason mentioned was the feeling of having no control over things, a sense of powerlessness. Incogitant viewing was connected to the awareness that a thoughtful focus on the political sequences would not make any difference; creating opinions was useless activity as there was no "market" for people's opinions. This subcategory can be framed as "deficit of agency". Mila described feelings of powerlessness when she said: "It was better to watch it this way, better than letting it eat you, better than feeling sad and hurt. Because ... we could not do anything about it, it was the way it was".

Some, mainly female, narrators mentioned their life stage as a reason for withdrawal from reflecting on political issues in the serials and in the society. They referred to their focus on starting families and bringing up children who were small early in the normalization period. (Family was the most important locus within normalization privatism [Havelková, 1993]. The early years of normalization saw a remarkable baby-boom, which was a demographic sign of a retreat into the private sphere. The total fertility rate in 1974 was the highest in the post-war years.)

The only departure from the general denial of cognitive involvement was the use of propagandist sequences in the serials as analytical material. Some narrators recalled that they watched the serials as a way of "studying the enemy", i.e. the Communist Party ruling establishment. They tried to do their own private analysis of propagandist techniques and protect their notion of the divide between reality and its ideologically distorted version. Pavel was one of those who revealed purposeful uses of cognitive functions: "I watched, as I say, only for study purposes. But some of them were simply too repulsive even as a study material". Jan gave a more detailed account of the same motivation: "Talking about *The Thirty Adventures of Major Zeman*, I was interested to find out how they shape the reality, how they present it to the audiences. Before

1968, my dad was a head of the psychology department at the university and I wanted to figure out how these people think. So I watched it carefully and learned a lot about the world we lived in.”

All narrators who mentioned study reasons for some intellectual involvement in watching the serials had an oppositional attitude towards the political regime, and one was a member of the dissident circles.

#### 4.2 *Non-cognitive reactions*

The narrators gave a list of other forms of viewing practices in relation to the socialist serials. However, they did not classify these practices as intellectual activities, nor agreed with this interpretation when it was offered to them in the fashion of a “devil’s advocate question” (Michiello et. al., 1990, p. 124). Therefore these reactions, which the narrators excluded from cognitive reflection, were grouped together within the category “non-cognitive reactions”.

The narrators fluently revealed **emotions** which they felt as a result of watching the socialist serials. They were predominantly sadness, irritation and hatred. Václav responded to this topic: “Watching it was suffering, a bit, sometimes... The piece about collectivization of the lands, I do not remember the title; it was difficult for those who lived in the countryside.”

The negative emotions which the serials raised had different intensities, from mild annoyance to open hatred. The feelings of open hatred (which were even translated into aggressive behaviour in one case) were, as well as “studying the enemy” in the category “cognitive reactions”, typical for the viewers with oppositional attitude. Mikuláš provided an intense example of hatred: “I played in the band. Once we were at some festival and we met Kaiser and Lábus there, the two actors who played in *Thirty Adventures of Major Zeman*, in the episode about hijacking the plane. I felt real hatred to these actors so I came down from the stage, came near and gave them a kick. All the guys then did the same thing, it was crowded and we were stealthily kicking their asses and shins.”

As the serials unreeled, people used to talk about the newly broadcast episodes in their conversations. Talking about new episodes of the serials was one of general everyday routines applied throughout various social groups and environments. Conversations related to the serials occurred in family circles or at work. Some narrators confirmed that talking about the episode broadcast the previous evening was the first thing they did after they arrived at work. Narrators who worked as manual workers reported less self-censorship in discussing the political sequences of the serials, as compared to the narrators who worked in administration. Antonín, who was a member of the communist parliament during normalization, remembered that his colleagues gave him the nickname

Plateník after the main character of the regional Communist Party Secretary from the serial *The District in the North*. He said: “The guys from the factory used to give me a hard time. When I came in the morning, they gathered around me and snapped at me: What a silly thing your comrades did in the last episode again ... But I almost looked forward to these moments.”

Suppression of the political sequences and concentration on the newest developments in the romantic parts of the plots was, however, a much more obvious practice. It was summarized by Anna: “It was normal gossiping. One came to work and the debate started: what about the main heroine last evening and what about him, what kind of bollocks somebody said, if she looked pretty or impossible, and so on...”

Very often the narrators mentioned **laughter** as their reaction to propagandist sequences in the serials. They described the laughter as ironic and in some cases laughter was combined with ironic comments to the television. (Laughter here overlaps with conversations – ironic talking back to the television is the intersection of the two practices.) Milada contributed to this issue: “It was malicious, ironic laughter. Sometimes my husband added a comment to the plot, like: Now you really explained it, thank you. It was a way of diminishing the tension.”

Laughter was either a compensatory or surrogate practice helping the viewers to eliminate tension or replace a less desirable alternative. The narrators noted that laughing helped them avoid becoming angry. Ironic laughter associated with watching the socialist serials is, nonetheless, different from the ironic viewing which was diagnosed by Ien Ang (1985) in the case of Dallas audiences. In the case of viewers of the socialist serials, laughter was an emergency practice which they did not enjoy.

A couple of times narrators rehearsed explicitly oppositional practices (a protestant priest who said he preached against the propagandist serials in the church) or practices of **excorporation** defined by John Fiske as the “process by which the powerless steal elements of the dominant culture and use them in their own, often oppositional or subversive, interests” (Fiske, 1987, p. 315). Both examples of excorporation were inspired by watching *The Woman Behind the Counter*. Olga said that the next morning after the first episode was aired she and the group of her friends went to their local supermarket, asked for a Customers’ Book and (in a joking manner) wrote a written complaint saying that this supermarket should be supplied as well as the one on television. Marie remembered that the exterior of the television supermarket was located at Praha Smíchov, and on the way back from a bar she and her friends banged on the door and yelled: “Let us in, here you have everything and other places have empty shelves”.

### 4.3 Unthinkable thinking

When asked about forms and intensities of reflection on the political parts of the serials, the first choice of answer in the absolute majority of cases was: “But we did not think about it back then”. The denial of any cognitive involvement was the red thread unreeling throughout the research. It emerged soon that it is mainly the signifier “thinking” which functions to stop further musing.

The dichotomy of cognitive vs. non-cognitive reactions became the central categorical pair. Cognitive reactions encompassed either cognitive denial or – solely in the case of narrators who had an oppositional attitude to the communist establishment – employment of cognitive functions to study the socialist serials as a source of knowledge of the methods the regime used to communicate with its citizens. The category of “non-cognitive reactions” encompassed all other reactions the narrators revealed after they had refused cognitive processing of the political scenes in the serials. They retrieved their affections (mostly negative); conversational references to the serials within the everyday situations; moments of bitter, ironical laughter and scattered behavioral reactions in *carnavalesque* style.

It is absolutely indispensable that the interpretation of the results takes into account potential traps and pitfalls of narrators’ remembering of the socialist past, specificities of remembering the past stored behind the socio-political rupture and supposable reconstitution of the memories under this influence. As was explained earlier, memory is always reconstructive – it mediates over time and suffers from all distortions that any mediation involves (and a few of its own). Nonetheless, in this research we want to narrow our attention to the modifications brought about by the dislocatory impact of socio-political change in 1989. From this perspective, signs of dislocation-affected reconstruction of memory accumulated mainly around the category of cognitive denial. These signs – contradictions in storytelling and uses of ahistorical language – appeared mostly when the narrators talked of their cognitive disengagement.

Contradictions refer to discrepancies in narrators’ accounts of their reasons for abandoning cognitive response as a possible reaction to the socialist serials. They mentioned loss of sensitivity to the political rhetoric caused by surfeit of clichés in the public space (labeled as political anaesthesia), and loss of motivation to develop opinions caused by their detachment from any decision-making acts (labeled as agency deficit) as the main reasons. Simultaneously narrators easily admitted that they joked and talked about the serials and laughed at them. In other words, they retrieved activities (labeled as non-cognitive reactions), which necessarily did involve some level of cognitive processing as well, but narrators would not mention them when asked about cognitive processing directly. Emotions, too, were totally detached from any cognitive accompaniment in the narrators’ accounts. Nonetheless, Liesbet

Van Zoonen collected evidence based on neurosciences' theory of affective intelligence, proving that emotionality is inseparable from rationality (2005, p. 65).

Another sign of narrators replacing memory with its adjusted counterpart affected by dislocation was a use of ahistorical language, i.e. the language containing lexical units which were not part of standard vocabulary in the past they were talking about. These are the examples of the symptomatic language: "it was a regular call for collaboration" (Mikuláš), "the ideology was everywhere" (Anna), "I was an anti-communist rebel, you know" (Svát'a), "of course, the serials were conformist to the regime" (Josef), "I was kind of sorry when I saw people who were enthusiastic about the regime" (Pavel). When giving reasons for their political lethargy, the narrators used vocabulary that showed the analytical distance from the totalitarian conditions which they simply did not have when it was in a full swing. The language indicated they had been revealing what they think now, not how they experienced the reasons for withdrawal from political thinking in the days of normalization. Dana Gabl'asová in her research on linguistic attributes of life-story interviews covering normalization arrived at the same experience and recorded one of her narrators confirming this theory: "Communist regime, ... it is not the way we put it back then" (Gabl'asová, 2009, p. 97).

#### 4 Conclusion

The phenomenon of cognitive denial is the principal finding of this research. Nonetheless, it is even more important to ask when it was that the denial occurred. It is at this point where we can relate the findings to the interpretation of memory operations in the countries of Eastern Europe. There are signs that dislocation-affected memory intruded on the way that the narrators rendered their cognitive relations to the serials more than other subcategories. It is likely that the socialist serials received more cognitive attention during their screenings in normalization than the narrators confessed to in the present moment. The idea that the socialist popular culture might ever have been worthy of thought seems to be utterly unthinkable in the present day. The category of cognitive denial is very likely to be shaped by a retrospective re-evaluation of the past. This memory figure may follow from retrospective negative judgement of the political situation of the time and a sort of "retrospective shame". In case of denying cognitive involvement in the socialist serials, narrators substitute parts of their memory with a reconfiguration compliant to the new neoliberal hegemony, which takes reprobation of the socialist past as one of its defining characteristics.

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### *Biography*

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# Sonic icons and histospheres: On the political aesthetics of an audio history of film

*Winfried Pauleit and Rasmus Greiner*

## Abstract

Film production and reception are complex fields of discourse in which the form and content of films mingle inextricably with cultural and societal practices. A central category for this connection is an aesthetics of film, which is not confined to substantive or formal analyses, but which – as a political aesthetics – questions and processes such discourses in relation to society.

This paper concerns itself with the discussion of a political aesthetics of the sound track of film and its ability to shape our understanding of history. Such “*Audio History of Film*” will explore how film sound generates, models and makes tangible history auditorily. To what extent can “*sonic icons*” (Currid, 2006) refer to history at the intersection of audio, image, and text? Can the “*experiential field*”, in which history in film is perceived (Sobchack, 2007, p. 300), also be extended to the aesthetics of film sound and be referred to as “*histospheres*” in the modeling of history?

Against this backdrop, we propose the development of new categories that focus on the relationship between film sound and history: on the one hand, “*sonic icons*” as complex inscriptions of soundtracks and traces, which finally describe mixtures of sound, image and text. And, on the other hand, “*histospheres*”, which emphasize films as complex audio-visual constructions of a historical world and its perception by interlinking aesthetics, narration and reflection.

*Keywords:* film and history; political aesthetics; audio history; sonic icons; histospheres

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## 1 Introduction

Film production and reception are complex fields of discourse in which the form and content of films mingle inextricably with cultural and societal practices. A central category for this connection is an aesthetics of film, which is not confined to substantive or formal analyses, but which – as a political aesthetics – questions and processes such discourses in relation to society.

This paper concerns itself with the discussion of a political aesthetics of the filmic soundtrack and its ability to shape our understanding of history. Such “*Audio History of Film*” will explore how film sound generates, models and makes tangible history auditorily. To what extent can “*sonic icons*” (Currid, 2006) refer to history at the intersection of audio, image, and text? Can the “*experiential field*”, in which history in film is perceived (Sobchack, 2007, p. 300), also be extended to the aesthetics of film sound and be referred to as “*histospheres*” in the modeling of history? As the soundtrack operates, in particular, on a sensual aesthetic level, this study attempts to incorporate film analysis, starting from an aesthetic perception and audiovisual experience.

While historians have not engaged in detail with the question of how films generate history visually and audibly, in film studies approaches have been formulated which posit that watching and experiencing film and media images play a key role in constructing historical events (Sobchack, 1996). In addition, the cinema has been read as a site of historical consciousness that replaces historical depictions of events, making the sensibilities of early periods palpable (Kappelhoff, 2008). The question of the “*per se invisible social conditions and their visibility in cinema*” occupies Kappelhoff also in his reading of Siegfried Kracauer’s *From Caligari to Hitler*, in which he concludes: “the pictorial spaces of cinema open up an external reality as a possible experiential field of social reality” (Kappelhoff, 2008, p. 63). On the one hand, this observation supports Marc Ferro’s thesis of the representation of “the hidden functional mechanisms of a society” in film (Ferro, 1991, p. 23), on the other hand it establishes far-reaching research perspectives towards the audiovisual nature of cinematic pictorial spaces. In recent years, the field of “visual history” has become established as a new realm of research (Paul, 2012), one that looks at related issues and represents an adaptation of the pictorial turn (Mitchell, 1994).

The auditive level of the moving image has been taken into consideration as well, although the audio history of film has been largely neglected to date. Since the 1980s, sound in film has increasingly become a relevant field of research, but this research remains largely limited to studies of sound aesthetics and the history of sound production or technology. While in some approaches, film sound is explicitly placed within the context of a cultural history of sound recording (Holl, 2012), the general meaning of film sound for modeling history and the construction of historical experience is scarcely examined in a

thorough way. All the same, it should be noted that the auditive level of film in history studies has attracted little attention. But here, too, there are approaches that understand visual history in the context of a society of “*co-viewers*” and, quite expressly, “*co-listeners*” (Lindenberger, 2004).

This research gap forms the starting point for the “Audio History of Film”, which explores how history may be generated in auditory terms, modeled or conveyed experientially by film sound (Greiner/Pauleit, 2014). The focus here is on creating a theoretical framework for the audio history of film. It represents an extension of existing approaches relating both to the cinematic narration of history and visual history. The innovative core stems from the hypothesis that the acoustic dimension of film makes its own unique contribution to the modeling of history. However, the aim of our audio history of film is to describe the complex interaction of narrative, visual and auditory history in film, foregrounding and examining the aesthetic dimensions of film sound and its potential for producing history, as well as looking at the material, technical and cultural dimensions of film sound production (including other fields of production and their interaction) with regard to methods of historical modeling.

The history of film sound is intimately linked with technical and social change, cultural history and the historicity of its perception. The effects of these processes are also of great relevance for an audio history of film. In particular, since the end of the 1950s the growing importance of film sound can be observed in the cinematic production of history. Innovative, metareflexive historical films refer to the Deleuzian theory of modern film that replaces the movement-image with the time-image as a correlate of opsigns and sonsigns (Deleuze, 1989). The French New Wave and later New Hollywood experimented with new sound concepts, which encouraged an emancipation of the soundtrack from the image. Moreover, films such as Alain Resnais’ *HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR* (F 1959) – “the first modern film of sound cinema” (Eric Rohmer) – initiate the discovery and further development of a distinct historiographical significance of film sound. The development and testing of new sound technologies (e.g. by New Hollywood) and the digitization of film sound, which preceded the digitization of the image, also had crucial influence on the production of history by and through film.

Against this backdrop, we propose the development of new categories that focus on the relationship between film sound and history: on the one hand, “sonic icons” as complex inscriptions of soundtracks and traces, that finally describe mixtures of sound, image and text. And, on the other hand, “histospheres”, which emphasize films as complex audio-visual constructions of a historical world and its perception by interlinking aesthetics, narration and reflection.

## 2 Sonic icons

Besides pictorial inscriptions (photo, video, film) *Zeitgeschichte* also yields auditory traces (all forms of recordings), and is undoubtedly conveyed in the recordings of historical political speeches, such as John F. Kennedy's speech on June 26, 1963 in front of the Schöneberg Town Hall in Berlin. Frequently repeated, parts of this speech have become iconic sound citations, like Kennedy's phrase "Ich bin ein Berliner". Within the wider context of reflecting upon the musical history of the Weimar Republic and the Nazi era, Brian Currid (2006) coined the term "sonic icon" to describe these and similar phenomena. In so doing, he characterizes examples such as Hitler's aggressive public speaking style as acoustic markers or substitutes for political history. Currid's concept of "sonic icons" basically adapts the art history approach of political iconography (Warnke, 1992) to musicology and cultural history. By way of contrast, we would like to define the concept of sonic icons differently, as a complex process of sonic inscription, which in film, always consist of a mixture of sound, image and text: in the course of film production, history inscribes itself into the audio recordings – since film productions are always part of history, which becomes audible through the voices of actors, for example.

A classical example is the figure of the public enemy that became established in the 1930s both as an unmistakable face on the screen and as a voice of the cinema. The appearance of this type of figure coincides with the introduction of sound film. Its popularity can, however, only be understood against the backdrop of the Great Depression, which radically shook up the previous social order. Hollywood changed its traditional policies within this context and began casting actors that were recognizable as "*hyphenated Americans*" in terms of their accents (such as the Irish-American James Cagney, or Jewish-Americans like Paul Muni, and Edward G. Robinson) in leading roles (Munby, 1999, pp. 39–65). These actors' accents were thus transferred to the figure of the gangster, imbuing it with a sense of street credibility and otherness in the process. It was due in part to this specific situation that Cagney, Muni, and Robinson were able to enjoy careers in Hollywood, much as gangster figures such as Tom Powers, Tony Camonte, and Rico Bandello succeeded in doing so in their films (in the imagination of the spectator) (Pauleit, 2015a). Therefore, sonic inscriptions of history are not to be taken as a naive copying or reprint of historical sounds, but rather as particular shifts in the production of film that use sonic inscriptions to mark a difference and finally lead to "*sonic icons*". These sonic icons consist of a mixture of sound, image and text, and are nourished by "*real*" individual voices and their recording to produce particular timbres and expressions that are intricately bound to history.

What applies to the voices of actors can also be applied to vocal performances (Dyer, 2008, 2012), to the use of voiceover and to musical recordings (Pauleit, 2016). Additionally, Heinz Emigholz, for example, in his late experimental films on architecture highlights buildings as sonic icons, recording the acoustics of specific historically shaped architectures, especially in his film *PARABETON. PIER LUIGI NERVI AND ROMAN CONCRETE* (D 2012) (<http://www.film-galerie451.de/en/filme/parabeton/>). But it can also be related to the compositions of the sound design, which – to give a prominent recent example – constructs the border region between the USA and Mexico as a community space (Pauleit, 2015b) in Tommy Lee Jones's *THE THREE BURIALS OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA* (USA 2005).

Historical audio tracks in films regarding history may also strike us if the sound recording itself is the subject; namely if microphones, speakers, tape recorders or phonographs play a central role as a self-reflexive agent, thus making the production process of film audible and visible, and producing configurations of sound, images and text, as we know them, for example, from Francis Ford Coppola's *THE CONVERSATION* (USA 1974). The very first scene of this film shows a surveillance operation undertaken by three interception units in a public square in San Francisco. The surveillance personnel try to record the conversation of a couple strolling through a public space which is populated by many other people, including street musicians, and this complicates the interception. Therefore, the recordings are overlaid with various sounds and voices. Moreover, they are characterized by a specific sound design that highlights the directional microphones of the private detectives with sound effects that are to be deciphered as interference on the recordings.

The sonic icon that is created in this scene relies on different sources: the actors' (Frederic Forrest [Mark] and Cindy Williams [Ann]) voices, background noises, random voices and street music, as well as the sound effects highlighting the presence of the microphones. These sonic icons can be heard again and again throughout the film, as they are played and replayed in different rooms and under altered playing conditions. The sound recordings are superimposed with visuals, including the face of Gene Hackman as private detective Harry Caul (head of the surveillance operation), electronically controlled camera movements and images of 'Uher Universal 5000' tape recorders, contemporary recording devices which were used not only in the fictional story, but also as part of the US surveillance scandals surrounding the so-called White House tapes (1971-1973) and the Watergate scandal.

