

PRESENT SCENARIOS OF MEDIA PRODUCTION AND ENGAGEMENT

Edited by Simone Tosoni, Nico Carpentier,
Maria Francesca Murru, Richard Kilborn,
Leif Kramp, Risto Kunelius, Anthony McNicholas,
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edition lumière

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Introduction: Researching Present Scenarios of Media Production and Engagement

*Simone Tosoni, Maria Francesca Murru, Laura Peja
and Nico Carpentier*

1. About the book

This book, the twelfth volume of the Researching and Teaching Communication Book Series, launched in 2006, stems from the combined intellectual work of the lecturers, the students and the alumni of the 2016 edition of the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School (SuSo). The main sections of this collective endeavor aims to shed light on key issues of the present scenarios of media production and engagement, and in particular on transmedia communication (Part I, Section I), on the current strategies and transformations within media and cultural industries (section II), on the politics of representation in contemporary media discourse (section III), as well as on some of the methodological challenges media scholars have to face in doing research (section IV). At the same time, the book gives an account of the work done at the Summer School, and in particular of the plurality of research interests and analytical perspectives that the SuSo community values as its main asset. The European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School, in fact, is run by a consortium of 21 European universities, and brings together PhD students coming every year from more than 30 different European and extra-European institutions: it therefore represents an arena where different disciplinary traditions and methodological backgrounds in media and communication studies can get in touch, debate and cooperate to advance our understanding of media systems and communication processes. The reader can get an insight of the richness and variety of the different perspectives in dialogue within SuSo from the second part of the book, dedicated – as it is customary in the series – to the PhD projects' abstracts of the students participating to the summer school. Altogether, these abstracts represent a good sample of the ongoing research of the next generation of media scholars, and an overview of the current trends in media and communication studies.

Six among these students—Julie Escurignan, Leandro Augusto Borges Lima, Naima Huassain, Anna Grøndahl Larsen, Justyna Pierzynska and Yuliya Lakew—have been selected to develop their research into a full paper. Their work features in this book together with eight lecturers' chapters and with the three chapters from SuSo alumni (Tania Lucia Cobos, Scott Ellis, Johanna Möller) that were selected through an open call.

The first thematic section deals with present scenarios of convergence and transmedia communication. **Julie Escurignan** opens Section I, interrogating the transmedia franchise *Game of Thrones* through a semiotic approach, to clarify how the visual identity of the brand is created and sustained across different media and products – the HBO TV show, adapted since 2011 from the novels by George R. R. Martin, and video games, dedicated websites and collectibles. *Games of Thrones'* visual identity emerges as coherent, with the notable exception of the product's licensed merchandising. This observation suggests interesting questions about the tension between the strategy of valorization of a transmedia franchise through third parties licensing, and the firm control on the franchise needed to articulate a coherent transmedia identity and storytelling. The second chapter, by **Simone Tosoni** and **Mariana Ciancia**, moves the focus of the section to user-generated content production, and in particular to vidding, the practice of synchronizing a song with excerpts of one or more visual texts (usually a TV series or a cult movie), so to confer new meanings to the video materials. The adopted practice-centred approach drives the authors to focus on the material and digital artefacts employed in vidding, on the competences required by the practice, and on its symbolic meanings. In particular, the analysis shows the transformations foregone by the practice when it moves from the fandom realm to the realm of video making. **Sonia Livingstone's** chapter presents the findings of a year-long ethnographic research with one class of 13-14 years-old students, investigating the ways in which they appropriate digital media. The author underlines the existence of a deep tension between the young people's desire to find in digital media new spaces of personal autonomy and agency, and the attempt by parents and teachers to deploy these same media normatively, in order to “*shape young people's present achievements and future prospects*”. Finally, **Leandro Augusto Borges Lima** addresses videogames – in particular, the *Mass Effect* trilogy – from the understudied perspective of political communication. The author, in fact, underlines how videogames can be part of “*scenes of dissensus*”, being political in three distinct axes: production, content and consumption. *Mass effect* would allow the articulation, at all these levels, of a specific political discourse on gender, as shown by the author through content and gameplay analysis, and through interviews with players.