The central feature of this sonic icon is that the recordings themselves are highlighted by sound effects. Its quality is not condensed in the figure of a movie character (like a 1930s gangster), but in the abstract process of vocal recordings, their interference and modulations. Furthermore, not only are the audio recordings characterized by sound effects as markers of difference, but

each replay implements an acoustic modulation. This mode of difference and repetition draws attention to the innovative sound design of New Hollywood cinema of the 1970s in a notably self-confident and self-reflective manner. Therefore, in this example, the acoustic inscription of history is even more complex: in the modulations of (increasingly disembodied) voices and sound effects, two historical developments superimpose on one another: the history of a political surveillance scandal and the history of the sound design, both of which operate with audio tapes to produce voice recordings. This essentially acoustic enactment of political history and self-reflexive history of (film) sound design is attached to the face of Harry Caul, and to the crisis of conscience he encounters as part of his surveillance activity.

### 3. Sonic histospheres

One of the key strategies in the filmic representation of history is to form a historical environment which is in many ways shaped by sound (Greiner, 2015a). Orientation sounds (Flückiger, 2001, p. 144), which are associated in our minds with certain geographic and temporal coordinates, are linked to other individual sound objects and create complex soundscapes. In terms of history, these soundscapes can provide both an impression of everyday life and a political statement. In terms of film studies, they are closely linked to the genre discourse (Greiner, 2015b). The movie character is embedded within the cinematically modeled historical world, not only by the *mise en scène* and the montage of the images, but also by a kind of *mise en son*. Associated with particular sounds and music the character himself “hears” this environment and reacts to it – often by self-generated tones and sounds, which become a part of the sonic representation of history.

Another important issue in the examination of histospheres is the perception of film, as history is not only represented in and by film, but consists of a sensual filmic experience.<sup>1</sup> The viewer’s emotional and cognitive response affects the understanding and evaluation of the cinematically modeled historical world. This includes remembered echoes and allusions, the correspondences between sensation and meaning, and the intersections between perception, affection and cognition (Kappelhoff, 2007, p. 311).

History in film always correlates with the aesthetic codes of history that have emerged in the cinematic representation – on a pictorial level certainly, but also on an aural level. Hence histospheres also refer to media history and film history. While this secondary experience of aural realities produces new

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<sup>1</sup> Vivian Sobchack describes history in film “as an experiential field in which human beings pretheoretically construct and play out a particular—and culturally encoded—form of temporal existence.” (Sobchack, 2007, p. 300)

hierarchies of perception, film sound can even question the ability to represent history itself, as well as the narration and experienceability of history by and through film. By way of illustration, these ideas will be examined with reference to Tomáš Lunák's 2011 animation *ALOIS NEBEL*.

Lunák's film recounts the fortunes of the eponymous Alois Nebel, an elderly Czech station master who becomes traumatized by events from his past, as around him the communist system begins to crumble. As a small boy Alois bore witness to the forced displacement of the German part of the population in 1945, yet the film blurs the particular levels of historical time and reality. It generates a media space in which time is suspended, and in which both repressed experiences from the past as well as the darker sides of the revolution in 1989 have a place.

Enigmatic audiovisual codes shape the beginning of the movie, until the audience is able to identify the approaching lights as headlights and the increasingly audible sizzling and gasping as the noise of a steam locomotive. A booming deep musical accent supports the impression that the film opens a mental portal to the past. A metallic sound, reminiscent of a wind chime, heralds an over-the-shoulder shot showing an over-irradiated window. Alois Nebel apparently stands in the station building and looks out onto an oncoming train. The emergent, gratingly loud squeal can be identified as the noise of the brakes, while the harsh shouts are evocative of military force. Right before the perceived sound objects can be assigned to a source, the sequence is charged with suspense and a sinister aura owing to the high volume and the dense, dissonant sounds. Thus, the noise assumes a classical purpose of film music: the emotionalizing of the audience (Flückiger, 2001, p. 19).

The longer the enigmatic sounds are heard, the more they encourage associations. The irregularly modulated, high-pitched squeals resemble the tuning of an analog radio, a sonic metaphor for the media-historical dimension that combines several time levels and locates both the movie characters and the audience in this histosphere. The following sudden fade-out of the noise and the visual cut to the empty railway platform make clear that the previous sequence must have belonged to a different time, one conjured from the imagination of the protagonist. Wind and melody fragments subsequently open up a wide imaginative space that allows the past to unfold. The film sound is assisted by a seemingly endless pan, which turns into a tracking shot through a forest at night. The subsequent accentuation, which is caused by the slow movement, corresponds to an extension of the sonic space, achieved by adding reverb or atmo-elements such as the wind noises.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, wind is often used as a metaphor for human borderline experiences (Flückiger 2001, p. 344). The sonic presence of the wind acts in this regard as a "memory catalyst" (Butzmann, Martin 2012, p. 155), signaling that the past emerges from oblivion. In addi-

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2 Birger Langkjear states, "[w]hereas the pictures manipulate time by slowing down visual movements, the sound manipulates time by extending the audio space." (Langkjear, 2010, p. 15)

tion, the mysterious voice that apparently reads a railway schedule can be considered as an “acousmètre”, which charges the histosphere with a near-magical sort of determination.<sup>3</sup>

The second example is another flashback from the middle section of the film. Again, this scene is initiated by the arrival of a train. Alois Nebel sits sleeping in his living room. Accompanied by mystical electronic music the room starts to shake. While the visual representation – the vibration of the interior and bright flashes of light – support the impression, it is mainly the metallic creak from outside and the clatter of dishes and the rumble of the furniture which shape the plasticity of the scene. The sounds of the train eventually swell into a noise which identifies the following episode as an element of the infinite stream of history. Literally moving from the present to the past, the flashback is similar to a media channel, a journey through time, which is yielded, in particular, by the soundtrack.

But the sonic part of the histosphere creates not only a sense of experiencing history. It also suggests political interpretations while generating associations to historical films and media. The pounding and hissing of a steam engine and the hard, loud shouts in the analyzed scene of ALOIS NEBEL build directly on the soundscape of deportation scenarios in Holocaust films like SCHINDLER’S LIST (1993). Even the pictorial iconography is retrieved: under the cover of night and fog, armed militia drive civilians in box wagons, just as in Alain Resnais’ seminal documentary about the deportation of the Jews of Western Europe, NUIT ET BROUILLARD (1955). While Alois passes between the expellees, the *mise en son* places the viewer in the subjectivized sound space of the child: even in the original Czech soundtrack some German goodbyes and prayers can be heard. Although Czech audiences probably do not understand the meaning of the words, the language refers to the historical background, the displacement of the Germans in 1945. The subsequent dialog is only a semantic confirmation. The really important information – such as the use of lethal force – is in turn represented solely by the sound: when the situation finally threatens to escalate, Alois is carried away by his father. What happens to the young German is not visible for the moment, but the sound of a gunshot and a desperate cry does not bode well.

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3 Michel Chion points out that an acousmètre is “a kind of voice-character specific to cinema that derives mysterious powers from being heard and not seen. The disembodied voice seems to come from everywhere and therefore to have no clearly defined limits to its power.” (Chion, n.d.).

## 4 Conclusion

With the notions of sonic icons and histospheres we aim to describe particular processes of sonic film production that link film aesthetics with history. Both categories lay the ground for an audio history of film that at its heart consists of a political aesthetics – foregrounding the dimension of film sound and its ability to shape history.

Sonic icons take on the form of sonic inscriptions through sound recording. However, a more complex understanding of sonic icons reads these sonic inscriptions as a production and a field of marking differences that always consists of a mixture of sound, image, and text, and that takes shape, for example, in the accented voices of the 1930s hyphenated Irish-American and Jewish-American actors that depicted onscreen gangsters during and following the Great Depression. Another example of a sonic icon is the sound design that coloured New Hollywood film production, fusing it with Watergate and the White House tapes of the 1970s, and linking it to the face of Gene Hackman in the role of private detective Harry Caul.

The *mise en son* of the historical environment, the sensual figuration of historical sounds, and the sonic reflection of historical film scenes and media clips provide altogether an aural experience of history, which can be considered as a histosphere. As a part of the “experiential field”, in which history in film is perceived (Sobchack, 2007, p. 300), histospheres suggest political interpretations of the represented historical events and processes. Therefore, its sonic elements interact dynamically with the moving image. The result from this specific combination of the visual and the auditory is a distinct order of sensibility, which may contribute to the understanding of the tremendous authority of film as an audio-visual production in shaping public ideas of history.

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# Section Four



on methods

Photo: François Heinderyckx



# From dogmatism to open-mindedness? Historical reflections on methods in audience reception research<sup>1</sup>

*Kim Christian Schröder*

## Abstract

The article traces, from the perspective of audience reception research, the gradual methodological rapprochement of once hostile methodological paradigms: quantitatively oriented uses-and-gratifications research and qualitatively anchored reception research. While recognizing that the methodological differences stem ultimately from different epistemological perspectives, the article describes how these differences have been played out on the terrain of empirical methodologies for conducting fieldwork on audience practices and meanings. The article considers four stages of this rapprochement: (1) antagonistic self-sufficiency; (2) separate camps; (3) self-critical coexistence; and (4) complementarity and collaboration.

*Keywords:* audiences, reception research, methodology, qualitative methods, quantitative methods, mixed methods, methodological pluralism

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a talk presented to the cross-generational workshop "Audiences: A Cross-Generational Dialogue", organised by the COST Action Transforming audiences – Transforming societies, hosted by the Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis, Brussels, 11 April 2012. It has previously been published under the same title in *The Communication Review*, 16(40-50)..

## 1 Historical struggles over what is ‘researchable’ in audience research

In 1993 I presented a research paper at a Business Communication conference in Pittsburgh, USA. My paper was about a qualitative reception study of corporate social responsibility, involving 16 informants whom I had interviewed about their sense-making of corporate ads, which presented the company as environmentally responsible, as seeking dialogue with interested publics, etc. (later published as Schröder, 1997). The discussant appointed to provide critical feedback to my paper was very positive, had both words of praise and some suggestions for changes. He concluded his critical remarks by saying: “So altogether I thought it was a very good paper, and I’m sure you could easily do a quantitative thing to it, if you wanted to publish it!”

While this is a true story from the historical world of communication research, at a time when leading scholars were devoting a special issue of *Journal of Communication* (vol. 43, no. 3, 1993) to the discussion of ‘ferment in the field’, I can further narrow down the contours of this reflective essay by sharing a story which is based on an imagined incident from the history of media sociology. This story is a fantasy from the late 1950s by a former student at Columbia University, reported by the American sociologist Todd Gitlin in an article published in 1978:

One of my favorite fantasies is a dialogue between C. Wright Mills and Paul Lazarsfeld in which the former reads to the latter the first sentence of *The sociological imagination*: “Nowadays men often feel that their private lives are a series of traps”. Lazarsfeld immediately replies: “How many men, which men, how long have they felt this way, which aspects of their private lives bother them, do their public lives bother them, when do they feel free rather than trapped, what kinds of traps do they experience, etc. etc. (Gitlin, 1978, p. 91)

These two anecdotes both have to do with what at first sight appear as methodological differences and conflicts, and more specifically disagreements between those who only find insights produced with quantitative methods scientifically legitimate and those who believe that the best way to study people’s lived experiences is through qualitative methods. However, it is well-known that such methodological conflicts are a kind of surface phenomenon, which originates in much deeper epistemological and theoretical differences and conflicts – to do with what scientific knowledge is, and how we can acquire or construct it through theoretical and empirical research: Underneath the methodological concerns and differences, therefore, lurks the distinction between positivism, empiricism and behaviorism on the one hand, and interpretivism and constructionism on the other, often simplistically and stereotypically ascribed to the scientific credos of the social sciences and the humanities, respectively. As Jensen/Rosengren (1990) puts it:

Social-scientific work puts great weight on establishing explicitly operationalized categories of analysis, and on keeping – in principle at least – the phases of theory and hypothesis formation, observation, analysis, interpretation and presentation of results separate from each other. Moreover, the assumption is that the researcher's role in the act of data collection and analysis can and should be minimized. The humanistic tradition, in contrast, assumes that in principle, no distinction can be made between the collection, analysis and interpretation of 'data'. (Jensen/Rosengren, 1990, p. 219)

While it can be argued, of course, that both traditions rely in equal measure on ubiquitous forms of interpretation throughout the research process - because all empirical research takes place in a "sea of interpretation" (Schröder et al., 2003, p. 52) - such differences have also sometimes been anchored in political differences, between so-called *administrative research* on the one hand and critical research on the other (Lazarsfeld, 1941; Gitlin, 1978). Here I shall not go further into these underlying backgrounds, but concentrate on the level of methodologies.

The Lazarsfeld/Mills anecdote was used by Todd Gitlin (1978) to demonstrate the way in which the quantitative paradigm became the dominant one in American communication research in the middle of the twentieth century: It established its hegemony within the communication research community, and declared that communicative phenomena that could not be researched with quantitative methods were, unfortunately, unresearchable.

Similar attitudes reigned in the qualitative research community, for instance, in the humanities and in cultural studies, which were dominated by textual, interpretive approaches which truly loathed the alleged shallowness of quantitative measurement. For instance, Raymond Williams targeted the methodological shortcomings of the quantitative approach as leading to findings with dubious validity (Williams, 1974, p. 119). For Williams this lack of scientific quality made it even more regrettable that the quantitative paradigm had assumed a position of scientific hegemony, and with its "particular version of empiricism [...] claims the abstract authority of 'social science' and 'scientific method' as against all other modes of experience and analysis" (Williams, 1974, p. 121; see also Schröder, 2013).

In the area of audience research the rejection by qualitative scholars of the rationale of quantitative methods of audience measurement reared its head particularly in the total rejection by radical constructionist audience ethnographers of any attempt to generalize findings about audience practices beyond the particular situation in which the data were obtained. For instance, the Dutch media ethnographer Ien Ang insisted that the necessary "emphasis on the situational embeddedness of audience practices and experiences inevitably undercuts the search for generalizations that is often seen as the ultimate goal of scientific knowledge." (Ang, 1991, p. 160)

Before I move on to the central argument of this essay, in which I describe what I see as four different historical scenarios of methodological development in audience reception research, a few comments about the title of this essay are in order. First, I end the title with a question mark: This is because that although I do believe that overall in audience research there has been a move from dogmatism to open-mindedness, perhaps the shift is not as clear-cut and complete as the recent methods textbooks' unanimity about the desirability of methodological pluralism appears to imply (Greene, 2007; Bryman, 2001). Out there in the real world of university research institutions one often encounters research environments that are still in the grip of myopic methodological strait-jackets, in which the issue of methods is not a matter of choice but of prescription.

Secondly the title implies a development from something negative to something positive – dogmatism is rarely thought of as a good thing, and open-mindedness, conversely, is usually a buzzword: However, when one of my co-panelists at the Brussels workshop (see note 1) saw my title she asked polemically, could one also say that the methodological development went “from firm principles to general woolliness?” (Sonia Livingstone, personal communication). The polemical response could be that at least “woolliness” feels warmer than dogmatism. But on a more serious note, I do believe that there is some truth to Livingstone's implicit claim: It is a problem, and has been over the last twenty years or so, that too many researchers are not rigorous enough in the way they handle methodological craftsmanship (see also Höijer, 1990).

Thirdly, I have inserted the word “reception” after the word “audience”. This is due to the fact that I cannot claim to speak about the vast field of “audience research” as a whole. The issue that I address here, then, is the narrower one about how dogmatically qualitative audience reception researchers have looked upon quantitative methods, and how dogmatically quantitative audience researchers (especially those coming from the uses-and-gratifications tradition) have looked upon qualitative reception research.

Finally, before I start, a note of caution about my own position in these methodological debates: What I'll give you here is not an impartial helicopter look at the field of audience reception studies, but rather a personal reflection in the form of snapshots taken by someone who, anchored in the qualitative tradition, was and is one of the contestants in the game - someone who has intervened from time to time in the cross-disciplinary discussions about audience research methodologies since the late 1980s (see for instance, Schröder, 1987, 1999; Schröder/Kobbernagel, 2010).

The driving force behind my interest in the cross-fertilization of paradigms and methodologies has been a concern with how to achieve **greater explanatory power** for the knowledge we build through research. I formulated this as an ideal in the 1987 article:

One of the tasks ahead will consist in conceptualising a method which makes it possible to incorporate and preserve qualitative data through a process of quantification, enabling the researcher to discern the [...] patterning of viewing responses. (Schröder, 1987)

The overall goal of ‘greater explanatory power’ can be fulfilled by many kinds of actualization of methodological pluralism, most frequently by combining different methods in a research design which **juxtaposes different methods** (qualitative and quantitative), applying one after the other. This is what many researchers have done, some with great success, but also with many difficulties – see, for instance, Livingstone and Lunt’s analysis of TV studio debate programs (Livingstone/Lunt, 1994); the generation by Jensen et al. of a typology of television viewers (Jensen et al., 1994); or Barker and Mathijs’s cross-cultural Lord of the Rings audiences project (Barker/Mathijs, 2007).

But the ideal expressed in the 1987 quotation is really about something more ambitious than the juxtaposition of methods: it talks about the **integration of different methods** within one research design (“preserving qualitative data through a process of quantification”), in order to be able to generalize one’s findings by discerning a patterning in the data. I have tried to implement such an integrative method in my recent study of news consumption in the cross-media news landscape (Schröder/Kobbernagel, 2010).

## 2 Brief historical trajectory of audience reception research: Four scenarios

Returning to the historical relationship between audience research paradigms, I am going to suggest, heuristically, that there have been four kinds of relationships between the quantitative and qualitative paradigms for researching audience uses and reception of media. I label the four scenarios: (1) Antagonistic self-sufficiency; (2) Separate camps; (3) Self-critical coexistence; and (4) Complementarity and collaboration.

These scenarios can be seen as following a chronological path, but they also overlap to a considerable extent. Also, it should be pointed out that the picture is more complex than the four neatly defined scenarios make it seem: throughout the existence of audience reception research since the early 1980s there have been ‘misfits’ – scholars who, while coming out of one of the camps, have nevertheless argued that both approaches are legitimate ways to explore audience uses and meanings of the media (Lewis, 1997), and some have them-

selves practiced both qualitative and quantitative research, emphasizing their appropriateness for different kinds of knowledge building (see for instance Høijer, 1990; Liebes/Katz, 1986; Livingstone, 1988; Livingstone/Lunt, 1994).

*(1) Antagonistic self-sufficiency*

In this scenario the quantitative and qualitative researchers say to each other: “Your way of doing research has no or little scientific value!” (this sort of condescension was the import of some of the quotations already presented above). In 1986, Klaus Bruhn Jensen defined reception research as inherently and necessarily qualitative:

In general, reception research is concerned with qualitative approaches to the audience experience of the mass media: it sees meaning production as an unfolding process in which the audience negotiates and establishes the categories of meaning. The qualitative approach to meaning as a process can [...] be characterized further in contrast to the quantitative approach to meaning as products. (Jensen, 1986, p. 70)

For the sake of historical accuracy it should be said that already at this point Jensen was arguing for the usefulness of both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore audiences (Jensen, 1986, p. 299), but he strongly advocated the need to study audience meanings’ with qualitative methods. This position was strongly supported by audience ethnographer James Lull, who pointed out the methodological shortcomings of uses-and-gratifications research:

The primary research method employed in uses and gratifications research, the field survey, does not work very well in sweaty environments. [...] I came to grips fully with the inadequacies of social science methodology as it is taught in the major American graduate schools and practiced by the vast majority of publishing scholars in our field. There simply was no way to represent numerically the essence of what thousands of young people had experienced during the concert or what the cultural meaning of music is to them generally. (Lull, 1985, p. 219)

From the other camp, uses-and-gratifications scholar Karl Erik Rosengren, staunch knight of the quantitative cause, launched vehement attacks on the sloppiness of qualitative reception research. Qualitative reception research, Rosengren says, “is based on anecdotal data and defined as unformalized, exegetic studies of the meaning of individual experiences [...]. These studies, as a rule, neglect otherwise generally accepted tests of reliability, validity, and representativeness” (Rosengren, 1993, p. 13).

A few years later, in his review of Jensen’s book *The social semiotics of mass communication*, Rosengren launched an even more vehement attack on the qualitative paradigm as epitomized by Jensen:

[...] time is long overdue for Klaus Jensen to leave his qualitative fortress, to pick up some of his interesting findings, regarding them as hypotheses to be tested with reliable and valid measurements carried out on a representative sample of some theoretically and/or empirically interesting population (Rosengren, 1996, pp. 139-140)

Curiously, some years before, in 1990, Jensen and Rosengren had coauthored an article advocating the desirability of a confluence of paradigms. Apparently their joint argument was based on a fairly tenuous consensual platform, which left their underlying disagreements visible, for instance, in subtle formulations about qualitative research. After saying that “any large experiment and/or quantitative survey <should> be preceded by small qualitative studies”, they clearly didn’t agree on what else qualitative methods were good for: Granting that “qualitative methodologies remain relevant as indispensable generators of insights and hypotheses”, they could only agree to say that “*representatives of the humanistic research traditions suggest that, in certain respects, qualitative studies may have independent explanatory value regarding the reception and uses of media*” (Jensen/Rosengren, 1990, p. 221, my emphasis). In other words, their agreement didn’t stretch as far as saying that qualitative approaches do have independent explanatory value regarding the reception and uses of media!

## *(2) Separate camps*

In this ‘Live and let live’ scenario the quantitative and qualitative audience researchers meet each other with an attitude of “You do your thing, and I’ll do mine!”

The Pittsburgh incident, which opened this essay can be seen as an example of this scenario: Although the quantitative discussant of the qualitative paper would not go as far as publishing the qualitative analysis without a measure of quantitative fortification, he had left the stage of hostile diatribes far behind and approached the Other in a friendly, dialogical manner.

Another example has to do with the way audience researchers form scholarly tribes within the framework of an international research association like the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR). In the late 1980s Klaus Bruhn Jensen established an IAMCR Working Group in qualitative reception research called NEQTAR (Network for Qualitative Audience Research). In IAMCR there already existed a related section in the field of Audience Research, chaired by a researcher from the British Broadcasting Corporation. This section focused on media companies’ need to survey the audience market through quantitative audience measurement. Jensen proposed a form of cooperation, for instance, joint meetings or possibly even a

merging of the groups, but was turned down by his colleague. Jensen remembers (personal communication) that there was no confrontation, just complete indifference from the quantitative camp – they were simply “worlds apart”!

### (3) *Self-critical coexistence*

When we move into this scenario, the qualitative and quantitative researchers can be imagined to say to each other: “We play in the same sandbox, we don’t play with you – but we’re interested in what you are doing, because we are not entirely satisfied with our own achievements!” Here is the self-critique of the quantitative camp as formulated by Keith Roe, a prominent member of the uses-and-gratifications paradigm:

We dismiss the qualitative criticism as ‘unscientific’ and if someone breaks ranks from within, the usual response is to offer platitudes, dismiss the heretic as a methodological purist (if not troublemaker), and promptly go back to business as usual. This strategy [...] has prevented any real methodological development and has given extra ammunition to critics (Roe, 1996, p. 87)

Walter Gantz, key American uses-and-gratifications scholar, argued along similar lines that it was time to learn from the qualitative camp:

The research agenda is likely to require alternative, if not innovative methods of data collection. [...] gratifications scholars will need to supplement survey research with depth interviews, where respondents are given ample opportunity to reflect and describe the nature of their relationship with media content (Gantz, 1996, pp. 26-27)

Self-criticism in the qualitative camp was offered, for instance, by the Swedish audience researcher Birgitta Höijer, who advised her fellow qualitative researchers to be more systematic and rigorous about their empirical work: “From one or two concrete, vivid instances we assume that there are dozens more lurking in the bushes – but we don’t verify whether or how many there are, and there are usually fewer than we think” (Höijer, 1990, p. 19).

In the area of international communication research associations, in contrast to Jensen’s early 1990s experience in IAMCR, the Audience and Reception Studies section (ARS) of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA, est. 2007) was founded on the principle of co-existence of paradigms, as explicitly stipulated in the section program: “The section welcomes various approaches (theoretical/critical works, methodological discussions or empirical studies) and methods (quantitative or qualitative research, or both) and encourages works that cross disciplines and traditional boundaries.” (<http://www.ecrea.eu/divisions/section/id/1>; accessed 22 December 2015).

However, the Section's name – audience *and* reception studies – still reflects the separate research traditions that are here being brought together under the same organisational umbrella.

#### *(4) Complementarity and collaboration*

I have labeled the last scenario of reception research 'complementarity and collaboration', because members of the audience research community have been arguing along epistemological, theoretical and methodological lines for the **complementarity** of methodologies. This view has been gaining ground during the last 10 years or so. For instance, Jensen has argued that

[...] the methodologies that constitute the field are different, but equal. They are complementary, not reducible to each other. They may be unified, not in the first instance – at the level of minimal measurements – but in the final instance – in concluding a process of inquiry, in a context, and for a purpose. (Jensen, 2012, pp. 283-284; see also Greene, 2007; Bryman, 2001)

Some have adopted a rather pragmatic stance to the implementation of mixed method research designs, holding that "there is a growing preparedness to think of research methods as techniques of data collection or analysis that are not as encumbered by epistemological and ontological baggage as is sometimes supposed" (Bryman, 2001, p. 454).

Others have insisted that it is necessary to sort out the epistemological quandaries accompanying the mixing of paradigms, in order to achieve absolute clarity about the knowledge claims that one can make for multimethod research findings (Schröder, 2012). A key argument has been that, epistemologically, complementarity can be based on a version of critical realism, which does not privilege numerical over discursive evidence, but provides a platform for bringing them together (Deacon et al., 1999; Danermark et al., 2002; Jensen, 2012; Eriksson, 2006; Schröder et al., 2003).

The label for the last scenario also includes the notion of **Collaboration**, because the current age is characterized by a number of large-scale, often cross-national collaborative research projects, which are methodologically versatile. Examples include the *EU Kids Online* project (Livingstone/Haddon, 2009) and the *Lord of the Rings* project (Barker/Mathijs, 2007). These and other projects have struggled to achieve the objectives of methodologically complementary research, and to work out not just how to do it, but also how to bring together interpretively the complex findings built from the different methods.

The objectives of complementarity and collaboration are also built into the platform of the COST Action *Transforming Audiences – Transforming Societies* (2010-2014), which organised the cross-generational workshop at which this essay was first presented. The Action's memorandum of understanding explicitly stated that the purpose was not just to bring researchers together, but to encourage collaboration across paradigms: "This Action will explicitly encourage methodological innovation and cross-paradigm research to counter traditional, often unproductive separations" (Memorandum of Understanding, p. 5; see the Action website <http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/>)

One arena in which the exploration of complementarity took place under the auspices of the Action was a Special Issue of the journal *Participations*, whose guest editors spanned the paradigmatic divide. With the title *Exploring the methodological synergies of multimethod audience research*,

[...] the Special Issue aims to develop a candid and constructive dialogue between different scholarly approaches to the exploration of audience practices. We seek contributions which reflect on and implement multi-method approaches to all aspects and dimensions of the practices and sense-making activities of media audiences and users.

The purpose of the Special Issue is thus to demonstrate and discuss how precisely dialogues between research paradigms within audience research may contribute to enhance the explanatory power of theory-driven fieldwork studies of contemporary media audiences. (Text of the Call for Papers 2012)

It may be that in this essay I have somewhat simplified the historical relations and tensions between different methodological paradigms in the area of audience reception research. But perhaps the best evidence that there has been a development from dogmatism to open-mindedness, and not just to methodological 'woolliness', is that the wording of this Call for Papers would have been unthinkable thirty, twenty and maybe even ten years ago.

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# Media ethnography for busy people: Introducing students to the ethnographic approach in media-related syllabi

*Simone Tosoni and Fredrik Stiernstedt*

## Abstract

Teaching the ethnographic approach is a challenging effort in higher education due to the increasing time constraints that characterize current academia. A debate about how to teach ethnography is therefore particularly urgent. As a contribution to foster this debate, this article presents and discusses a practical exercise, first tested at the SuSo 2015 Summer School. The method is based on taking pictures of media practices, texts and technologies in public spaces. The mediation of the camera allows students to engage with the field and to experiment with the 'denaturalizing' vision that generally characterizes ethnographic approaches to media use and consumption. This reflexive stance is further fostered by a classroom discussion on the practice of observation and on the materials produced. In this way, the exercise aims at an acceptable compromise between the reduced time available for teaching and the advantages of allowing students to personally experience the practicalities of method.

*Keywords:* pedagogy, media ethnography, visual ethnography, photography, denaturalization

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## 1 Introduction

Ethnography as a research method has a long and well-established tradition within media studies. Pioneering works on media production, one of the two main strands of ethnographic empirical research in the field, date back to the 1950s (see in particular Powdermaker, 1950). Since the 1970s, these studies have resulted in an uninterrupted line of inquiry, feeding especially into the subfields of journalism studies (Shudson, 1989; Cottle, 2000; Tuchman, 2002) and, more recently, into political communications studies (Spitulnik Vidali/Allen Peterson, 2012).

Ethnographic research on audiences and media users dates to the 1980s (Livingstone, 2006), a time when scholars started to address media reception through ethnography-inspired approaches (see, for example, Morley, 1980, Radway, 1984). Several authors have questioned the soundness of the categorization of “ethnographic studies” (Nightingale, 1993; Coman/Rothenbuhler, 2005) for these early works, due to their limited time of engagement with the field. Since the early 1990s, however, the direct observation of the household as an everyday context of media consumption and use has become a tenet of audience studies (Moores, 1993).

While the epistemological premises and theoretical implications of media ethnography still remain controversial (Algan, 2009), the approach seems to have been steadily accepted within the canon of media studies. On the one hand, in fact, the ongoing methodological debate on media ethnography is systematic and lively. In recent years, researchers have strived to adjust their ethnographic approaches to meet the new challenges posed by the evolving transformation of our media environments by experimenting with those new ways of engaging the field that had been first adopted within the neighbouring fields of social and anthropological ethnography. The present call for a ‘sensory ethnography’ of media practices (Pink et al., 2008; Pink, 2015), or the attempts to revamp cultural audience studies’ empirical understanding in order to address media usage in ‘urban public spaces’ (Tosoni, 2015; Tosoni/Ridell, 2016) are just two of many examples. On the other hand, the media ethnographic approach is also the object of an equally sustained effort of systematization and institutionalization. It is being granted increasing attention in handbooks, methodological manuals and teaching textbooks that introduce students to the field of media studies (e.g., Jensen, 2002, ed.; Baxter/Babbie, 2003; Berger, 2011; Wimmer/Dominick, 2013), and media-related curricula and courses in higher education.

Still the current process of institutionalization of ethnography seems to be lacking a sustained disciplinary discussion about the actual practices of teaching media ethnography. Indeed, due to the characteristics of the ethnographic method, media ethnography pedagogy poses specific challenges that are not

sufficiently addressed by existing manuals and textbooks. These introductions to media ethnography often address theoretical and practical issues such as the complexity of developing a proper ethnographic sensibility, the difficulties that may be encountered in engaging with the field, or the plurality of methodological frameworks that may guide the process of observation. However, this scholarship rarely discusses how to address these issues in an effective way within practical teaching situations, given all the constraints and limitations that are typical of working with students in the classroom.

In this chapter we wish to enhance the debate regarding media ethnography pedagogy. We see this debate as an indispensable contribution to a more general effort of rethinking media curricula – an undertaking that several scholars consider to be urgent (Alvarado, 2009) in the present phase of disciplinary development. We will first address some of the main challenges of teaching media ethnography, with a particular focus on the problem of *time*. Coming to grips with the ethnographic approach requires an amount of time that is generally unavailable within higher education – particularly for syllabi that feature media ethnography but are not exclusively focused on it. We will then present a case study of our own teaching experience at the SuSo 2015 Summer School. The final section of the chapter is dedicated to some remarks on teaching media ethnography.

## 2 Teaching media ethnography with time constraints

The present discontinuous debate on media ethnography pedagogy mainly revolves around issues related to teaching the method in non-humanist curricula - and particularly within computer science courses, being the approach most often used to improve software design (e.g., Weinberg/Stephen, 2002; Brown et al., 2011). A more general pedagogical debate can be found only in the broader fields of social and anthropological ethnography. Thanks in particular to the editorial efforts of specialized journals such as *Teaching Anthropology*, scholars in these fields are discussing broader issues related to tutoring and teaching in real situations. For example, Carol McGranahan (2014) has presented interesting reflections on teaching an ethnographic sensibility in undergraduate courses with more than 100 students each, where it is not possible to engage in fieldwork. In contrast, Hubert Bastide (2011) addresses the challenges and opportunities of the Oxford tutorial system, in which students are taught in groups of one to three. Willow Sainsbury (2012), in turn, deals with teaching technicalities such as the potentialities (and limitations) of using anecdotes within the pedagogy of ethnography. We will draw on this ongoing

discussion in order to address the pedagogy of (media) ethnography in real teaching situations, focusing on one of the most common problems in higher education: lack of time.

Time is a crucial resource, both for ethnographic research itself and for teaching students how to conduct such research. For both the researcher and the student, the experience of media ethnography fieldwork is based on taking a reflexive place in space and time, and on developing social relations with other subjects in a process that should ultimately result in understanding. As summarized by Harry F. Wolcott (2004): “*Fieldwork takes time. Does that make time the critical attribute of fieldwork? According to ethnographic tradition, the answer is yes.*”

In contemporary academia, however, we live increasingly “hurried lives” (Davis, 2013). Funding bodies seek quick completion of projects and may see ethnographies as unlikely to satisfy “value for money” criteria (Jeffery/Troman 2004). Time is becoming an increasingly scarce research resource under the “publish or perish” regime. However, an appropriate length of time (Brown et al., 2007) is required for the teaching of ethnography. As with any other practical skill, gaining expertise in how to take a “reflexive place in space and time” within a specific social field – and how to conduct theoretically driven observations from this position – requires a long first-hand process. This is so even when this process occurs under the guidance and tutoring of an experienced researcher. However, large groups of students and the increasing streamlining of higher education work against the possibility of any long-term teaching approaches, in both graduate and post-graduate settings (Giroux, 2002).

Social sciences have long since acknowledged the critical relevance of these issues, prompting a methodological rethinking of the temporal “regimes” of the ethnographic approach. For example, Bob Jeffrey and Geoff Troman (2004) have elaborated on different temporal modalities for ethnographic research, ranging from *compressed* to *intermittent* and on to *recurrent* time modes. Understanding ethnography as something that can be (and is) done in different time modes makes it easier to combine its instruction with the conditions and structures of contemporary academia. In the same vein, scholars have proposed and experimented with less time-consuming forms of field exposure. Although differently labelled – examples include “Blitzkrieg Ethnography” (Rist, 1980), “Rapid Ethnography” (Millen, 2000), “Focused Ethnography” (Knoblauch, 2005) and “Short Term Ethnography” (Pink/Morgan 2013) – all these methodological reconsiderations rely on a narrower and more intense form of observation. In this sense, media ethnography can be seen as a form of “focused ethnography”, in which only specific media-related practices of a specific social field are addressed by the researcher, so that the total time in the field can be shortened (Bolin, 1998).

The narrower focus of media ethnography undoubtedly provides an advantage in teaching the method. However, more elaboration is still needed on how to do so within the short time frames that are available in many higher education settings. The proposal that will be discussed in the next section, derived from our own experience at the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School, is based on two key pedagogical tools: the use of photography, and guided classroom discussion on camera-mediated observations.

### 3 Experiences from the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School

We first experimented with our pedagogical approach to media ethnography in August 2015, during a joint teaching experience at the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School in Bremen. Later, we fine-tuned this approach in our own regular classes (undergraduate and graduate).

The European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School (SuSo), launched in 1992, is a yearly event supported by the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) and by a consortium of 21 European universities, each contributing one lecturer to the programme. At SuSo, in contrast to many other summer schools, the main task of these lecturers is not to lecture; rather, they provide support to the participants in their PhD trajectories. The main part of the summer school is hence doctoral student feedback sessions, in which students present their dissertations and get feedback from each other and from senior academics. Furthermore, great emphasis is placed on workshops that address practical research issues.

At the summer school of 2015, we arranged a workshop on ethnography. The time frame for these workshops was a maximum of about two to three hours, and there was no time for any lengthy preparation by students. Furthermore, the students' knowledge about ethnographic fieldwork varied widely, depending on which research tradition dominated their universities and on their national variant of the multi-disciplinary field of media and communication studies. Some students were already using ethnography in their PhD projects, and thus already possessed specialized and deep knowledge of the approach. Others had very shallow knowledge of it. Teaching ethnography in this setting was therefore very challenging.

In planning the workshop, we started with the need for a practical exercise that was possible to complete in a short timeframe without any previous experience of ethnography, but that would still be fruitful for the subsequent guided discussion in the classroom. For this we assigned to our approximately 20 graduate students the task of documenting their surroundings (at the Bremen

university campus) using mobile phone photography, and of focusing their visual attention on media in public places. We instructed the group to take photographs of media practices, technologies and texts seen in public – and to then bring these photographs to class. The seminar itself contained a brief introduction to (visual) ethnography that provided some key concepts, followed by a structured discussion, first in smaller groups and then as a whole group.

Using visual ethnography in this way, and more specifically using photography, turned out to be practical and fruitful in several ways. Firstly, most people have a camera in their mobile phone, and taking photographs in public places does not require much time. Secondly, the materials collected in this way are suitable for a common discussion that can easily be guided to focus on two main topics: the phenomena observed, and some of the central and difficult problems of ethnography – including issues of epistemology, ethics and the practicalities of observations in the field. The most relevant characteristic of this kind of ethnographic discussion is that it is grounded in actual, practical experience and not only in readings based on the experiences of other people. In our opinion, it is of the utmost importance, even in hurried academic situations, to facilitate a practical dimension when teaching methodology of any kind.

Beyond these general points, however, we consider our pedagogical proposal to be particularly apt in conveying a sense of a key feature of the craft of (media) ethnographic research: the adoption of a specific form of “ethnographic vision”.

#### 4 Ethnographic vision and the question of denaturalization

In many ways, ethnography is about *seeing* things in a certain way, as emphasized by *I Swear I Saw This*, the title of a book about the ethnographic craft written by the anthropologist Michael Taussig (2011). With Brown et al. (2007, p. 424), therefore, “*we would liken the process of learning ethnography to that of learning to see*”: In other words, teaching ethnography is about training students in what can be labelled an ethnographic vision.<sup>1</sup>

This process of “learning to see” has several dimensions. First, it involves discerning what to focus on in the field. In this sense, vision is tightly intertwined with theory and theoretical foci. When teaching ethnography, it is thus essential to give students a problem or theoretically motivated question to work with as they experiment with fieldwork. This is vital for their observations to be in any way fruitful. In our case, as stated earlier, we asked students to document media practices, technologies and texts in public places. Beyond this level, ethnographic vision also has to do with openness, concentration and

<sup>1</sup> This same stance applies of course also to the other senses.

attention to detail. The use of photography helps with all of these things. The task – to find artefacts, people and practices to photograph – provides students with a new way of relating to the world and a new way of looking at it.

A second crucial issue when teaching ethnography, and especially media ethnography, is the question of “going native” versus adopting a (critical) distance from the social settings observed by the ethnographer. In traditional (anthropological) ethnography, this issue has been described as a dialectical process. In the first phase, the researcher, thrown into the field, must first “go native” in order to achieve closeness, and an inside understanding of the field and its actors, thus becoming part of it in a way. The second phase consists of reflexive distancing, which is both a precondition and a result of the ethnographer’s critical reflection and analysis. When it comes to ethnographic works in media studies, especially works on media engagements and uses, “going native” seems to be held as less of a concern, since from the outset the researcher is already close to – or even a part of – the social settings under observation. On the contrary, the main issue is to achieve an appropriate reflexive stance on the social worlds in question, so that their dynamics and contradictions – their meanings – become apparent.

This process, which consists of questioning that which otherwise would be taken for granted and assumed to be normal or natural, can be labelled “denaturalization”. Photography is a useful tool for this purpose, since the very act of watching the world through a photographic lens and taking a picture is a way of seeing things in a different light. In our exercise, the reflexivity fostered by the photographic gaze was further fostered by the subsequent discussion and comments made in the classroom, helping students to understand and experience first-hand the process of denaturalization. This pedagogical process can be exemplified by some of the debates that arose during the seminar.

One of the liveliest discussions concerned the very *act* of taking photographs. The students not only debated the epistemological nature of the knowledge produced by this practice, but also how the act of taking pictures of social situations in public – mostly of strangers using their personal media technologies – revealed several norms about how to use mobile phones and mobile phone cameras in public. Several students described the awkwardness they experienced when transgressing these implicit rules about how to behave in public.

Another related discussion focused on how the photographs themselves made *norms* about photography *visible*. Students reported their attempts to compromise between taking photographs without being seen, doing it quickly and discretely, and trying to create understandable visual information. This conversation helped them to bring forth and discuss the underlying cultural norms, understandings and visual aesthetics of what constitutes appropriate photography.