Section II of the book deals with media and cultural industries, their structural transformations and their strategies in the present media system. In the first chapter, **Montse Bonet** offers an overview of the early years of the study of political

economy of communication and culture in Spain. This kind of contribution makes available at an international level the research done in non-Anglophone contexts, and is much needed not only by scholars working on cultural and creative industries, but in all the fields of media studies. Especially in the past decades, a difficult access to international publications and obstacles related to language have in fact hindered non-Anglophone scholars to fully contribute to the international debate: national research traditions in media studies still represent an under known, yet potentially valuable resource for the whole field. Regarding cultural industries, as the author resumes, *“the insistence that the critical analysis of culture and communication should not be separated, the classification and the exhaustive study of each and every one of the cultural industries, the division between industrialized and non-industrialized culture, as well as the defence of public service and critical perspective could be the principal contributions of the Spanish researchers in the early years of democracy – and still today.”* In the second chapter of the section, **Tania Lucía Cobos** focuses on the key topic of the tensions between the interests of news producers and what she calls the “Fifth Estate”: the multinational technological companies on the internet, providing service of news aggregations and distribution like Google news. In this respect, the author talks about “frienemies” to highlight the ambiguity of this relationship, one of symbiosis but also of competition, not rarely giving rise to conflicts and legal actions. The author identifies five areas of potential conflict: technological dependence, distribution of the advertising revenue, competition for the audience, irruption of territories and the subtle or explicit influence on public opinion. In the chapter that follows, **Leif Kramp** addresses the strategy of news media companies to attract young audiences in the German context. Discussing the cases of *VICE Germany* and of *jetzt*, the author shows how journalistic media companies face the intense competition of non-journalistic providers of news and entertainment. In particular, the author shows how the new strategies involve also a relevant organizational restructuration, together with a pursuit of new channels to engage their target (most prominently, social media) and with new editorial approaches (the intentional blurring between news and commentary, for example). This restructuration is particularly related to the institution of editorial teams characterized by a low average age, to reduce the communicative distance with the audiences, but also to valorize the skills in using social media that young journalists share with the target group. In the final chapter of the section **Naima Huassain** interrogates ethnographically the journalism practice in Greenland through the lenses of Bourdieu’s field theory, and in particular through the analytical concepts of *habitus* and *capital*. The author underlines how the understudied case of Greenland must be read in terms of the relationship of dependency, but also of the tensions, between the “*small, exposed and vulnerable*” local journalistic field and the transnational field. While, in fact, “*legislation*

and the organizational structure of the media are inherited, and a flow of Danish visiting journalists and editors keep up norms and the value system of the field", Greenlandic journalists operate in a context with its own specificities, like for example the close tie between reporters and sources of information. Drawing on these empirical observations, the author points also out some possible directions of further development of Bourdieu's original account of the journalistic field.

Section III of the book is dedicated to the politics of representations in contemporary journalism, and it's opened by a chapter by **Anna Grøndahl Larsen** on the representations of foreign fighters (Westerners joining the Islamic State in Syria) in Norwegian media. Based on content analysis and on in-depth interviews with journalists, the chapter describes a representational strategy based on humanization: rather than simply depicting them as dangerous criminals, Norwegian media describe foreign fighter as complex human beings, giving them a detailed story and describing their "path to extremism". This representational strategy would allow to expand the understandings of violent extremism, and to broaden the range of perspectives on the topic within public discourses. The following chapter, by **Justyna Pierzynska**, addresses the construction of brotherhoods of nations in post-Communist media, and in particular in Serbian media. The author shows how the construction of an "*exotic brotherhood*" with different nations of the Caucasus (Georgians, Armenians, Ossetes) should be interpreted in terms of the anti-Westernism of their political orientation and as a way of contrasting the great powers' political strategy in the peripheries such as the Balkans or the Caucasus. Yet, at the same time, the author underlines how these kinds of symbolic brotherhoods would also represent a valuable occasion to overcome nationalism and historical manipulation by fostering new occasions of cultural exchange. In the third chapter of the section **Michael Bruun Andersen** introduces the reader to indexing theory, stating that in those circumstances where the national interests are at stake, most notably in war, media "mirror" political power. At the origin of this phenomenon there would be the dependence of routine news journalism by official sources. This approach is applied and illustrated by an analysis of the media coverage of COP15 – the 15th International summit on climate change organized by the UN in Copenhagen 2009. In the following chapter, **Johanna Möller** investigates how, in Germany, the debate on Edward Snowden's disclosures on NSA surveillance contributed to the de-mystification of discursive myths about technology as invariably promoting "self liberation" and social democratization. Drawing on social constructionist perspectives, the author points out how such a disenchantment would potentially be of great relevance for a more democratic rethinking of the relationship between technology and society, hindered by dominant techno-utopist discourses. Yet, the NSA debate would represent a sort of missed occasion: German newspapers would have not got fully rid of deterministic ways to conceive the relationship between technology and society, conceiving the

former as “black boxed” and, as such, defying at least in part the public political debate. In the final chapter, **Scott Ellis** discusses how media can contribute to create a safe and inclusive environment for LGBT youth, protecting them from bullying and victimization. In a mediatized society, in fact, LGBT identities are in part defined also by media and thought media. Drawing on a small research among higher education students in the US and UK, the author analyses the effectiveness of gay-straight alliances (as well as high-profile campaigns with heterosexual spokespeople, particularly straight men) in improving social inclusion for LGBT.