However, the denaturalization fostered by our exercise did not only concern the students' personal media practices of taking pictures in public spaces. The same reflexive stance was experienced in students' observations of physical space, people and media practices in the field. Paying close attention to details in public spaces, such as stickers, graffiti, posters and other forms of "guerilla" or alternative media, created new understandings and experiences for several of the students. The groups spoke about the changing nature of this alternative media landscape in different locations in the city (in particular, the university campus and downtown areas) and how the city was divided into various symbolic, cultural, political and aesthetic zones that had not been obvious to the students, but that became visible through the ethnographic vision stimulated by the exercise.

Even more telling were the discussions about less visible media, such as open WiFi networks, surveillance cameras and the infrastructure of public electrical plugs which enables and delimits the public use of media, and ultimately structures the movements of people in the cityscape. This *infrastructure* is in no way obvious; students' understanding of these structuring infrastructures resulted from an ethnographic gaze that was enhanced by the push to take photographs to document media practices in public spaces.

In addition to these barely visible yet structuring materialities, *non-obvious cultural meanings* were revealed and debated during the seminar. One reflection that emerged after observing and photographing people using their smartphones in public was the very uniformness of mobile use as a bodily practice: how the thumb moves repeatedly up and down over the screen. Students observed how this bodily practice much resembles the handling of prayer beads within religious practices, as the thumb moves between beads in an act of prayer and meditation. This reflection, which developed from a denaturalizing view of a familiar and taken-for-granted practice, led to discussions of how to interpret mobile phone use and what such usage stands for.

## 5 Conclusion

The pedagogical exercise we have proposed and discussed does not aim to be an all-encompassing strategy for teaching media ethnography. As it is based on camera-mediated experimentation with a denaturalizing vision, this strategy may be, for example, less sound for teaching ethnographic approaches that aim to gain an understanding of specialized practices through "participant comprehension" (Collins, 1984), particularly of media production. However, this exercise is flexible enough to cover a vast array of key issues within the ethnographic craft. The classroom discussion, based on students' first-hand experiences, can be profitably used to stress and bring forth issues related both to

the observation of the field and, reflexively, to the observation of the researcher engaged in the field. Moreover, the limited time required by the exercise makes it an acceptable way to deal with the temporal constraints in current higher education practices.

The urgency we attribute to joining our colleagues in social and anthropological ethnography in a common debate on this kind of teaching practice must not be misunderstood as the acceptance of the present pedagogical status quo in higher education. Rather, it is at best a way of coping with the present problematic situation and, notwithstanding the unfavorable circumstances, dealing with the effort of training new generations of media scholars and ethnographers.

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### *Biographies*

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# Communicating at international scientific conferences? The key to being selected, understood, and published

*Bertrand Cabedoche*

## Abstract

The chapter “*How to communicate at international conferences?*” proposes to split the overarching question into several parts: first, how to be qualified by the scientific committee of an international conference; second, how to make key elements of a conference presentation understandable to a heterogeneous audience; third, how to deal competently with questions; fourth, how to enjoy an unforgettable moment of discovery and encounters; and finally, how to have your paper published in conference proceedings and/or ideally in a qualifying review.

*Keywords:* self evaluation, relevance, network, publishing

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## 1 Introduction

The content of this chapter results directly from a series of training modules designed for PhD students since 2006 at the University of Grenoble Alpes, which have been extensively exported abroad to partner universities. This chapter has been taken directly from the lecture: *How to communicate at an international conference?*

The objectives of the training module *How to communicate at international conferences?* could be summarized as follows:

To succeed in being selected by the scientific committee of an international conference for which the student has submitted a part of his PhD-thesis in response to a call for papers; to succeed in making key elements of a presentation understandable to a heterogeneous a priori interested audience; to deal competently with questions, whatever their nature and/or critical dimension; to enjoy an unforgettable moment of discovery and encounters ; and to succeed in being published in the conference proceedings and/or ideally in a qualifying review.

## 2 How to reply to a call for papers? Why, when, where?

Some advice to start with: First, do not wait until you have completed your PhD-thesis before replying to an international call. There are several reasons why a student should not shy away from that. Second, participating at an international conference is an excellent opportunity to test your work and seek the opinion of others apart from your supervisor. Moreover, successful participation could constitute an evaluation criterion, and eventually boost one's career chances: search committees take into account not only your thesis but also your publications. Third, this could be a benefit for the research unit which is hosting you to prepare your PhD-thesis. But to succeed, requires proper self-evaluation and the right moment to respond to a call: neither too early nor too late, depending on the answers to two sets of questions:

1. From the actual state of my PhD-work in progress, what could be my contribution? - a theoretical one, a methodological one or a conceptual one? Am I really making the right choice in applying to a call? Is the call concerned with my own scientific discipline? Will the proposals be reviewed by a scientific committee? Remember: "*Don't waste your ammunition*", because when a paper has been published, it cannot appear elsewhere in another scientific review or book. So, I must at least be sure that a scientific committee exists. If not, I do not apply!
2. A second useful question is: Do you really have something to communicate? Once more, you must define your own contribution to your scientific discipline, preferably with the support of your supervisor: Could it be a methodological, a conceptual or a theoretical contribution? Then, writing

the abstract for your application calls for careful consideration of the expectations set out in the call for papers: always observe the details of the call; always respect the formal rules when writing your abstract; always consider the deadline for submitting your proposal.

Identify a possible and necessary convergence between the PhD-thesis and the general topic of the international conference. Then, familiarize yourself with the organisers' expectations and try to identify the possible convergence between the part of the PhD-thesis you are considering as a possible contribution and the axes of the colloquium (expected orientations) to facilitate the integration of your presentation (if accepted). Thereafter, pay close attention to the application procedure in terms of the formal textual requirements,

To conclude this first part, "*How to reply to a call*", remember that a scientific committee tries to understand the same elements as a jury during a PhD-thesis defence:

- Is there a problematic, i.e. indications of an epistemological heritage, that makes sense of my questions for the discipline, and specifies my theoretical embedment and major concepts?
- What are my hypotheses, and must any of them be justified according to the issues raised by the conference?
- Is the case study perfectly identified, as a construct, depending on previously selected problematic and hypotheses?
- Are the methodologies consistent regarding the theoretical embedment?
- Do we see a formal structure, i.e. bibliographic indications or keywords at the end of the summary, constituting my reply to the call?

From that, as a minimum, the scientific committee will proceed to evaluate and select proposals based on the usual criteria. The general principle is a double-blind evaluation, according to previously defined and set out criteria. The selection process involves criteria such as the originality of the proposal, the extent to which the proposal matches the axes of the conference, the extent to which the approach can be considered as innovative as well as the proposal's theoretical and empirical quality.

Once your abstract has been selected, you now have to write the text for your oral presentation as if it were a final paper to be integrated in the proceedings. Following the oral presentation, a second assessment by a new scientific committee is usually necessary for the written conference paper. When writing up the conference paper one has to follow the conference's style guide in order to be considered for publication.

### 3 How to prepare a successful oral presentation (communicating and being understood)?

The following proposals must be considered solely as recommendations. Do not forget that formal aspects of your presentation are not enough, if the fundamental aspects have been neglected. Formal attention merely constitutes a help.

So, from my previous experience (as a leader of workshops, lecturer, or simply as a participant), I would propose seven precautions to facilitate appropriation on the part of your audience.

1. Communication will be facilitated if you, as a speaker, consider that nothing is obvious
  - I prepare and display my key message, i.e. my approach and contribution to advancing the state of the art;
  - I clarify terminologies and the nature of used terms, i.e. are they pre-notional, concepts, categories or paradigms?
  - I clarify the status of my affirmations, i.e. are they quotations, a belief, a doxa, hypotheses or demonstrated results?
  - I refer, i.e. I prioritize my sources; I clarify the status of my references (is the structure based on a book or a paper, a theory, an official report, or a testimony?);
  - I translate, i.e. I explain, particularly when using abbreviations, foreign terms, technical jargon, topography, or local context.
  
2. Communication will be facilitated... if you, as a speaker, enlarge your talk beyond its textual dimension
  - I provide visuals, i.e. prepare a balanced image/text on my Power-Point screen, especially regarding the key message; just write one idea per slide; write key words, major authors as reference (see more, Heinderyckx, 2015);
  - I use the power of pauses, i.e. I frame the key message between silences;
  - I pay attention to my own gestures, i.e. I train myself to open postures; I move; I concentrate on the congruence of gesture and speech;
  - I use my voice to maximum effect, i.e. I train and modulate tone, pace, power and speed of my diction;
  - I engage the attention of my audience, i.e. I display my plan, visual scanning.

3. Communication will be facilitated... if you, as a speaker, know that your audience needs prior information
  - Some people need to immediately know contextual and concrete elements including the case study. So, I expose these asap;
  - I explain the structure of my presentation and construct bridges between the different sections;
  - People need to know the theoretical embedment of my communication. So, I expose it too asap: I must remember that my approach should be connected to the general theme of the international conference;
  - I clarify the specific protocol of my case study;
  - I provide indications and reasons for delimitations; specify methodologies.
  
4. Communication will be facilitated... if you, as a speaker, know how to quickly provoke a feedback
  - I punctuate my oral communication, i.e. I include pauses to create rhythm and facilitate appropriation;
  - I carefully observe the reactions of my audience;
  - I provoke feedback before my conclusion, questioning the public without necessarily waiting for the planned period of debate following my oral presentation.
  
5. Communication will be facilitated... if you, as a speaker, consider every question as relevant
  - I suppress my polemical reflexes, *i.e.* I refrain from verbal assault and avoid replying: 'yes, but...';
  - I wait for the end of the question before replying, *i.e.* I abstain from interrupting, and reply only when I have understood what the question implies;
  - I consider the expectations behind the question and re-solicit, particularly when I am faced with a generic, ideological, aggressive or blurry question;
  - I try to get more details from the person putting the question by means of echoing the question, remaining silent for a while, raising a hypothesis or another question;
  - I solicit validation of my understanding of the question, and then I go on to solicit validation of the quality of my reply.

6. Communication will be facilitated... if you, as a speaker, know how to adapt yourself to the modes of communication of others
- I prepare two sets of exhibition materials in case there is a non-planned event, *i.e.* I prepare options: one detailed PowerPoint and another more general PowerPoint;
  - I do not repeat but rephrase, *i.e.* I vary the registers: declarative register / participative register / representative register; adapt to my audience's mood;
  - I anticipate hazards and always have a backup plan, *i.e.*, in case of a technical failure, shortened deadlines, late participants, forgotten document, etc.;
  - I do not try to cover everything in my presentation, so I refocus on my key message, rather than try to cover everything in a hurry;
  - My conclusion is always an opening one and not a closing conclusion, *i.e.* I pick up on raised questions, suggest hypotheses for possible future research work.
7. Communication will be facilitated... if you, as a speaker, question your own performance after you have finished it: *the meaning of your message is also part of the feedback you provoke*
- My audience looks stressed: maybe that means that I appeared stressed when I began speaking. So, to anticipate my next presentation and try to reduce my own stress, I'll test the exhibition material (micro, auditorium chair, translation, video-projector);
  - My audience crushed me with their superiority; maybe that means that I did the same, unconsciously. So, to improve my future performance, I'll prepare a humble introduction, I speak as soon as possible about my limitations, difficulties, without under-valuing my competencies;
  - My audience wrongly accuses me; maybe that means that I was imprecise in my formulation. So, to improve my future performance, I'll accept that what I said is perhaps not what I meant, or what I have effectively said. Recognition of a slip of tongue avoids sterile disputes;
  - My audience criticizes me; maybe that means that I was wrong. So, to improve my future performance, I'll consider the criticism as an opportunity. I'll focus on the content of the criticism and not on considering the question as a personal attack;
  - My audience says they have not understood; maybe that means that it was not possible to understand because my way of speaking. So, to improve my future performance, I'll articulate more clearly and speak louder, particularly when stating the key message;

- My audience praised my presentation or they stigmatized me; focusing on that would mean preparing my next failure, thinking that I am a genius or a bad pupil. So, to improve my future performance, I self-debrief, i.e. without any concession or misplaced pride, after my oral presentation I try to identify my strengths as my axis of progress, in fundamental and in formal terms. ‘If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster and treat those two impostors just the same, Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it, And —which is more —you’ll be a Man, my son’ (If, by Rudyard Kipling).

#### 4 Post presentation (enlarge your networks and be published)

Now it is time to think: How could you intensify your own networks and promote your paper’s content? To succeed and develop the benefits past your own oral communication calls for two basic actions: first, you must expand your participation during the whole conference, and secondly, you must carefully respect the publisher’s style sheet to be edited.

The first basic step is to integrate the whole environment of the international conference:

- I reject personal academic tourism, i.e. I must avoid leaving the conference immediately at the end of my oral communication. I stay and listen to other oral presentations and enlarge my circle of contacts.
- I participate in other presentations, i.e. I take notes, I question, and I prepare summaries of presentations, especially the opening conference (often a state of the art)
- I participate in extra conference activities, i.e. I honour our host, take lunch at the conference venue; I uncompromisingly attend official functions; participate in planned excursions; respect local customs, being careful about taking personal initiatives to visit; distribute calling cards and maintain contact asap after the conference ends

After the conference, once you are back in your country and preparing your final paper, if requested, for a scientific publication (proceedings, review or book), you must respect the editing guidelines:

- I observe guidelines, i.e. I pay attention to the style sheet and deadlines;
- I evaluate the type of proposed publication, i.e. I prioritize the publication in peer reviewed journals or edited volumes, rather than conference proceedings; *i.e.* I try to give priority to a linguistic diversity of publications, paying attention to the qualifying nature of the review;

- I mention my own lab, my university and its partners, because the benefit must also be a collective one, i.e. I provide information about the publication to my PhD-thesis supervisor (who is interested) and sort publications according to their nature in order to prepare reports (individual assessment and evaluation of my laboratory).

#### 4 As a conclusion

Now, everything is perfect. Your paper has been edited. But don't think your work is finished. While you are preparing how to disseminate your work, it could be relevant to think about its valorization via scientific communities:

- I disseminate information via the university's communication service, i.e. I inform other scientific units and assist the international relations department in structuring offers;
- I inform partners, because individual success is in their interest, too;
- I prepare media coverage, if relevant, i.e. I am available for interviews, round tables, which is one way to honour the organisers and my own laboratory, too.

In the longer term, you can think about the set terms of communication in a curriculum vitae, and your lab's four or five-year report. So, you should classify asap your own contribution in terms of influence and academic attractiveness:

- Participation in national and international collaborative research projects: (write time-period and the name of the relevant research units). This concerns e.g. third-party funded research...
- Participation in regional research projects (write date and level of commitment: participation, accountability ...)
- Regular collaborations with other laboratories (engagement with other research laboratories)
- Participation in national and international networks, and in EU cooperation projects (JPI Joint Programming Initiative-COST-European Cooperation in Science and Technology, etc...),
- Participation in federative structures or FRS (federative research structures)
- Participation in national scientific societies (e.g. Société Française des Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication): responsibilities (level of participation, reality of commitments and achievements)
- Participation in programmed scientific projects (preparation of proposals, infrastructure, installation, etc.)

- Organisation of national and international conferences; organisation of international study day, organisation of scientific events... (organisation = member of the organising committee or responsible scientific committee)
- Awards and distinctions: exact description of the awards with date of production; distinctions: (appointment, election to an agency with mention of date...)
- Invitations to scientific events (opening or closing conference); guest keynote speaker
- Collections editor for scientific publishers
- Participation on editorial boards
- Participation in scientific committees of symposiums or conferences, (give exact title and date of the conference), and the exact role (evaluation of articles? Committee chairperson? ...)
- Participation in proceedings of scientific expertise
- Awarded scholarships and financial grants (period duration): research time credits; delegation; research bonus
- Contracts: prizes for research, lecturing, registered trade marks ...

Even later on, what could be important to valorize are the interactions with social, economic and cultural environment, *i.e.*

- Products for various non-academic stakeholders, related to research work (list references):
- Participation in national and international collaborative research projects: (give time-period and name of the research units concerned). This concerns e.g. third-party funded research...
- Papers edited in professional or technical journals, synthetic works for experts;
- Studies and expert reports for public and private decision-makers; contribution to establishing standards;
- Details of support activities and events (science festivals, for example) contributing to the dissemination of scientific culture, to continuous training and public debate.
- Valorization methods (dissemination among academic and non-academic communities)

Commitment to partnership relations and any element demonstrating the interest and commitment of non-academic partners, visibility of the research entity in the socio-economic or cultural field, such as:

- Installation of support structures for technology transfer; involvement in interface structures (clusters, mixed units and network technology clusters, associations of citizens, etc.);
- Collaboration with cultural institutions (museums, libraries, conservatories, theatres and operas, etc.); scientific activities with large libraries, museums, cultural centres, cinemas (conferences, lecture series) theater ... (indicate the exact type of collaboration)
- Participation in cultural events, heritage programmes, debates; e.g. member of scientific councils of economic and cultural institutions
- Administration and provision of documents (specialized libraries, archives, digital resources);
- Contracts with non-academic partners (publishing contracts, supply of expertise or resources, etc.);
- Participation in partnerships (scientific committee, policy committee...);
- Organisation of conferences, debates, exhibitions, seminars and training courses for professionals or for social groups (associations of patients, consumers, environmental protection, etc.)...;
- Appointments to national or international panels of experts (health agencies, international organisations, etc.).

Results of research collaborations and partnerships, such as:

- Business start-ups, contribution to the creation, maintenance or development of employment in an economic sector;
- Effects on public health, on the environment, on land, on legislation, on the public debate, etc.;
- Creation of new structures or professional organisations;
- National, European or international regulations backed by results or contributions of the research unit; expert opinions to assess the potential impacts of technological innovations.

You must also consider your pedagogical and administrative responsibilities to be important (regularly, you have to update a list of your responsibilities during your contract : period, sector, description of position held). And finally, you have to classify your publication during the reporting period, in accordance with the categories that international assessment agencies use to define.

To summarize, remember that participating in an international scientific conference is a commitment that will profit the organising institution and its partners, your own scientific laboratory and the university that hosts it, the science discipline to which you belong, finally you and your career. Or not!

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### *Useful Sources*

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University of Wisconsin-Madison's APA Pages: <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPA.html>.
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## Biography

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The European Media and Communication  
Doctoral Summer School 2015  
and its Participants



Photo: Leif Kramp



## Abstracts

### Making a difference in the supermarket: A discourse-historical perspective on ethical consumerism in Sweden

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The research project is situated in the field of media discourse studies, centring on how the media constitutes a political public sphere; a ‘crucial site for the definition and re-definition of meanings’ in society (Carvalho, 2005). Fairclough (1995) argues that given the focal position of mass media in contemporary social systems, their relevance to the study of sociocultural change should not be understated. The PhD project at hand focuses on how media discourse historically has shaped, redefined, and converged notions of citizenship and political participation in relation to consumer identities. Recent decades have been characterized by a ‘personalization of politics’ (Bennett, 2012), often mobilized around different ways of ‘making change’ and ‘saving lives’ through consumption choices and lifestyle values. Thus, the idea of ethical consumerism is expressed in practices which turn the act of shopping into a political statement, a form of ‘commodity activism’ created by the fetishization of social action as a marketized commodity (Banet-Weiser/Mukherjee, 2012). Using the term ‘ethical’ instead of ‘political’ to describe these practices is, as Lewis and Potter (2011) suggest, a way of highlighting a shift in the nature and state of contemporary consumer politics. The ‘commodification of morality’ (Fisher, 2007) generates a certain value in Western societies, associating brands and social identities with ethical lifestyles. Hence, the very identity of being an ethical consumer becomes a product in itself, through what Gundersen (2014) refers to as ‘a third layer of commodity fetishism’.

The focus of the analysis is mediated ethical consumerism, and methodologically the project draws on the discourse-historical approach (DHA) within critical discourse studies, exploring how discourses, genres and texts change in relation to sociopolitical change. A central focus for the DHA is how texts manifest traces of differing ideological struggles for dominance and hegemony, and thus become ‘sites of social struggle’ (Reisigl/Wodak, 2009). Based on empirical material from Swedish print media, from the late 1980s to the present, as well as contemporary blogs and advertising, the research design is an attempt to capture ‘critical discourse moments’ (Carvalho, 2008) and analyze the

issue development of ethical consumerism in the context of awareness-raising campaigns and commercial marketing. It is important to stress in this context how ethical consumption “[...] depends on the activities of political claim-makers who load consumption with political content” (Balsiger, 2010, p. 312), and how those activities impact notions of everyday political responsibility and participation.

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## Data and the transformation of journalism and civic engagement

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Modern societies are increasingly driven by data. In the often proclaimed ‘age of big data’, both governments and businesses increasingly rely on decision-making-processes based on data collection and analysis. Yet the consequences of this transformation for democratic and civic life are highly controversial. On the one hand, personalized advertising enabled by the continuous data collection online raises concerns over ‘filter bubbles’ that only show content which confirms the views of the individual and thereby undermines con-

sensus and shared civic spaces. Moreover, the comprehensive surveillance of online activities by commercial actors or intelligence agencies made possible by big data threatens the agency of those not in control of these technologies. At the same time, however, 'data' is also associated with a strengthening of democratic values and journalistic autonomy. Many accounts of data journalism are enthusiastic about the new possibilities, and stress the potential of data technologies to lower the costs of investigative reporting and for creating new business models. Beyond journalism, open data initiatives promise a strengthening of democratic values, and new levels of transparency and accountability through datafication.

I suggest that one reason for these contradicting visions and metaphors is our limited understanding of new, 'data-driven' forms of journalism and civic engagement. In my PhD project, I want to critically examine the practices and self-understanding of two of the main actors in this field: data journalists and civic hackers. With the growing computation of journalistic practices, the interaction between these actors has increased in recent years. Supported by institutions like the Knight Foundation in the US and shaped in events like Hacks/Hackers, their exchange is increasingly shaping the way data is used to facilitate both traditional journalistic values as well as values and practices typical to hacker culture. This project is unique in that it brings together perspectives from both groups equally, and does not highlight one over the other. Following a practice theory approach, I ask how data journalists and civic hackers utilize data, for what ends, and how they understand what they are doing. By gaining knowledge in the interconnections of the practices and self-understanding of these groups, I aim to reflect on the implications of the datafication of society for civic and democratic life, and to provide insight into how shared civic spaces are created and sustained in 'datafied' publics.

## Formal and informal relations between journalists and political leaders in Lithuania and Sweden

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This PhD study aims to understand how journalists and their political sources use informal relations with each other in their work, as well as how the presence of these relations enable and limit their professional choices. Both journalists and politicians are dependent on each other: journalists through politicians seek access to information, politicians through journalists seek publicity. On the one hand, access to the network of informal sources is a professional

asset for a journalist covering politics. On the other hand, political sources, directly or not, might exercise their informal power by trying to influence media content or attempting to promote or downplay certain messages or names. Despite the scholars' agreement that informal relations are an important component of political communication, the empirical research on the informal aspects of journalist-political source interaction is limited. There is little knowledge about when and why informality comes into play in journalist-source communication as well as which informal contacts, norms and types of interactions are perceived as acceptable by the actors involved in these relations in different journalistic and political communication cultures. The project aims to contribute to answering these questions.

This research is based on the theories on social interaction, social capital and on the earlier research on media systems and journalism cultures. The comparative design of the study should help to identify some of the professional practices that are more universal and not so dependent on one country-specific context.

Two different media and political systems act as case studies for the empirical research: Lithuania and Sweden. The study's data includes a) semi-structured interviews with journalists from the leading newsrooms in each of the countries and qualitative interviews with political sources (government politicians and their press-advisors); b) reconstruction interviews with the journalists in each of the countries. The goal is to reveal the routines within journalistic processes when working on specific news stories. At a later stage, social network analysis on selected case studies should allow a deeper insight into source-work in the specific situations.

## Understanding the 'face' concept using Chinese youths' online self-presentation

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Chinese 'face' practices are considered as being at the heart of Chinese culture, its intangible social norms and regulations. Chinese people's perception of 'face' is believed to have great impact on their self-presentation. Western researchers such as Goffman (1959) adopt impression management to explain people's willingness to gain positive images from others, and this concept has been widely used to explain people's online practices. However, according to the Chinese 'face' concept, Chinese young people's online practices should be more affected by different aspects of the traditional 'face' concept rather than

only dominated by impression management. Existing research believes that impression management is more suitable to the individualistic Western culture, rather than the collective Eastern culture. As the Chinese 'face' concept is believed to be dynamic and complicated, this research aims to understand contemporary Chinese 'face' concepts through Chinese youths' online practices. The Chinese 'face' concept and Western studies on self-presentation provide the theoretical framework for this study, which contributes to discovering the relationships between the traditional Chinese 'face' concept with the Western self-presentation studies. By adopting ethnography research methods to observe and interpret Chinese youth's online practices, also by categorizing Chinese youths' online practices into 'identity', 'materialism', 'ethic', and 'privacy', this research discovers that there are great similarities between Goffman's study on impression management and the traditional Chinese 'face' concept. Furthermore, impression management theory is not limited to explaining the individualistic issues as existing research has claimed. Moreover, both impression management and the traditional Chinese 'face' concept do not have that much affect on Chinese youths' online practices, instead, the new Chinese 'face' concept is shaping Chinese youths' online practices.

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## Ibero-American media outlets and news aggregators: analysis of editions of Google News Brazil, Colombia, Spain, Mexico and Portugal

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Google News is a news aggregation service owned by Google. Officially launched in September 2002, it was developed by the Indian engineer Krishna Bharat after 9/11 in the United States. It claims it trawls and posts over more than 2200 Spanish and Portuguese language news sources. Without any advertising being displayed, news in Spanish is available in Spanish, Columbian, Mexican and other Spanish-speaking country editions. News in Portuguese is available in Brazilian and Portuguese editions. The news aggregator role has been polemic and widely covered by the media. Criticism of it has come from news agencies, media conglomerates, magnates, media outlet associations, governments, among others. Furthermore, in December 2014 the Spanish edi-

tion produced in Spain was closed because of conflicts with the new Spanish Copyright Law. However, small publishers look at this service with approval. Google says its news aggregator increases the news traffic, and this can be monetized through Google AdSense; besides, the service does not infringe copyright because it just shows snippets and links them to the original source, and it does not pay to the media outlet because no advertising is displayed. This creates a situation of cooperation (cooperation/competition) because both sides, news outlets as sources and Google News as infomediare, are forced to work together being as they need each other. In the same way, Google News plays the role of gatekeeper, setting up its own agenda, which in turn could have an influence in shaping public opinion, all this using algorithms whose performance is little known. This thesis seeks to determine which media outlets are indexed in the above-mentioned regional editions, who owns them, what their aggregation frequency is, and how the indexed media and the news aggregator are related. Additionally, the thesis attempts to prove that the aggregator's regional editions are biased towards the media indexed (determined by the aggregation rate/frequency) and not towards the news itself. Since the edition in Spain was unexpectedly closed, a theoretical approach will be provided to understand what happened. A web scraper algorithm was designed to daily collect, store and report data such as: country edition, section, media name, etc. The media outlet's country of origin and media ownership will be identified through a document review. Finally, interviews with media organisation's representatives and, if possible, with Google News representatives will take place in order to determine the relation between the indexed media outlet and the news aggregator.

### The gamification of mobile news. Adapting traditional journalism to the challenges and opportunities provided by mobile devices

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This research project examines the effects of applying gamification techniques to the consumption of news in the emerging mobile society. The focus is placed on young users and their mobile media choice and news consumption habits. As mobile devices have expanded their functionalities, the rise and ubiquity of constant Internet connectivity has already altered the environment of news and information. Traditional news organisations are trying to respond to audiences' interest with pervasive, portable, real-time local information, but competition for users' attention has expanded to include a myriad of competing digital

services. This suggests that the role of individual habits and motivations are particularly important when assessing media consumption. As younger generations' engagement with traditional news decreases, video games attract a large majority of youth. Subsequently, several news platforms have started to introduce game mechanics in their digital news outlets, providing a personalized experience with the aim of engaging news consumers and persuading them to use their services regularly, sparking daily habit.

Departing from the presumption that healthy journalistic practice and well-informed citizens are prerequisite to a vigorous democratic society, this dissertation aims to discern how the introduction of gamification in mobile news platforms affects journalism and news consumption. This assessment is primarily focused on the media choice of youth and the role that mobility, persuasive design, and game mechanics have in fostering engagement as well as changing and motivating the habit of reading news.

This study draws from a renewed Uses and Gratifications approach, but also from theories found in the field of psychology, such as Self-Determination Theory to look at the ways in which gamification attempts to engage and empower habit change in users. It also looks at the possible negative effects of merging two media types with different guiding logics. Methodologically, a triangulation of methods will be used that are derived from an experimental design conducted with Swedish millennials (18-35 years of age). This three-pronged approach will produce data from a) a participatory design exercise, in which users will design their own "desired" news app, drawing on their notion of what news is and how they would like to receive it; b) the actual experiment with the newly designed test app, which will provide a quantification and modes of news consumptions; c) and finally a set of focus groups to gather together personal experiences of interacting with the gamified testing app.

The study will provide an innovative overview of the impact and effects of gamified news in younger generations' news consumption in mobile settings while filling a gap in current research

## Digital media, political mobilization and the aesthetics of information: A case study of the Shahbag movement of 2013 in Bangladesh

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This research focuses on the connection between digital media and social movements. Social movements and mass gatherings in streets these days are accompanied by an abundance of images. Whether it is newspaper coverage, or electronic media's attempt to add dramatic credibility to coverage through spectacular images captured by the protesters or bystanders, images seem to declare the ontology of physical movements. I will study the extent to which production, distribution and consumption of visual and verbal information through online and offline social networks play a significant role in communicating the political aspect of the Shahbag Movement of Bangladesh in 2013. The Blogger-Activist Forum initially started the Shahbag movement and mainstream media covered the protest in detail. Gradually the convergence of media spheres has opened up the debate between religion and politics. This case will therefore be helpful in problematizing the relation between online activism and representations of physical performance in relation to the larger sphere of democracy and political progress.

Drawing upon Ariella Azouley's (2011) argument that images circulated within an intimate public sphere could become evidence for a crime depending upon the platforms and the communicative infrastructure, I aim to address questions of the emergence of the political through the circulation and consumption of information, and how these are often intermingled with the power structure of a network. With the rise of digital new media, the collective actions of late 2000s show the importance of online and offline activity networks. Although the original spaces of resistance might be formed on the Internet, offline social networks should not be ignored if the dynamics of connectivity and engagement are to be comprehended. In this context I will refer to the concepts and debates on network initiated by Jose van Dijk (2013), Manuel Castells (2012) et al. I will argue that the narratives on the pro-protest blogosphere and representations and circulation of protest performances activate a network of shared cultural struggle over identity and belonging within the democracy of a developing nation-state such as Bangladesh.

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Representation of the energy debate in the post-political age.  
A qualitative analysis of news coverage of energy issues from a  
historical perspective

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Nuclear energy has been provoking heated public debate in Belgium since the 1970s. This PhD-project approaches this public debate as a discursive struggle. This implies looking at the issue from a political perspective. Chantal Mouffe (2005) defines 'the political' as the sphere of conflict and ineradicable antagonism in society. Hence, any energy policy is the (temporary) outcome of a struggle between competing discourses, rather than a rational consensus or a technological inevitability. This project looks, in particular, at the articulation of discourses of resistance in the newspaper coverage on the occasion of large-scale nuclear accidents.

Having provoked heated debate, large-scale accidents provide interesting cases with which to study the clash of discourses. From a theoretical perspective, they are considered 'dislocatory moments' (Laclau, 1990). At the moment of their occurrence, large-scale accidents 'dislocate' the hegemonic nuclear discourse. The hegemony destabilizes, as such accidents go beyond the pro-nuclear discourse's explanatory horizon. Therefore a dislocation traumatizes the hegemony of nuclear energy. Whereas the hegemonic discourse tries to suture the trauma, competing discourses try to exploit it to further undermine the hegemony. They attempt to expose its contingency and articulate alternative worldviews.

Large-scale accidents also provoke increased media attention for the issue of nuclear energy and, with that, create opportunities for otherwise underexposed societal voices to access the (mainstream) media. For these reasons large-scale nuclear accidents are interesting cases with which to study the discursive struggle and in particular the articulation of the discourses of resistance.

The PhD-project analyzes the newspaper coverage of three large-scale nuclear accidents: Three Mile Island (Pennsylvania, 1979), Chernobyl (Ukraine, 1986), and Fukushima (Japan, 2011). Empirical data consists of two months

of newspaper coverage from four Belgian quality newspapers, an alternative magazine and a business magazine starting on the day of the accidents. The project analyzes the newspaper coverage using discourse-theoretical analysis (DTA) (Carpentier/De Cleen, 2007), which combines theoretical concepts from Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory (1989) with methodological guidelines from critical discourse analysis (e.g. Wodak/Meyer, 2009) and qualitative content analysis (e.g. Wester, 2006).

Preliminary results from a first case study on Three Mile Island show the importance of 'risk' as a 'nodal point' or privileged signifier within the discourses of resistance to nuclear energy. A recurrent way to neutralize the concept of 'risk' in the nuclear discourse is to prioritize economic risk over health and environmental risk. The analysis of the newspaper coverage of Three Mile Island also shows that the discourses of resistance focus mainly on reformative measures for the nuclear sector, and only to a lesser degree on radical societal change.

### The combination of family life and career in US television series

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This project consists of a combination of two distinct disciplines that are nonetheless inextricably linked: the study of television series (and the indispensable contribution of television studies and cultural studies underpinning it) and gender studies. More specifically, this research will focus on the way American television series, comprehended as powerful vehicles of social and political (re)presentation, depict the difficulties of combining a professional life and a family life, which is one of the central stakes of gender studies and feminism today. Indeed, the so-called "maternal instinct" still tends to impact our definition of femininity, and the ability to carry a child provides our definition of 'being a mother'. This research argues that television series have the ability to destabilize and de-essentialize notions of the dyads masculinity/femininity and man/woman, through their depictions of such stakes.

The progressive fragmentation of the feminist movement led us to the plural theoretical framework that we know today, allowing masculinity, queer and trans identities and postfeminist points of view into the debate. With this evolution, the very notions of masculinity and femininity have been re-designed, first within academic fields, then progressively in popular culture,

where television plays a crucial role. Indeed, as Mumford puts it, “there is some relationship between the representations of gender that occur on television and the way that gender operates in viewers’ lives” (Mumford, 1998, 117).

More specifically, television series hold intrinsic characteristics that turn them into powerful vectors of sense and meaning and that allow them to reach spectators to a particular extent. As the result of their creator’s subjectivity and of economic imperatives, these “paraphrases of reality” (Esquenazi 2010, 187) offer a peculiar version of our society where progress as well as weaknesses can be anticipated, emphasized, negotiated or erased. Therefore, the depiction of gender and sexuality that is found in TV series is crucial and participate, on the one hand, in individual construction of identity, gendered or otherwise, and on the other hand, in collective considerations around those issues.

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## Tools and methods of media manipulation

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Our research, in its first part, belongs primarily to the category of basic theoretical research, which aims to address an elusive issue of media effects. Media research has moved from naive opinions that media determine human behavior to a more realistic understanding of their conflicting and unpredictable influence over people’s thinking and behavior. However, the overall influence of media in our lives still justifies the need to identify and categorize applied tools and methods of media manipulation in modern society. Ideally, we could study and explain them under a comprehensive theory of social communication, which would serve as a framework for further inquiry. Formulating such a theory is the main objective of our research. We decided to analyze available theories and models of communication; through their synthesis and combination with research in cognitive psychology and neurobiology, we will try to explain the issue of media effect in any social setting. The cognitive and neurobiological reality of communication is identical for all members of humanity without significant differences caused by nationality, race, or cultural

background. It includes three basic stages of human cognition: 1) Perception, 2) Computation, and 3) Representation, which further determine human behavior, communication and individual identity.

Our understanding of a medium (sign) is broader than just seeing it only as a part of human language systems because communication can be found among all other living organisms in nature. All known forms of communication which do not belong to human language systems are expressed through locomotion, sounds, or by a vast array of biochemical means, and they are also fully utilized by humans. We learned that it is necessary to extend the standard Laswell's basic communication model characterized by timeless questions such as, "Who says what, in what channel, to whom and with what effect?". Our model for social communication suggests that, in most cases, it is not so important who says it, what is being said, or through which channel, but the emphasis should be placed on the missing element of Lasswell's model. It is the critical essence of why it is being said to the specific individual or target group. Whose utility is being maintained or improved in the process? We claim that any communication is always performed with an intent to create, maintain, or improve a utility for the communicator.

The second part of the research will test the theoretical assumptions of the suggested Theory of Social Communication in specially designed separate case studies. Each of them is planned to begin with collecting qualitative and quantitative data through questionnaires and continue with the training of cognitive skills which, as assumed, should provide a necessary help when resisting generally applied tools and methods of media manipulation.

## Family photography and post memory in Turkey

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Family photographs are not only a part of the everyday life of a family, but also have an important role in constructing the family's memory. Families' memory and photography practices could provide various insights to the researcher on what it means to be a family. Additionally, family photography is also directly related to the issues of identity and the traumatic past.

The purpose of this study is to focus on the memories of the families who were excluded from the hegemonic national history. Since the Republic of Turkey adopted the idea of nation state and Turkish nationalism, we have witnessed that many ethnic groups living in Turkey have been oppressed and their identities, as well as memories, have been excluded from the national memory. De-

spite this oppression, memories of these groups have been conveyed through remembrance. For these people photography has also become a very important medium for coping with their traumatic past.

It is in this scope, I aim to focus on Armenian families who live in Turkey and their family photos and albums. With the help of the concept of post memory by Marianne Hirsch, we can explain the process of Armenian family memory. Hirsch defines post memory as the “relationship that the ‘generation after’ bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before –and to experiences they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences are transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right”. According to Hirsch, “these events happened in the past but their effects continue into the present”.

There is a certain difference between the reading of photography and talking to the user of photography as a researcher since the family photography is a part of family memory, and also may be a part of the trauma. For this reason, ethnographic methods will be used in this research. With the help of ethnographic techniques, the researcher may lead us to understand how memory is constructed and how the family members remember through photography. We can also witness their past and stories. It may be arguable but if we participate in their ritual of looking at their photography and observe their photography practices in their space, we have a chance to understand the situation from the inside, and hear the voices of their memory with the help of photography. Finally, this study also questions whether family photography could be understood as a medium of resistance both in the everyday life of these families and in national history.

Local newspaper competition and the means of diversity:  
A historical-comparative study of policy, content and audience  
in Norway and Sweden

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This project will explore the nature of local newspaper competition in the democratic corporatist media systems of Norway and Sweden. My goal is to investigate local newspaper competition in light of diversity ideals in press policy (through document analysis of white papers, 1965-2013), in light of content

diversity (through content analysis of eight newspapers, 1985, 2000, 2015), and in light of audience exposure (through survey analysis of local news exposure in two-paper cities).

While the press support system in Norway and Sweden are both extensive and similar in their form, the political aim of supporting and preserving newspaper diversity on a local level has been challenged in different ways. Whereas most of the Swedish no. 2-newspapers have been acquired by the owner of their local competitor, the number of competing local newspapers in Norway is in great decline. Additionally, the scope of ownership concentration and ownership changes has also blurred the traditional distinction between liberal/conservative no. 1-papers, and social democratic no. 2-papers. Changes in publishing formats, changes in printing hours and not least the emergence of the Internet as a joint publishing platform may also be taken as examples of a more institutionally homogeneous newspaper sector. Thus, one may ask, how do such structural changes affect the democratic means of local newspaper competition? Are the Norwegian and Swedish two-paper-cities losing their position as so-called “bastions of diversity, competition and choice”?

The main hypothesis which guides this proposed work is the following: “An increasingly market oriented media system interferes with the democratic means of local newspaper competition”. The hypothesis will be explored through these research questions:

1. How has the diversity concept been understood, justified and defined during the history of modern press policy in Norway and Sweden?
2. Whether and how do the degree and forms of content diversity vary according to historical and national differences within the competitive newspaper markets? Does intercity newspaper competition contribute to increased content diversity in local newspaper markets or within competing newspapers ?
3. How do the specific logics of online news affect the degree and forms of content diversity among local competing newspapers? Are the newspapers more or less diverse online?
4. What kinds of demographic, socio-economic and ideological variations can be identified among readers of two competing local newspapers, and to what extent is there a correlation between diversity in content and diversity in exposure?

This project will draw on previous works on media diversity, both as a policy objective and as an empirical measure. The empirical data will be analyzed in light of theories on media and democracy and Hallin and Mancinis’ work on media systems.