The fourth and last section addresses issues concerning doing research in media and communications studies, and it deals with methodological problems and with academic research practicalities. The section opens with **Bertrand Cabedoche**, which discusses the differences between common sense and academic knowledge. This very basic issue is of key relevance for any student and researcher moving his/her first steps into media and communication studies, and more in general into any discipline dealing with culture and society. In the second chapter, **Yiannis Christidis** and **Nico Carpentier** present their experimentation with an alternative form of communication of academic knowledge: the sound art composition – or “*Audionces*”, as the authors have named it. After accounting for the production of their *Audionces* as a translation of a pre-existing academic written text, and after discussing the main theoretical issues risen in the process, the authors clarify what in their view are the opportunities that a sonification process offers to academic knowledge: the possibility to target different audiences and the circulation of ideas in societal fields often inaccessible to academia; the enrichment of the original text as a consequence of the combined processes of conceptualization and sonification; the possibility to communicate different things at the same time allowed by the multi-layered nature of the sonic. In the chapter that follows **Yuliya Lakew** discusses about reflexivity in quantitative research, and the need “*to unravel conventions and granted assumptions of media studies as a discipline, reflect upon data’s temporal and spatial components, the subjective position of the researcher, the limits and the meaningfulness of generalizations, and the role of interpretations in statistical analysis*”. Drawing on her research practice, the author convincingly demonstrates the need to extend reflexivity from qualitative research, where it is part of the validation process, to quantitative research, to consider the cost of deriving knowledge from statistical models, in terms of what has been omitted, ignored or not taken into account. Finally, in the chapter closing the section and the first part of the book, **Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt** addresses the present neoliberal academic culture and the problems of time management it implies. The author discusses six time management strategies: working shorter hours, focusing on tasks, sleeping, planning, multitasking and forgiving yourselves if something is not as it should be.

Throughout the book, a series of photographs taken during the programme are also included. Our special thanks goes to François Heinderyckx 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 2016, the Summer School moved for the first time to the University of Sacred Heart in Milan, where it took place from July 25th to August 5th, 2016.

Including the University of Sacred Heart Milan, 22 universities participate in the consortium: Autonomous University of Barcelona (ES), University of Bremen (DE); 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 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 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 globalisation 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 research-

ers 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 rigueur, 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 realise these principles, the fourteen-day 2016 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, where 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 gave the participants more insights into Italy's media structures, politics, cultures and histories.

3. The scholars involved in the Summer School

In 2016, 44 doctoral students participated in the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School, originating from 20 countries: Austria (2), Belgium (8), China (1), Czech Republic (1), Denmark (2), Estonia (1), Finland (2), France (1), Germany (3), India (1), Italy (2), Norway (3), Slovenia (1), Spain (2), Sweden (3), UK (10) and USA (1). All of their abstracts, and a selection of six chapters based on their work, are included in this book.

The blue flow consisted of Jolien van Keulen, Marta Albújar Villarrubia, Diana Livadic, Novella Troianiello, Julie Escurignan, Shant Fabricatorian, Miriam Bartsch, Veera Ehrlén, Yuliya Lakew, Martina Topinkova, Felicitas Schenz, Thanh Loan Ngo Thi, Qiong Dang, Sofie Flensburg and Amy McHugh.

The yellow flow was joined by Christiana Voniati, Ida Vikøren Andersen, Gyorgyi Horvath, Anna Grøndahl Larsen, Diretnan Dusu Bot, Débora Antunes, Maryam Vaziri, Mehtap Çalar, Hannah Grüenthal, Bilal Ayan, Dianjing Li, Leandro Augusto Borges Lima, Demetra Kolakis, Karianne Sjørgård Olsen and Mihael Djukic.

The green flow grouped Marija Skoir, Yingzi Wang, Kate Moffat, Justyna Pierzynska, Sarah Gillaerts, Marlen Komorowski, Pauliina Penttilä, Petre Breazu, Amy Genders, Serena Fossati, Gemma Gómez Bernal, Age Rosenberg, Xiaomin Hu, Philippine Clot, Dan Wang and Naimah Hussain.