## Understanding gender in neoliberal development contexts through oppositional ethnography

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The main aim of this study is to find points to refer back to or ways to negotiate the structures instituted by neoliberal agricultural policies in the context of India. The Vidarbha region in Eastern Maharashtra in India has seen massive agrarian crisis in the last decade owing to new mode of agriculture resulting from the adoption of genetically modified crops. Disenfranchised by the rising costs of agriculture, indebtedness, and a decline in public investment, farmers face utter lack of agency, except in committing suicide in order to be heard. Yet, suicides are only symptomatic of the said crisis. They are often attributed to familial stress, dents in social status, inner-family conflict, and crop failure. All resulting from new macroeconomic policies liberalizing agricultural trade. The lack of safety nets and restructuring programs for farmers have also been associated with the present crisis (e.g. Patnaik, 1999), but do not feature in the public discourse on the present agrarian crisis. This study focuses on understanding the agricultural practices of women in the farming households, and listening to them as a way of reversing the narrative of 'progress' and 'development' that have been used to describe adoption of new biotechnological inventions. The text also creates a space for to be heard within the structural constraints that erase their agency. In this way, this study also seeks to pursue oppositional politics by creating narratives that counter and negotiate the neoliberal policies. Ethnographic study that holds the interaction between culture, structure, and agency as central will be used as a methodology for this study. This methodology is known as the Culture-Centered Approach (Dutta, 2011). Through this methodology, this study will seek to draw insights for understanding gender in the neoliberal policy structure, in the context of a developing country, among subaltern populations. The change from a colonial feudal system of peasantry to a neoliberal agricultural system calls for a framework for understanding gender anew. Postcolonial and subaltern studies have previously offered the frameworks to understand gender in marginalized contexts. This project has its roots in that scholarship but seeks to offer a new way of thinking about, understanding, and doing gender in development related work in neoliberal systems; in other words, it seeks to suggest a way of doing oppositional gender-based politics in development-related work, so that such work serves the special needs of gendered subaltern subjects.

Communication for social change: A case study investigation into the social change effects of community radio in diverse international settings

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Internationally, community radio was established to address issues of inequality and to strive for improved community access and participation within the media. Today, there are thousands of community radio stations across all continents. Within the Australian context, community radio listening continues to rise (McNair, 2013) yet persistently there is comparatively little dedicated scholarly attention paid to this third sector. In the new nation of East Timor there are now 16 community radio stations. In general the stations take a normative approach to community radio in seeking to provide a “voice” to ordinary people, and are owned and managed by the local community.

Australia and East Timor’s significant not-for-profit community radio sectors ostensibly have inclusive community structures, and deep social connections specifically designed to address society’s injustices and maximize ‘having a voice’ through the media. My research asks the questions: to what extent, and in what ways, does community radio contribute to communication for social change? A combined theoretical position incorporating critical political economy of communication and a citizen’s media approach is applied in my investigation. Using a case study approach I examine two stations, one in Australia and the other in East Timor, using multiple research methods in order to investigate their contribution to participatory media, communication rights, counterpublics and communicative democracy. My research not only acknowledges the vast, insipid and undemocratic impact of neoliberalism on media and communication systems, it also thoroughly investigates, raises the profile of, and listens to the myriad voices, critical media perspectives and alternative community visions created by community radio practitioners in two diverse settings, thus enabling wider consideration of the potential of the community radio form.

We live in a time of continuous global crises, from war, poverty, and the economic meltdown to the threat of climate change. What is not broadly considered is that we may well be in - or entering into - a crisis of democratic communication, or a crisis of voice (Couldry, 2010). Communication is central in democracies and cultures - socially, politically and more recently economically. But where are the communication forms that explicitly tackle issues of injustice, oppression, poverty and exclusion? Just as a crisis of finance seems absurd within the wealth of the world, so too does a crisis of communication

appear illogical within a time of unprecedented information flows and digital connections. Yet for both it is arguably the overbearing influence of neoliberalism - with its propensity toward private wealth above common good - that stifles communicative democracy and critical participatory media.

## Analyzing the circulation of music within the audiovisual landscape: The case of preexisting music in French TV shows

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Since the 2003 Compact Disc crisis in France, promoting strategies have been multiplying in the music sector. Preexisting music is being used more and more in advertisements (Magis, 2013), public places (Rouzé, 2004) and TV programmes. The main aim of my Ph.D project is to understand the different stakes (sociocultural, economic and legal) coming from the links between the TV soundtracks used in nonfictional TV shows and the use of preexisting songs by analyzing the circulation of music.

This project is a continuation of research from the field of Cultural Industries. First, the transformations observed in the two sectors concerned, the recorded music industry and the French audiovisual sector are discussed in order to highlight mutations or connections between them.

Second, in order to approach the circulation of music and its stakes, the concept of “informationalization” (Miège, 1999) is called up to show that the digitalization of music could accelerate its circulation and its production and perhaps result in important changes in its use in TV shows. To answer these first question, a quantitative content analysis of TV programs is used to highlight the percentage of usage of preexisting music at the current period (2006-2015). This first analysis will be compared to others from defined periods (1949, the first vinyl record in France, to 2006, DADVSI law). With this statistic data, a first view of the evolution of the use of preexisting music in French TV Programs was done.

Moreover, the symbolic linked to music is studied. Indeed, music is a necessary component of the everyday life of viewers and so its use in audiovisual scripts made it possible to attract them by the “power of memory” emanating from the preexisting music. To confirm this hypothesis, I’ll try to note how music is used in scripts through a qualitative content analysis. Moreover, I’ll research whether music has already been used in other audiovisual productions, such as movies or series. What I want to show here is that an audiovisual

“songscape” (in reference to the different “scapes” formulated by A. Appadurai in 2005) can exist. TV soundtrack makers could draw on these references to enhance their productions.

## Alternative media and social movements in a Latin-American context

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The present research aims to focus on the different uses of media and communication tools within social movements in Brazilian society.

Using a media sociological perspective to investigate a social movement allows a deepening of several aspects of its heterogenous identity like peculiarity of self-representation, collective narrative forms and sense of community that arises from joining the same ideas and expressing them in public.

Communication practices and media discourses are studied like alternative voices from the mainstream media and politics. The increasing importance of media production in the era of globalization is strictly tied to the political dimension and to the creation of symbols and imaginaries.

In the Latin-American context social movements build up not only to claim their rights, but they present a global overview of society and its structure, and they fight for an alternative development model from the neoliberalistic and market-oriented one, which dominated their history till the last century.

As media features are embedded in the economic and political conditions of a specific geographic area, it's important to recover part of the history of these practices to analyze the relationship between social movements and civil society, institutional processes and, on the other hand, to understand the performative dimension of political ideas and democracy empowerment. The latter includes horizontal decision-making, direct participation, and counter-hegemonic discourses, which challenge relations of authority and control.

This case study will be a social group organisation with a solid tradition and a complex structure like the housing movement in the Brazilian city of São Paulo.

The theoretical approach finds a proper methodological frame in visual sociology, whose techniques and codes based on images are at the same time a relevant key to accessing the imaginary dimension made of narrative ideologies, communication choices, self-representation and power dynamics.

Incompatible interests? The right to privacy and big data:  
Lobbying efforts, policies and practices in the EU.

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New technologies have always challenged not only existing regulation but also existing social norms of privacy, on which future laws are based (Tene/Polonetsky, 2013). Data that used to be known only to data subjects are now stored in the databases of private companies and public authorities. This raises several legal, political and ethical questions: Is the computerised mining of keywords on an instant messaging app comparable to an actual person reading a private conversation? What is consent online? Which data may be sold to third parties? The questions are hard to answer since social networks, fitness apps and smart smoke alarms lack historical equivalents, as the data they provide are significantly richer than what has previously been available (Ohm, 2010, p. 1725).

The extensive collection of data has been termed panspectric surveillance, which refers to the constant monitoring of multiple sources of data and its subsequent computerized filtering and analysis in order to produce information (De Landa, 1991, p. 180). Critical political economy theorists have expanded the concept to a theory of a panspectric diagram (Palmås, 2011). Whereas Foucault's (1977) panoptic diagram was based of the idea of social control through visible surveillance, the panspectric diagram is based on the idea of control through all-pervasive data collection used to identify security threats and estimate future behaviour.

The European Union is presently trying to address online privacy challenges with a new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EC, 2012), which is yet to enter into force. The new law is undoubtedly a compromise of several conflicting privacy views, but it is still unclear to what extent different perceptions of privacy have influenced the regulatory output of the EU institutions.

My PhD project explores the influence of different interest groups on the GDPR in its different legislative stages. Do the EU institutions propose policy and law in support of the practices that form the panspectric diagram or are they rather trying to restrict the panspectric nature of society?

The empirical data is composed of nearly 800 position papers that have been submitted to either the European Commission or Members of the European Parliament. A sample of submissions that are representative of the different interest groups have been chosen for closer analysis. The results will provide

a clearer picture of the privacy perceptions of different interest groups and their influence on the final proposal for a regulation, which is an aspect often ignored in politics research (Klüver, 2013, p. 203).

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## How online journalism has influenced the journalistic 'ecosystem': Estonian example

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The study of journalism production needs revisiting, as multiple variables that determined how journalistic content was produced, distributed, and consumed, have changed. Though production is just one component of the journalistic 'ecosystem', it holds a key position in binding together all the aforementioned. My PhD thesis aims to analyze the influence of online journalism on journalism culture, namely production. The research comprises three theoretical fields: political economy of the media; information processing; journalism as a profession.

Critical political economy refers to approaches that place emphasis on the unequal distribution of power and are critical of arrangements whereby such inequalities are sustained and reproduced (Hardy 2014, p. 6). The scarcity of resources and the impact of information society change the scene for journalism practice (McChesney, 1998; Küng, Picard/Towse, 2008; Deuze, 2009).

Informationalism in the post-industrial approach is seen as the elevated presence and significance of information, which entails complexity in information processing. It has been referred to as 'information economy' (Bell, 1979;

Toffler, 1980), but lately more often as ‘network economy’ (Castells, 1996; Bell, 2001; Tonkiss, 2006; Van Dijk, 2006). Therefore the discussion over the core journalistic skills of information processing becomes ever more relevant.

The historical development of the journalistic profession and journalistic text formats has always been related to resources and technological change. The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century have challenged the profession in many aspects, including convergence and the many-to-many model of distribution, but also in external factors such as economic recession, and competences of information processing in the context of changed technologies (Høyer/Lauk, 2003; Hanitzsch, 2007; Hanitzsch et al, 2011; Boczkowski, Mitchelstein/Walter, 2011). Therefore analysis of the current situation in journalism culture not only needs to address journalism on the institutional and organisational level, but also on the individual level.

My research is based on the Estonian media market. The change that came with online journalism has transformed both Estonian journalism practice and the media landscape in various ways similar to many countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, my research is focused on the changing of the Estonian journalistic ‘ecosystem’, but at the same time is comparable to a number of other CEE countries. I have combined quantitative and qualitative methods, and am currently seeking advice on how to incorporate the three theoretical and empirical directions into the comprehensive unit of a PhD thesis.

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“Who cares?” Audiences and mediated distant suffering.  
A qualitative and quantitative interdisciplinary study of a Flemish audience in relation to mediated distant suffering.

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This PhD project is mainly interested in obtaining more empirical data to support and expand current (mostly theoretical) knowledge about audiences in relation to mediated distant suffering. Mediation of suffering is an emerging subject of research within the social sciences that has gained increasing attention over the last decade. Clearly answering recent calls, there has been a noticeable rise in the number of empirical studies concerning audience in relation to mediated distant suffering these last years (cf. Engelhardt/Jansz, 2014; Kyriakidou, 2014; Ong, 2014; Orgad/Seu, 2014; Scott, 2014; Scott, forthcoming; Seu, 2010). Still, empirical evidence on people’s reaction to mediation of suffering is rather scarce and scattered over different disciplines while much has been written and explored on a moral and theoretical level. By further inquiry into different disciplines and by a multi-methodological approach, I aim to obtain deeper and more structured evidence to ascertain how audiences perceive and relate to representations of distant suffering.

This PhD project intends to contribute to this growing body of empirical knowledge in several phases. During a first exploratory phase, in-depth interviews are being held with experts, both academic and practical experts (i.e. journalists, NGO practitioners) on the subject of audience and distant suffering to delineate and further refine questions pertaining to the audience. After this, a series of focus groups will be carried out with members of the general Flemish (Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) public to explore in more detail how the public think about and relate to mediated distant suffering. These two phases combined will result in an overview of opinions and perceptions concerning mediated distant suffering from three social pillars in society: academics, practitioners in the field of mediation and the public itself. Apart from the qualitative insights, these two phases will inform a quantitative survey that will be designed and tested to take into account these different points of view. The intention of this PhD project is to end with a valid design for a survey that can be used as a (academically) multi-deployable quantitative tool to further measure audience perceptions of the mediation of distant suffering.

## Internal communication and sense-making during organisational change

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This study seeks to examine the role of internal communication from an interpretive perspective in the sense-making process during the implementation of planned change initiatives within Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia. This study will explore how individual employees make sense of change in higher education institutions and what influence internal communication exerts upon sense-making regarding change among the organisational members. This study will implement Weick's sense-making framework to analyze how change is communicated and understood and how these individual differences of understanding of change events are transformed into shared understanding that enable coordination through an internal communication programme. The study focuses on the three premier public universities in Malaysia that are currently undertaking extensive nationwide transformation programmes recently launched by the government of Malaysia in its blueprint National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) 2007 – 2020. The universities are University Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), University Putra Malaysia (UPM) and University Sains Malaysia (USM). This study will employ qualitative interviewing as the primary method through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions from 10 respondents from each university to elicit views and opinions from them regarding the change initiatives implemented. Interviews will be gathered face-to-face and audio-recorded with expected length ranging from 30 minutes to 90 minutes. The interviews will be conducted either in Bahasa Malaysia or English depending on the participant's preferences. The main overarching question of this study is how internal communication influences university employees' sense-making of change implemented in NHESP. This project is motivated by the limited number of empirical studies on internal communication in Malaysia, in particular, during change processes. The adoption of sense-making as a theoretical framework will contribute new insights Malaysian perspectives as previous studies (Sonenshein, 2010; Kyriakidou, 2011; Balogun/Johnson, 2004; Bartunek, 2006; Maitlis/Christianson, 2014; Maitlis/Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, Sutcliffe/Obstfeld, 2005) were mainly conducted in the Western countries. The studying of change in a public sector context is another contribution provided by this project since previous literature was mainly concerned with change in the private sector. Public sector perspectives

of change will be interesting to explore since employees of this sector are usually associated with slow receptivity towards change and that leads to change fatigue (Frahm/Brown, 2007).

### The uses of the internet by teenagers with a physical disability

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Topic: The prevalence of internet use amongst youngsters has spawned extensive research. It has become apparent in the course of reviewing existing literature that a majority of the research is repeatedly focused on providing an understanding of non-disabled youngster's use of the internet, producing little research on those youngsters with a disability. Having recognised the paucity of research on young people with physical disabilities, this study aimed to elicit their online activities and also how their parents and teachers construct them as young online users.

Methods: In order to research young people with physical disabilities and their use of the internet, this study identified eleven participants at a special needs school. The participants were aged between fifteen to nineteen years and have physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy, brittle bones, severe ichthyosis, hemiplegia and muscle wasting conditions. By using a strong ethnographic approach that includes observation, the researcher undertook the role of a volunteer in the school concerned, and used the methods of video diaries, face to face and online interviews to provide rich data.

Findings: Presently this thesis has finished gathering data and I have been able to identify four key themes from the research findings. The first theme reveals the distinct ways in which the participants, their parents and teaching staff define disability and construct a disabled teenager. The findings have revealed internet surveillance to be a second theme, which takes place in two forms: through physical observations carried out by school staff and virtual surveillance. The research also reveals the ways a small number of students actively engage in testing and resisting surveillance measures in the school. The third theme relates to how these participants manage and form social relationships online, and finally the fourth theme relates to their online activities.

## “Mythical approaches and image construction in advertising”

*Fatma Nazl Köksal*

The present study addresses the issue of sublimation, which is created by using visual images as myths in the design of advertisements. I would like to draw attention to how advertising, by referring to the behavioral archetypes within the social lives of humans creates a devotion object and aggregates masses onto a mechanical submissiveness. The contemporary means available to mass media to create ideological expressions are nearly unlimited. Advertising is a regularly used social propaganda tool. Industrial methods are being used to reproduce images in advertisements as conveyors of meaning. Therefore, advertisers use famous movie stars, singers, politicians or athletes that can be expressed as parts of a modern myth. The core idea of this study is to find the type of mythical approaches used in print advertising, how they affect the construction of a certain phenomenon, and how people perceive and experience these ‘constructed’ phenomena within the scope of advertiser -audience-advertisement trilogy. On that account phenomenological analysis is used as a method because it becomes possible through phenomenology to understand the experiences of and reactions to the advertisements more thoroughly.

Furthermore, advertisements support the system by motivating consumption. Nearly everything is merchandised by media and advertising companies. The current study addresses the urge of authority to the control masses, enforcing its ideological tools to their maximum and takes into account the merchandising of the socio-cultural structure of an individual’s environment for such purposes. Hence, media texts chosen for research analysis (advertisements) are to be criticized using Critical Theory. At this point, advertisements will also be handled and examined with regards to cultural anthropology, sociology of everyday life as well as psychology. Cultural anthropology studies the ontological dimensions of society’s relationship with the connotative meaning of object, this being advertised. The sociology of everyday life examines the existing concerns of the masses regarding the influence of societal structure. Psychology is related to the way individuals understand and internalize images and focuses on the differentiation of personal, communal and collective memory. The examination of advertising without referring to these three disciplines can only lead to mere economic evaluation and so, this study considers the three disciplines when examining the relationship between images and myth in advertising.

This study aims to identify and analyze the constructed meaning in print advertisements that uses modern myths as visual images and to offer critique for the advertisement industry via anthropological and ontological bases.

## Playing gender in video games

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Video games can be understood both as a rigid and fixed system of meanings as well as a depiction of a deliberative environment open for reading and pleasure at the same time. My dissertation focuses on this contradiction, specifically in the context of gender. It would be beneficial to understand how the audience interacts with various kinds of texts. I want to show the new kind of interactivity of video games and the ability of a reader to participate in their own experience. At the same time, this ability highlights the complexity and fluidity of the (gender) identity.

My thesis is based on the assumption that the ideal player, a sort of an implied reader in mainstream or blockbuster video games is still primarily a heterosexual man. In this sense, players are active – they construct narrative of the video game and also they co-create the pleasure of playing. They do not need to read texts the preferred way, but they can create very specific meanings, gender identity included. As a result, video games can be a subversive tool that can contribute to deconstruct of gender stereotypes and gender stable identities.

My dissertation is divided into two parts. In the first section, I intend to outline the discourses of gender representations in video games using the discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003) of selected video games and their surrounding texts. The second part of the dissertation will focus on the audience. I will interview Czech players – both regular and occasional players, individuals with declarative non-heterosexual or heterosexual orientation, or considering themselves members of the LGBT community.

(Playable) characters can be understood as the densification of gender stereotypes, expectations and standards. I shall analyze selected forms of preferred femininity and hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), and the very specific principle of watching and controlling the playable character. Playing video games in this sense paraphrases the concept of the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975). The dissertation should also investigate whether the gender categories are fixed or fluid, complementary and hierarchical, and what kinds of sexuality video games offer.

On account of the interactivity of video games, the player is connected with a fictional world in a whole new way. This identification with a main character and its intensity varies across video game genres. I would argue that we can expose these different strategies by men or women players, heterosexual or non-heterosexual players and consequently we can speak about subversive or

even queer playing (whether conscious or not). According to Donna Haraway (2013), the connection between the players and their avatars can be described as a Cyborg. It is not only a game character, but the players themselves and their identities, their own imperfect bodies expanded or exceeded within the fictional world. Playing video games becomes a potential practice of identity fragmentation.

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Affective space, affective politics:  
Understanding political emotion in cyber China

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The original dream of the Internet as an open, universally accessible medium enjoyed by everyone led this technology intimately to interweave with the culture of freedom and democracy, which has a special significance for a country like China. The emergence and application of participatory media further boost academia's passion for analyzing the scenario of digital politics. The rise of participatory culture requires us to show more concern about the effort each ordinary netizen contributes to generating and shaping the current situation as well as how they experience such an ecology. The term 'experience' here should not only refer to external behaviors, but also to psychological states such as feelings and emotions that people go through when engaging in certain activities, and this is where this work comes in.