The Summer School hosted 20 permanent lecturers from partner universities from all over Europe: Peter Berglez, Michael Bruun Andersen, Bertrand Cabedoché, Roberta Carpani, Nico Carpentier, Fausto Colombo, François Heinderyckx, Maria Heller, Montse Bonet, Richard Kilborn, Risto Kunelius, Sonia Livingstone, Anthony McNicholas, Simone Natale, Hannu Nieminen, Tobias Olsson, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Ilija Tomanić Trivundža, Tomas Trampota, Simone Tosoni and Karsten Wolf. Furthermore, Peter Lunt from the University of Leicester contributed to a workshop with Sonia Livingstone.

In addition to the activities of the Summer School lecturers, the programme included a visit to Triennale Design Museum and Museo del Novecento. This year, Fausto Colombo was the local director of the Summer School, and Simone Tosoni and Maria Francesca Murru were the local organisers. The local team was supported by the international director Nico Carpentier. In addition, François Heinderyckx acted as the ECREA liaison. Richard Kilborn, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Anthony McNicholas, Risto Kunelius, Tobias Olsson, Nico Carpentier 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), social activities;

website, pre-summer school communication, the Summer School book; and the flow-managers/Summer School staff.

The evaluation generated 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 2016 as well as their approachability was appreciated by the participants on nearly the same levels as in the previous years.

The average ratings for the lectures and workshops (1 = poor to 5 = very good) were 3.5 points for lectures and 3.5 points for workshops. In the view of the participants, the mixture of workshops and lectures in the Summer School programme was very well-balanced. The interactivity and the split workshops with half of the groups were highly appreciated.

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.