Due to its 'ontology' based in Confucian political philosophy and Maoist theories, one can never fully grasp the picture of Chinese politics without understanding the dynamics of emotion. Thanks to the affective turn in political and sociological studies, recent discussions about politics and emotion have been set free from the restriction of 'the rational man model' and the limitation of a patronized viewpoint towards emotions, arguing that emotions are not just episodic disrupts of politics but essential to politics. The emotionally saturated features of cyberspace have further accelerated the 'affective' or even 'seduc-

tive' trend of digital politics: emotions have been witnessed not only as performative factors embedded in texts, images, and videos, but also as dynamics circulating vividly in various types of political interaction and activities taking place in the digital era.

In a broader sense, this work highlights the very important relationship between emotion and digital politics, and narrows down its focus to the case of China. Specifically speaking, four research questions are further delivered: i) What kind of emotion is displayed in political activities in cyber China, ii) How is the emotion presented and performed during those activities, iii) What factors, for example, the characters of the digital platform where those interactions are placed, the very specific Chinese digital culture, and the socio-cultural, political and economic dynamics of modern China, might contribute to the generation, formation and shaping of the emotion, iv) How might the emotion influence the political culture in cyber China? In order to empirically address those questions, I further focus my analysis on four cases representing different topics under the big theme 'politics', and locates my examination in three public, non-governmental Chinese cyber forums. Here I regard online postings as 'frozen moments among the continuous stream' of online political interactions and activities, and thus will collect a certain number of them for further analysis.

For methodological considerations, rather than offering an expansive, panoramic, and systematic description of what documentary source contains, an intensive and detailed discourse analysis will be conducted. The relationship between emotion and discourse has been scrutinized in previous scholarship, arguing that discourses have the capacity to perform different emotions, while emotions are integral parts of everyday discourse to describe and account for things. However, there hasn't been a clear methodological approach which incorporates politics, emotion, and discourse together. On the one hand, for political discourse analysis, most of its frameworks aim at examining how political arguments are established logically and reasonably, and thus leaves little space for emotions to be involved. Discursive psychology, on the other hand, examines empirically how emotions are invoked, produced, and performed within discourses, but the knowledge it offers mostly focuses on the linguistic level, and therefore is limited to presenting the interaction between emotions and the underlying social and political forces. As an exploratory research, this research intends to investigate a methodological framework which incorporates the heritage of political discourse analysis, discursive psychology, and critical discourse analysis together in order to better analyze political emotions in the digital era. Later on, a certain number of semi-structured, Skype-based, in-depth interviews with ordinary participators will take place in order to better put those emotions back into their social, cultural, and political contexts.

## Organisational communication and 360-degree evaluation: What type of communication is used by leaders?

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Organisational communication and performance appraisal have a central role in organisations, because they promote organisational effectiveness (Proctor/Doukakis, 2003). However, there are not many studies about these two themes. In this study, we aim to understand how the application of a specific performance evaluation methodology (i.e., 360-degree evaluation) may influence organisational communication. More specifically, we would like to know how this type of evaluation may influence the leader's communication and how employees communicate with each other and with the leaders. 360-degree evaluation is different from the traditional evaluation, because it considers more than one appraiser - colleagues evaluation; self-evaluation and customer evaluation (Brutus/Gorriti, 2005).

Some authors argue that 360-degree evaluation may become useful for reducing communicative distortion, because the distribution of power in organisations contributes to the modification of leader's forms of action (Letchfield and Bourn, 2011). This equity of power may help support communication by the leaders (Czech and Forward, 2010). In addition, it is also known that 360-degree evaluation may be responsible for a more horizontal organisational communication. This horizontal communication is advantageous, because it allows better interaction among employees, and therefore greater trust between them (Mamatoglu, 2008). Considering the information mentioned above, this study aims to understand how 360-degree evaluation contributes to the adoption of support communication, by the leaders. Furthermore, it is important to understand what would be the attitudes and behaviors of subordinates (e.g. voice behavior, silence behavior, commitment, satisfaction, trust and cynicism) after this communication has been applied. The central aim is develop a theoretical model that may explain what type of communication is used by leaders, after the application of 360-degree evaluation and what could be their implications for certain attitudes and behaviors among employees. In this sense, this investigation will deal with different phases, considering different goals for each one. In an exploratory phase we will try to define the organisational communication and 360-degree evaluation and try to understand the role of 360-degree evaluation in organisational communication. For this, we will apply 25 exploratory interviews with experts (this study is already being applied).

After this first exploratory phase and we have considered the information collected for the literature review, we will start building the theoretical model to understand what type of communication is used by the leaders after applying 360° evaluation, and subordinates behave and what their attitudes are. Finally, the model will be tested through a quantitative study.

## Being political in media spaces

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My PhD project is concerned with ways of being political in the media. By studying the ways in which political activists are positioned in media discourses and in the symbolic and imaginary spaces of the media I am interested in the practices and ideologies related to participatory activism in and through the media (Carpentier, 2011). I am doing this by exploring the ways activists experience their relationship to media and mediation as well as through studying how different media discourses (for example, news discourse) create subjects or subject positions out of activist practices. Through studying a few different actors who are organised differently as well as employing different media strategies I attempt to explore new ways of understanding political media subjectivities (Dahlgren, 2013; Dahlgren/Alvares, 2013).

In studying media text as well as in-depth interviews the project is concerned with analyzing possible and articulated modes of identification processes (Wetherell, 1998; Wood, 2010), to grasp the dimensions of media experiences (Coudry, 2000; Silverstone, 1999) related to political practices. Thus, the primary interests are to inquiry aspects of media experience and the ways these experiences can be understood as constitutive for individual, social and political identities.

Empirically the project is constituted around case studies, of which the first is coming close to completion. This first case study is concerned with a group of migrant rights-activists based in Malmö, Sweden. The work with this case will result in two different analyzes, employing different methodological approaches. The first one is a critical discourse analytical study (Fairclough, 1989, 1995; Macgilchrist, 2011) focusing on epistemic and dynamic modalities (Machin/Mayr, 2012) in journalistic texts about the group. As a consequence of such analysis, I discuss how activists are positioned in news discourse in terms of knowledge claims and possibilities of political change. In the second study I analyze interview data collected from interviews with activists. This

analysis has a focus on how they discursively express constitutive aspects of their media experiences, circled around the fear of over-exposure, visibility, empowerment, ethical violence (Butler, 2005) and representation.

The coming task is to finish the work with the first case as well as develop strategies for choosing and working with new relevant case studies within the project that are complementary and consistent with the project's broader aims.

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PSB regulation in Poland. Systemizing the transition from state broadcasting to Public Service Broadcasting (1989-2015) as seen from a participatory media governance perspective

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The PhD-project deals with the development of PSB regulation in Poland since the socio-political transition of 1989. It aims at providing systematic evidence of the disproportionate influence on PSB's political-administrative system, as well as portraying alternative forms of governance. This will be discussed in the context of the transformation of statehood, political expansion and co-regulation. Two trends can be identified in Public Service Broadcasting

(PSB) regulations in Poland, which have had a major impact on the operation of the political-administrative system. Firstly, there is a management crisis in the political system in many Central and Eastern European countries which comes from the disproportionately high level of governmental influence on the broadcasting legislation. Secondly, and parallel to the first development, many social scientists in the “democratic west”, in light of growing societal complexity and functional differentiation, began to critically interact with the role of the state as a sole regulator (see Mayntz 2010, p. 39; Papadopoulos 2010, p. 2). Poland was not excluded from the broad developments in the media, i.e. going from a social democratic ideal and welfare-state to a neo-liberal vision of society and the market system (see Jakubowicz 2007, p. 44; Jakubowicz/Sükösd 2008, p. 18). However, civil society organisations such as The Citizens Committee of the public media (Komitet Obywatelski Mediów Publicznych), have also participated in the process of PSB relevant legislation and regulation. Such developments can be embedded within the theoretical framework of participatory democratization (see Crouch 2008), particularly in the media of the participatory Media Governance (see Demirovi/Walk 2011; Donges 2007; Kleinstauber/Nehls 2011).

**Theoretical approach:** The media governance paradigm implies a modified interaction between the political-administrative system and society, and suggests a horizontal shift in the political system towards a political society. To investigate these assumptions within the PSB regulation in Poland, I apply a PSB governance model which encompasses PSB in a network of social systems: economy, politics and society. This model builds upon the assumption that the balance of power between the three variables is essential to the effectiveness and legitimacy of PSB. The model derives from actor-centered institutionalism, and Uwe Schimank’s actor-structure-dynamics model (2010, p. 350) as well as from Patrick Donges’ portrayal of the broadcasting model (2002, p. 113). Both authors deny the participant status to society. It is precisely here that the PSB governance model comes into action.

**Method:**

Starting with the model, which represents PSB regulation within the context of its system environments, I will measure the impact of the different actors (political, economic and social) on PSB regulation within the period of 1989-2015 and systemize this impact along the indicators of the PSB Governance model. For this purpose, I will analyze the relevant legal documents and literature and conduct expert interviews with experts involved. The investigation time points are marked by the milestones of the Broadcasting Act’s amendments and of the attempts to influence the PSB after a change in government. Starting with the periodization prepared in the International Transformation Research as well as the indicators for a successful transformation

of the media system, which was specially prepared for the media sector, they should be extended to modes in the direction of horizontal participation and bottom-up approaches.

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## Censorship resistance: Iranian professional journalists' use of social media as an alternative channel

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Iran is not a free country; media are controlled by the government, and journalists face restrictions and censorship. Also, Iran is not a free country when it comes to the internet. In these circumstances, some Iranian professional dissident journalists use social media as an alternative means to bypass the limitations they face in their daily jobs in the established media, and distribute what is censored and underrepresented in the mainstream media. On the other hand, online activities of journalists are kept under a surveillance that poses severe online and offline security risks on them; this may also provide a reason for some journalists to avoid using social media or to participate with anonymous identities. The main subject of the study is to explore how Iranian professional journalists, working in media inside Iran, utilize digital communication, in particular, social media, as an alternative channel to challenge mainstream media publishing. The study also seeks to find out how social media offer Iranian journalists opportunities to bypass governmental control and mainstream media censorship, how their personal and professional lives are affected by their usage and why some Iranian journalists avoid utilizing social media.

The importance of this study lies in the particular state of freedom of expression, journalism and media in Iran as a non-democratic context. Another important aspect of this research is that it offers journalists a chance to use their own voices to complement the already existing literature. In addition to the theoretical contribution of the study, the findings will also help Iranian journalists gain a better understanding of their situation, thus empowering them to operate freely without fear and serve public interest.

The theoretical framework of the study is based on the theories of "alternative media" as the media in an antagonism relationship to mainstream media. The theoretical framework also includes the previous literature on alternative media practices as a form of resistance to censorship, hegemony and power. Previous literature on alternative journalism practices through social media in authoritarian contexts as well as the literature on freedom of expression and safety of journalism in digital communication will also be reviewed.

For this study a qualitative research method has been chosen. Since the aim of the research is to gain an understanding of the journalists' experiences, the method for collecting the main material of the study is face to face, in-depth, and semi-structured interviews with about 40 journalists who work in media inside Iran. The data will be analyzed through thematic analysis method.

Exploring the role of social media in the dissemination of news regarding civil actions in the UK and how it can influence feelings of empowerment and political activism.

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Social media is rapidly becoming one of our main sources of information regarding current affairs and social issues. However, this information is not free from interpretation and the way agenda setting news organisations present social events such as protests can have a significant effect on people's understanding of the events covered and the role of the individual within the democratic system (van Dijk, 1995). Existing discussions have focused on the growing usage of social media and how this in turn affects traditional media platforms and outlets (Papacharissi, 2010), and its role as a tool for organising civic activities such as debates and protests. By utilizing a three tiered design incorporating both quantitative (Content analysis and questionnaires) and qualitative (IPA interviews) methods, this project addresses the relationship between user uploaded stories, those regulated by mainstream news organisations and civic engagement. The population targeted within this project was that of British Nationals aged 18-25 due to their associated political apathy (Armstrong, 2005). The project focuses on the role of agenda setting news organisations such as the "BBC" and "The Times" due to the perception within the academic forum that these still remain the primary agenda setting platforms (Fuchs/Pfetsch, 1996; Walgrave/Van Aelst, 2006) and the topics covered by these organisations are still considered to be integral to formulating public priorities (Cohen, 1963; McCombs/Shaw, 1972). Further justification for the target population is in relation to their adoption of digital media forums and the correlation between this adoption and the appearance of positive behaviours associated with political engagement in a number of areas (Bakker/de Vreese, 2011). Furthermore, specified internet use can be used to generate a model predicting social capital in those under 35 (Shah, Kwak/Holbert, 2001), highlighting its potential importance in reducing apathy in the population identified previews. Findings thus far have been indicative of those demonstrated by Levy and Rickard (1982) in that exposure to news stories associated with traditional news organisations facilitate a level of apathy with the audience which is correlated with a distinct mistrust of both the news organisation's coverage of an event and the politicians responsible to various national initiatives.

## Intercultural management and communication: Essential tools in today's global market for managers and organisations

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In the last decades, managers in Portugal have been dealing with the increasingly important need to internationalize their organisations, largely due to the impact that the global crisis has had on a small economy. As a consequence, we have witnessed a large increase in foreign investment and trade. Portuguese industry has been seeking global clients and partners worldwide. But cultural differences have proved to be a challenge difficult to overcome, and have had significant impacts on the people and companies involved.

Furthermore, it has thus become imperative that Portuguese managers explore new markets to promote their products and services in other countries. These facts have contributed to the emergence of a new manager profile. The focus of this research will be on three types of managers: top managers, middle managers and first line managers. In addition to their daily routines, these global managers have to face adversity and several cultural challenges while undertaking an international negotiation; they are faced with the need to develop critical cultural skills to be able to negotiate.

This Ph.D project addresses why acquiring intercultural competence is important and how it helps the efforts of Portuguese industry. Specifically, examination of how intercultural skills can help the negotiation processes, places this analysis in the context of Portuguese culture and industry. It also addresses the challenges of the theoretical articulation between management, leadership skills and communication, essential tools for the success of an international negotiation process, and will establish that intercultural management skills are fundamental for this new type of global manager, whose job it is to interact with diverse cultures. Such skills strongly benefit the new global managers' professional and organisational performance, and are key for the success of their business relations.

We will perform several exploratory interviews with top managers that have been doing business worldwide in the last five years. In those interviews we will obtain data to answer the main question: what is the profile of the global manager whose leadership skills and intercultural communication is adequate to meet the emerging challenges of the new globalization? This data will also assist in developing questions and designing the survey that will be used to validate the initial research question. The goal is to demonstrate that acquisition of intercultural skills benefits these managers and makes their lives – and tasks – easier.

Communicative construction of cultural memory in societies in transition and their diasporic communities: A case study on Vietnam and Vietnamese diaspora in Germany

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The dissertation examines communicative processes of cultural memory in transforming societies and their related diasporic communities. In a case study on Vietnam and the Vietnamese diaspora in Germany this research explores relations between aspects of socio-cultural continuity, change and identity linked to the past. Taking an intergenerational and transcultural perspective, the dissertation addresses the following research questions:

In which way are contents and practices of (media) communication relevant for constituting cultural memory in the transforming society of Vietnam and Vietnamese diasporic communities in Germany? How are these constructed within and across different generations?

In times of peace, economic growth and media development in post-reform Vietnam the governing Communist Party also still seeks legitimacy in the nation's past struggle for liberation. State-regulated mass media, banners and billboards often function as public reminders of historical events. They represent examples of communicative means of the leadership's memory politics and nation-building strategies in a once divided state. Despite the dissemination of official historical narratives, however, "the past" remains a complex and contested issue within Vietnamese society and beyond in diasporic communities.

Drawing from qualitative communication and biographical research, a set of triangulated methods was developed, combining (1) content analyzes, (2) qualitative in-depth interviews, (3) expert interviews and (4) historical research: (1) explores the relations between journalism and public memory in two state publications in Vietnam (daily "Vietnam News", weekly "Le Courrier du Vietnam") as well as in the television news on "VTV4"; (2) takes an audience studies perspective, investigating media use, media memories, intergenerational communication, perceptions of change and history; (3) deals with journalists as memory agents and (4) examines historical artifacts provided in museums.

During four months of fieldwork in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, 59 interviews with respondents from four generations and nine expert interviews with media professionals were conducted and ten historical institutions were visited to inquire the complex entanglements of publicly mediated memories, individual remembering and communicative engagement of the urban, mid-

dle-class population in Vietnam with the past. Further interviews were conducted with members of Vietnamese communities in Hanover, Leipzig and Berlin (Germany).

Theoretically, the dissertation builds upon mediatization (Krotz 2001; Lundby 2009; Hepp 2013), diaspora and transformation research as well as communication approaches to memory studies (Volkmer 2006; van Dijck 2007; Zelizer/Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2014). On a larger scale it aims at de-westernizing the field and elaborating the potentials of communication research for memory studies and vice versa.

## Newspapers, social media, youth and political participation in Egypt after the 25th January revolution

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My research project discusses the potential effects of newspapers and social media on political participation among youth in Egypt between 2011 and 2015. These effects are investigated from a perspective that does not focus on reading newspapers or using social media as motivators of participation, but as a starting point to understanding the essence of political events in which youth are engaged. This notion is derived from the logic of connective action theory (Bennett/Seegerberg, 2012), which divides political events into two different types: connective and collective. In this context five events that took place in Egypt are to be investigated: June 30th 2013 protests, Muslim Brotherhood protests after July 3rd 2013, the constitutional referendum in January 2014, the presidential election in May 2014 and January 2015 protests. Besides the importance of investigating the nature of these events, the project is also interested in exploring a new notion based on the people themselves as a hub of connective or collective process, in the sense that we investigate whether they tend to be connective or collective people. The project also seeks to examine the nature of interaction between the youth and Egyptian political powers with respect to their using newspapers and social media for political purposes. This can be achieved through investigating some concepts in the context of media and power such as political actors and relational capacity (Castells, 2009).

The project uses two methods to collect the empirical data: first, a survey includes 400 respondents from Egyptian youth aged 18-35; they will be selected from three different regions in Egypt. Through a questionnaire some indicators are taken into account to examine the nature of Egyptian political events such as the political mobilization channels that affected youth to en-

gage in the aforementioned events, information channels, political affiliation and respondents' age. The second method involves interviews through which the study attempts to go beyond the quantitative explanation of media and political participation by explaining the mechanisms of cooperation/conflict between youth and political powers as a result of using newspapers and social media. In this context, a series of semi-structured interviews with a number of Egyptian journalists and political activists will be conducted. These two categories were chosen, because, on the one hand, journalists are more capable of assessing how newspapers handled the political events, and also because a considerable number of them represent somehow the supporting views toward the Egyptian government. On the other hand, political activists are more capable of assessing social media, especially because they intensively use it to spread their ideas.

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## Social media as a political rhetorical arena

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Norway is among the countries in the world where the largest proportion of the population is active in social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The use of social media has also increased dramatically in Norwegian politics in recent years. Although their importance in election campaigns is not yet comparable to traditional mass media, social media's importance as an arena for political communication is rapidly increasing.

Social media has different boundaries and affordances than traditional mass media in terms of interactivity, uptake and identity. As a form of public sphere, often described as a networked public, the new social media are shaped by the blurring of public and private, the loss of common context, the high degree of circulation and reduced control over the message. Social media are also in their essence formed by users' content and participation. This emphasizes the participatory role of citizens as active rhetorical agents, but also increases the much-described complexity, fragmentation, and changeability of the contemporary public sphere.

The main objective of this project is to study how the medial functions of Twitter and Facebook influence rhetorical practice and reception, and thereby describe the characteristics of social media as a new arena for political rhetoric. This includes how active citizens discuss civic issues and express political identity in their everyday discourse. The main focus of the project is thus not formal or institutional political discourse, but the vernacular exchanges of everyday talk about political and civic issues.

Research Question 1: What characterizes social media as political a rhetorical arena in a multi-party parliamentary system like Norway?

Research Question 2: How do active citizens engage in exchanges surrounding political and civic issues in social media? And how do they express political identity and values?

Research Question 3: What characterizes the rhetorical debate in social media, in terms of argumentation norms, style, salience of topics etc.?

Methodology: The research questions will be explored through a two-step method of analysis. The first step involves semi-structured in-depth interviews (1 hr) with key informants from each medium. The second step is qualitative rhetorical analysis guided by insights from the interviews and the sample texts. Based on their experience from the study thus far, the informants will typically be political pundits, journalists, politicians, bloggers, academics and laymen from different sides of the political spectrum. The case studies will typically pursue rhetorical characteristics like the style of wit and humor in social media, the personal action frames of value issues, recursive argumentation strategies, etc.

“Rhetorical arena” is the central analytical concept in the dissertation. This is an attempt to bridge the concepts of rhetorical agency and rhetorical situations in a coherent analytical approach based on sociological structuration theory. The idea is that rhetorical arenas can be analyzed through adjusted concepts of modalities of structuration: perceived affordances, roles and relations, discursive schemes, and social norms.

Theory: The main theoretical framework of the dissertation is contemporary rhetorical theory, public sphere theory and deliberative theory, including more recent contributions addressing the challenges of the new media ecology.

## Making free culture: Making technology and visual media in the domain of digital commons

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My project is about the cultural significance of techno-artistic practices centered on building and circulating independent media production infrastructures and content in the domain of digital media commons. It is also an attempt to expand the ways in which media production could be theorized within the field of media and communication studies by adding perspectives and ideas on technology from the domains of Science and Technology Studies (STS), cultural studies, software studies, and the philosophy of technology.

Starting with a grounded approach and multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995), I engage empirically with an ethnographic exploration of the largest 3D computer graphics community and animation producers in the domain of commons, namely Blender and Blender Institute at its head office in Amsterdam and their latest film production “Gooseberry”. I will also investigate its counterpart from the 2D computer graphics field through the Synfig community and the film production “Morevna” in Southern Siberia, Russia.

By studying the production specifics and the processes of making meaning in these communities and film projects, I attempt to address four key questions. The first one relates to the ways in which different types of value are created and negotiated through the production of open-sourced animation films. Specifically, I explore the value of using, developing and distributing free and open source software in open-sourced cultural production – value for the animation film producers, the broader Blender and Synfig communities, and generally the domain of visual culture production.

Secondly, I investigate the value and role of exposing the production processes, the labor and artwork created to the broader field of visual culture production. I attempt to complicate the discourse around sharing media as commons by using Baudrillard’s work on symbolic production, in particular the idea of the gift as ambiguous, representing positive communication and agonistic confrontation.

Then I address the question of how the different degrees of control over technology relate to the possibilities for media producers to exercise different degrees of creative autonomy, and lastly, how the practices of production of digital visual media commons are organised in relation to participation.

The project aims to move away from earlier conceptualizations of practices of digital media commons, and free and open source software production as ideological or anti-capitalist. I argue instead for a more pragmatic conceptualization, also anchored in the history of computer graphics development.

## Digital storytelling for community engagement

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New digital media have deeply changed people's media habits, transforming them from passive consumers to active producers of contents. Social Media and Web 2.0 applications have modified the paradigm of producer-audience: from one-to-many to many-to-many, as people are creating different kinds of content and are sharing it on the Internet and social media, blurring the boundaries between producers and audience. In this context, the term 'Digital Storytelling' refers to the creative practice of "ordinary people" (i.e. amateurs) who tell their own stories using digital tools and languages, and share them through digital media.

This research analyzes Digital Storytelling from the perspective of the Design domain and focuses on the process of engagement of people in a community through storytelling, in which the final output – digital stories as media content – cannot be considered as an effective communication product: it gains its value for those who participate in the creation process, but it lacks coherence and autonomy as a strategic communication product. The core hypothesis is that a design approach to digital storytelling, could contribute to adding value and meaning to community digital stories, focusing on both the co-creative process of content production, and the narrative quality of the final product, helping ordinary stories emerge from the amateur dimension and disseminating worthy contents in the new media.

Reflecting on this critical issue, this research focuses on two fundamental questions: 1) What is the relationship between the co-creative dimension of digital story-making processes and the quality of the derived products? 2) How could design contribute to facilitating co-creative story production processes?

Mainly involving the local community of a suburban area of the city of Milan in Italy, this project belongs to the area of research through design, in which the design of tools, processes and methods for digital storytelling are tested, adapted and modified step by step during the research process. Considering both the theoretical and applied levels, the methodology is based on different research strategies: a first phase is based on a literature review and

the analysis of the two pioneer case studies in the field of Digital Storytelling, together with a map of best practices for digital storytelling projects, which aims at exploring how participatory creative processes have been elaborated into autonomous digital projects. The following phase draws on the strategy of participatory action-research for the definition of a designer-facilitated process for digital storytelling, which includes a set of tools and co-design practices. The participatory action research project builds upon the idea of experimenting tools and practices for co-designing digital stories with both designers and non-designers, working communication design students and members of the local community of citizens.

The main expected result for this research is an analysis of both the content of stories and a designer-facilitated process of story-making, which might prove useful for articulating some guidelines for new and innovative digital media products. These products would then provide value to community creativity and consider people as both authors and characters of fictional stories based on reality.

## Media audiences and democracy in Croatia: Social stratification as a predictor of media use and its role for political participation

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Political communication in new democracies has mostly prompted research within normative assumptions of democratization theory (Voltmer, 2006) and is criticized for simply copying research agendas from more developed democracies (Barnhurst, 2011). In this PhD project, I plan to use mainstream political communication concepts, media malaise and virtuous circle, in a post-socialist setting - new EU member state Croatia. However, I plan to critically reflect on the theoretical model. The media malaise and virtuous circle should be revised for the contemporary media environment by employing non-mediacentric views or user centred approaches (like media repertoires, in Hasebrink and Domeyer, 2012). I would like to analyze the effects of media use on political participation by studying the position an audience member takes in the complex social structure. With every technological innovation that reshapes the media market, social stratification remains, and class, gender or age influence media reception (Livingstone/Couldry/Markham, 2007, p. 25). Social stratification of media use will be analyzed using Bourdieu's concepts of capital and habitus, which are seen as useful to addressing cross-media use in con-

temporary media environments and “systematically describe the interrelation between the individual’s media use and his/her societal position in a structured society” (Weiss, 2000/2001, in Hasebrink and Domeyer, 2012, p. 763).

Following Prior (2007), who found widening information gaps in “high choice” environments, I expect there will be significant differences in information repertoires between users depending on their socio-demographic traits and acquired economic, cultural and social capital. Cultural capital as an element of competence is expected to be one of the strongest predictors of differences in media repertoires. If cultural capital is missing, media repertoires would have negative correlation to political engagement, following the media malaise theory. In the case of acquired higher cultural capital, media repertoires should act as a certain “extension” of cultural capital in Bourdieu’s sense, and would enable the “virtuous circle”.

Research will be made through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell, Plano Clark, 2011, p. 82). Quantitative analysis is based on data gained from the representative survey performed in 2014. Semi-structured interviews with selected respondents from the subsample of survey respondents will follow up to complement and give more detail to survey results, but priority will be given to the quantitative part of the research. In the qualitative phase of the research, “active” and “disaffected” citizens will be analyzed to better understand implications of differences in media use for political participation.

Private and political in online political communication:  
Comparative analysis of political actors on social media, taking Barack Obama, David Cameron and Ivo Josipovi as examples

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The phenomenon of personalization of politics has been widely acclaimed and written about in recent years. Use of social media by politicians, which had a boom with Obama in 2008, has also been explored. However, little is known in what manner the personalization of politics as a phenomenon is present on social media.

Employing a mix methods approach – quantitative content analysis and qualitative text analysis, Facebook posts and citizens’ comments will be analyzed in order to trace the phenomenon of personalization of politics on social media in three different democracies: the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Croatia. Emphasis in the research will be on one dimension of

personalization which is called the privatization of politics, whereby privatization will be conceptualized on two different levels: 1. as a part of the political communication strategy of political actors, 2. as an incentive/stimulus for citizens' engagement online.

Relying on the idea that internet can help engage citizens in politics and that an ever increasing interest of the public for the personal life of politicians can increase citizens' interest in politics, we shall try to reveal how these concepts work when they come together on one platform. By looking at three case studies, Facebook fan pages of the president of United States Barack Obama, the prime minister of Great Britain David Cameron and former Croatian president Ivo Josipovi, we shall try to answer the following research questions:

Research Question: What is the nature and level of personalization of political actors on their official Facebook fan pages? Sub-research question: To which extent are citizens willing to engage with leaders' fan pages and to what extent may their engagement be explained by personal and private cues communicated by the leaders via their social media profiles?

This study will also question whether online forms of participation can have any relevant impact on the political decision making process. Contribution to the field will go between the theories saying that "internet is engaging already engaged citizens" and those who propose definitions of "clicktivism", "couch potato democracy" ect. As a consequence, a new definition of a certain form of participation will be derived from the research.

## Online news coverage of government health policy: Powerful sources, time constraints and the role of specialized reporting

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Official and elite sources have always sought to play dominant roles in shaping news content. The pressure of daily news production also ensures communication professionals and those supplying information subsidies have become important pillars of many journalists' work routines. However, for journalists and news producers, online formats offer new technological capabilities, spatial freedom and unrestricted access to alternative sources. This suggests there is the possibility for new voices and narratives - traditionally omitted from mainstream coverage - to be heard.

This study, using health policy stories on online news websites as its focus, considers: whether mainstream general news reporting is evolving to include alternative perspectives; what factors are influencing the narratives and

frames; and to what extent source networks are being developed and used in generating story content. It considers what variation exists between the content produced in net-native environments and “legacy” organisations, as well as variations between specialized beat reporters and general reporters.

This mixed-methods, empirical research uses two phases of content analysis over a 14-week period, looking at five news organisations:

(i) an initial quantitative phase to gather story data and account for the sources used; and (ii) a secondary phase which will use an ethnographic content analysis approach on clusters of related stories to describe what variation exists between them in terms of sources and form, where they originated, and how they developed over a number of days.

Following this content analysis stage, interviews will be carried out with journalists who wrote some of the coded stories. These interviews will be used to determine what pressures, source relations and work routines influence a final news story. They will also consider the journalists’ role perception and their attitudes towards their work environment. Interviews will also be sought with communications specialists from relevant lobby groups or state departments, to consider how they feel their messages are being carried, or challenged, within media content.

The research will draw on literature on normative media theory, the internet’s democratizing potential, powerful primary definers, changing journalistic roles - in particular despecialization among reporters - and the political economy of online news. It also deals with homogenization of content, inter-media agenda setting, and information subsidies. Using structuration theory, the research also considers the relationship between structure and agency; the limitations of the environment a journalist works within, as well as the possibilities for a journalist to alter these structures.

## The impact of new technology on news production processes in the modern newsroom

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This project provides an ethnographic account of newsroom culture in two Kurdish news channels. The cases cover a modern digital newsroom and a more traditional analogue newsroom. The two channels are KNN and GK in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The key goal is to explore and compare the role of different news technologies - digital AVID News and more traditional analogue methods - in everyday workplace practice and culture. The ethnographic study draws on in-depth interviews with journalists in the newsroom, non-participant observation, collected documentation and secondary data.

The framework of Kurdish news production provides a number of key contexts. These include the recent implementation of state of the art digital news production alongside the existence of older newsroom formats. At the same time there has been an expansion of TV channels and media sources. This context provided a unique opportunity to comparatively explore the development of new forms of newsroom practice and culture. Hence, the research was able to compare both the case of the modern digital and the analogue newsroom. In this way, the research is able to overview the two different principles of news-work culture and environments.

The study draws upon the theory of Communities of Practice (CoP) developed by anthropologists Etienne Wenger (1998) and Jean Lave (1991). The CoP approach provides a focus on issues of workplace culture training, shared history of learning and shared knowledge. The newsroom communities of practice offer the members routes and methods to develop their skills and experiences within the workplace. For example, the newsroom CoP provides opportunities for the workers to engage in daily interaction, processes of learning, joint working, shared practice, and joint projects in the workplace. In this manner, the newsroom becomes a focus of social activities and action in order to reach their workplace goals. Hence, the workers by engaging in the social activities are able to develop an identity within the newsroom community. Moreover, in this context the newsroom members share their goals, history of learning and experience in order to develop and maintain their community. The daily interaction of workers provides the community with a dynamic social situation that can: develop the skills of workers; help exchange information, and knowledge; and story sharing. Additionally, the new technological tools play a role in developing the community of practice and build the members' relationships within their physical or virtual workplace. For instance, the technological

tools give the workers a better means to communicate between themselves, to exchange information or documents, to send messages, to make use of database services and to build a virtual community.

The Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Bruno Latour, 1992; Michel Callon, 1992; John Law, others) provides the best tools to carry out an investigation of socio-technical phenomena in the modern newsroom. ANT is useful to explore the interactions between technology use and workplace cultures within the workplace network. The use of ANT provides a basis for understating both the workers and the technologies as actors (the human and nonhuman) in the system of news production. ANT offers the researcher a means to explain the infrastructure of the newsroom network and the shape of the network in the workplace. ANT provides the chance to describe in more detail the connections between the human and nonhuman actors in the network. This project argues that ANT can propose the ontology of news production and the methods used based on actions within the modern newsroom network. ANT focuses more on explanation of the assembly of a heterogeneous network in the newsroom by understanding the connection between the different actors and roles and the position of each in the operation of news production. In this context ANT helps to explore the wide-ranging heterogeneous network in the newsroom community. Additionally, the project is based on grounded theory which was used to analyze the data. Through this approach the researchers are able to obtain an indicative method in order to create a systematic analysis for generating knowledge.

China's public diplomacy through media strategy in Africa:  
How to cultivate a positive national image by exerting  
inter-media agenda setting effects on African reporting of  
China's engagement in Africa

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China is becoming a prominent player on the African continent. China's engagement in Africa has elicited much scholarly and journalistic attention. However, China's involvement is far from neutral and triggers intense controversy. Whether China is a foe or friend, imperialist or ally and what the political implications are for some authoritarian African countries is discussed by media around the world. In order to disseminate a positive image of China, broadcast a mutually beneficial relationship and advance new ways of looking at Africa,

the Chinese government has decided to employ mediated public diplomacy to win hearts and minds on the continent. This is achieved through China's noticeable presence in the African media sphere. Several state-owned Chinese media have established branches in Africa. Enjoying abundant funds and firm support from the government, Chinese media organisations devote themselves to becoming the primary information source providers of the African media. Many scholars are concerned that the news produced by China is not trustworthy and Chinese media expansion in Africa will eventually encroach on the hard-earned media freedom of African countries.

Inter-media agenda setting is utilized to examine the impact of Chinese media on African media. Agenda setting has two levels. The first-level of agenda setting is talking about the transfer of issues and objects, which emphasizes the media's role in telling the audiences "what to think about"; and the second-level of agenda setting is the transfer of numerous attributes, which underlines media's function of telling the audiences "how to think about" (McCombs/Shaw, 1993). In March 2013, China's President Xi made an official visit to three African countries, Tanzania, South Africa and the Republic of Congo. This visit offers a great opportunity to examine the effectiveness of China's mediated public diplomacy. To be more specific, in this study, the purpose is to examine the transfer of salience of issues and attributes between Xinhua News Agency African branch and African newspapers. The following three questions are studied. First, what is the strategy used by China to engage in African media space? Second, is there any first-level agenda building effect by the Xinhua news agency reports on the Tanzanian and South African news media? Third, is there any second-level of agenda building effect by the Xinhua news agency reports on the Tanzanian and South African news media? Quantitative content analysis is utilized. In each African country, an elite newspaper and a tabloid newspaper are selected to collect news articles. Three time periods are chosen. Two cross-lagged correlation analyzes are performed. In the coding process, three variables: issue, affective and substantive attributes are coded. Cross-lagged correlations and the Rozelle-Campbell baseline are chosen in this study as statistical analysis models.



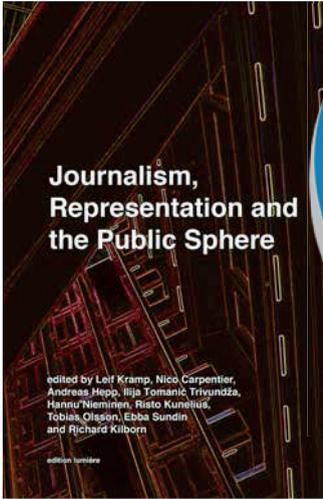


# #SuSo15









# European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School



„Journalism, Representation and the Public Sphere“. Bremen: edition lumière. 300 pages, ISBN 978-3-943245-37-0, EUR 19,80

It is our pleasure to announce the publication of the 2014 ECREA Summer School Book "Journalism, Representation and the Public Sphere", edited by Leif Kramp, Nico Carpentier, Andreas Hepp, Ilija Tomanic Trivundža, Hannu Nieminen, Risto Kunelius, Tobias Olsson, Ebba Sundin and Richard Kilborn.

The topic "Journalism, Representation and the Public Sphere" is dedicated to the fundamental question: How do journalism, the various representations and public spheres of European cultures and societies change? This volume consists of the intellectual work of the 2014 European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School, organized in cooperation with the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) at the ZeMKI, the Centre for Media, Communication and Information Research of the University of Bremen, Germany. The chapters cover relevant research topics, structured into four sections: "Journalism", "Representations and Everyday Life", "Public Sphere, Space and Politics", "Rethinking Media Studies" and "Academic Practice".

Contributors are (in alphabetical order): Bertrand Cabedoche, Nico Carpentier, Andreas Hepp, François Heinderyckx, Magnus Hoem Iversen, Leif Kramp, Katrin Laas-Mikko, Maria Murumaa-Mengel, Georgina Newton, Hannu Nieminen, Alexandra Polownikow, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Irena Reifová, Maria Schreiber, Saiona Stoian, Ebba Sundin, Simone Tosoni and Eimante Zolubiene. The book additionally contains abstracts of 41 doctoral projects that were discussed at the 2014 European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School.

The European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School brings together a group of highly qualified doctoral students as well as senior researchers and professors from a diversity of European countries. The main objective of the fourteen-day summer school is to organize an innovative learning process at doctoral level, focusing primarily on enhancing the quality of individual dissertation projects through an intercultural and interdisciplinary exchange and networking programme. This said, the summer school is not merely based on traditional postgraduate teaching approaches like lectures and workshops. The summer school also integrates many group-centred and individual approaches, especially an individualized discussion of doctoral projects, peer-to-peer feedback — and a joint book production.

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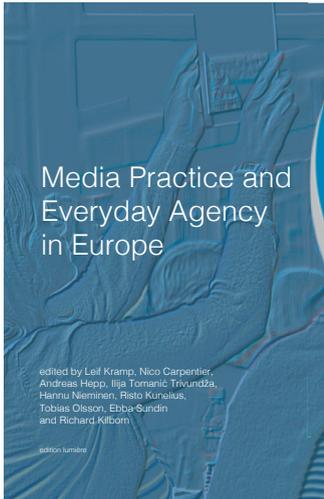
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# European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School



„Media Practice and Everyday Agency in Europe“. Bremen: edition lumière.  
375 pages, ISBN 978-3-943245-28-8, EUR 19,80

It is our pleasure to announce the publication of the 2013 ECREA Summer School Book "Media Practice and Everyday Agency in Europe", edited by Leif Kramp, Nico Carpentier, Andreas Hepp, Ilija Tomanić Trivundža, Hannu Nieminen, Risto Kunelius, Tobias Olsson, Ebba Sundin and Richard Kilborn.

The topic "Media Practice and Everyday Agency in Europe" is dedicated to the fundamental question: How is media change related to the everyday agency and sense making practices of the people in Europe? This volume consists of the intellectual work of the 2013 European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School, organized in cooperation with the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) at the ZeMKI, the Centre for Media, Communication and Information Research of the University of Bremen, Germany. The chapters cover relevant research topics, structured into four sections: "Dynamics of Mediatization", "Transformations", "Methods", and "The Social".

Contributors are (in alphabetical order): Aukse Balčytienė, Bertrand Cabedoche, Nico Carpentier, Fausto Colombo, Nick Couldry, Benjamin de Cleen, Rosa Franquet, Ane Møller Gabrielsen, François Heinderyckx, Andreas Hepp, Anne Kaun, Erik Knudsen, Leif Kramp, Friedrich Krotz, Risto Kunelius, Sonia Livingstone, Knut Lundby, Anna-Laura Markkanen, Dorothee Christiane Meier, Maria Murumaa-Mengel, Hannu Nieminen, Tobias Olsson, Svenja Ottovordemgentschenfelde, Riitta Perälä, Irena Reifová, Minna Saariketo, Andra Siibak, Ingvild Kvale Sørenssen, Christian Schwarzenegger, and Ilija Tomanić Trivundža.

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