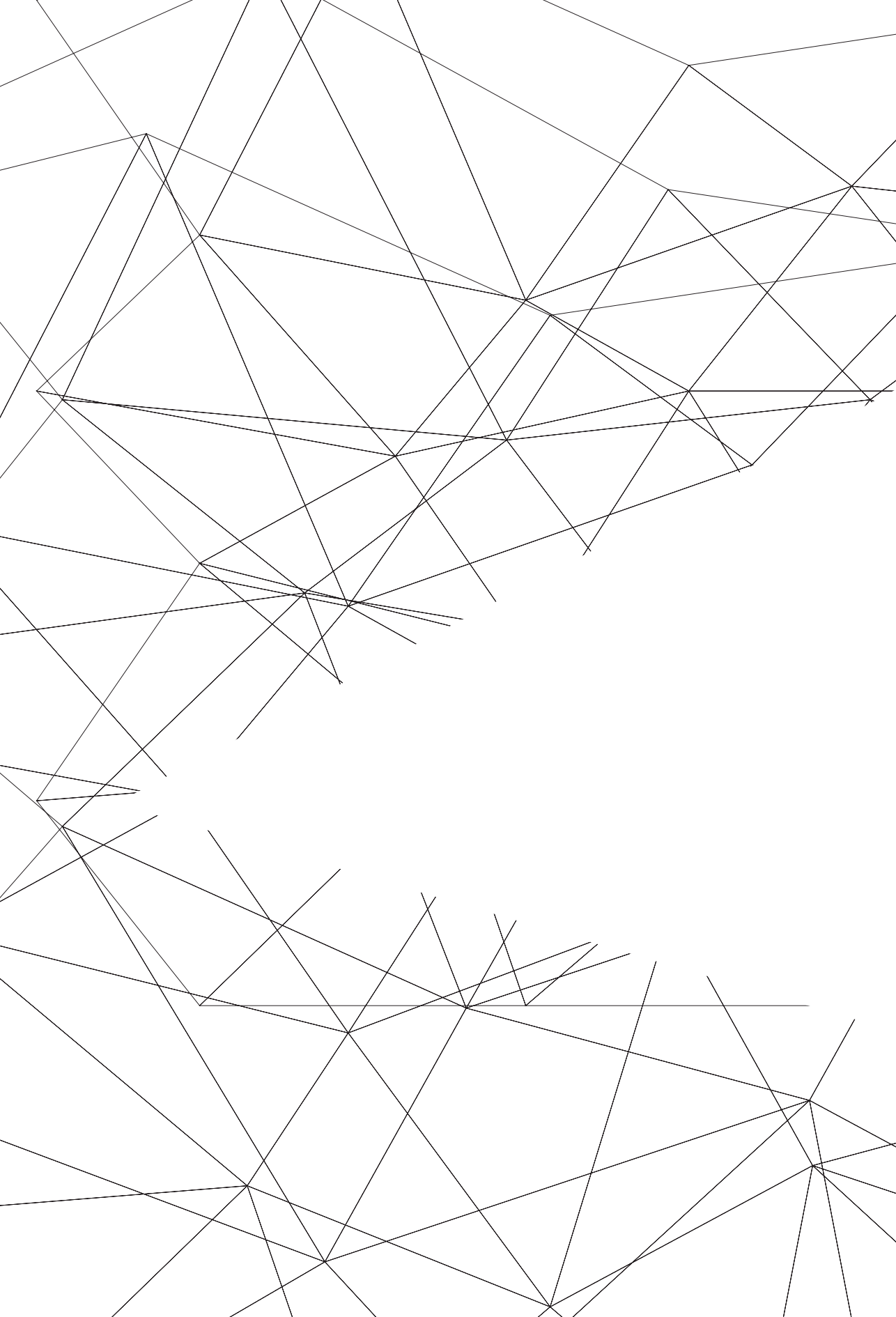
5. Final acknowledgments

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 success of the Suso 2016 has been possible thanks to the organisational and financial support of many institutions. Organisers want to express their gratitude to: the Department of Communication Studies and Performative Arts of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano; Almed – Post-graduate School in Media, Communication and Performative Arts and his Director prof. Ruggero Eugeni, Lifelong Education Office and Educatt – Student Services of the same institution; “I Don’t Want to Be Inactive” Research Network D3.2. on aging, funded by Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore; and Sky Italy.

With its diverse sections and chapters this edited volume shows that the profoundly changing social and cultural environment poses new challenges to media scholars. The continuous effort to analyze these transformations should be combined with the attempt to 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 con-

tribute 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.





PART I



SECTION 1

SCENARIOS OF CONVERGENCE AND TRANSMEDIA COMMUNICATION

Branding *Game of Thrones* Across Media: HBO's Visual Creation of a Brand Identity

Julie Escurignan

Abstract

Starting as a series of fantasy novels by George R. R. Martin in 1996 and adapted as a television drama series by HBO in 2011, *Game of Thrones* is one of the most popular examples of what is sometimes referred to as transmedia narratology. Its storyworld has, namely, expanded across a range of HBO official and licenced products and platforms, from board games to video games, dedicated websites and collectibles. With the series, the network has developed a particular visual identity for the franchise. The aim of this chapter is to uncover the various elements of this visual identity and to discover if the storytelling across the various media platforms matches the visual universe established by the television show, that is to say if the visual elements characteristic of the series can be found across the different media. In other words, is there a coherent identity in all the products associated with HBO's *Game of Thrones* or can we find visual discrepancies in the individual media iterations? To do so, this study will attempt to distinguish the visual features that characterise *Game of Thrones* as a brand. Building on Barthes' semiotic approach (1957), on studies of transmedia narratology (Ryan, 2004; Jenkins, 2008; Mittell, 2015) and on research exploring the relationship between marketing and transmedia storytelling (Bourdaa, 2014), this study offers an in-depth analysis of the series' visual identity as it is created on different media sites.

Keywords Game of Thrones; Transmedia; Storyworld; Merchandizing; HBO

1. Transmediality in Game of Thrones

“The 21st century has seen the rise of innovative narrative extensions grouped under the term transmedia storytelling, significantly expanding the scope of a television series into an array of other media, from books to blogs, videogames to jigsaw puzzles” (Mittell, 2015: 180). This is how Jason Mittell starts his chapter on transmedia storytelling in *Complex TV*. Discussing the notion of transmedia storytelling as described by Jenkins (2008), he redefines the term in order to adapt it to the current media situation. And indeed, many of today’s media franchises, whether they are television series, video games or movies, extend beyond the narrow scope of their “original” medium to reach out to other media and platforms. For Henry Jenkins, who coined the term “transmedia storytelling”, this situation is no surprise, for it is very much in the commercial interests of entertainment industries to create transmedia franchises. As Jenkins observes: *“There is a strong interest in integrating entertainment and marketing, to create strong emotional attachments and use them to make additional sales”* (2008: 104). Jenkins calls this integration “synergy” (Jenkins, 2008: 104) and considers it to be a visible trend in today’s entertainment industry. *Game of Thrones* is no exception to this rule.

Game of Thrones started life in 1996 as a series of fantasy novels written by George R. R. Martin under the title *A song of ice and fire*. It was adapted as a television show by HBO in 2011. Since then, it has expanded its storyworld across a range of products and platforms and has acquired the status of a transmedia franchise. *Game of Thrones* is more than an example of complex TV. With *Game of Thrones*, we have what Jenkins calls “complex stories” that expand *“the range of narrative possibility rather than pursuing a single path with a beginning, middle, and end”* (2008: 119). These stories take on an additional life beyond that of the original manifestation and extend to products and platforms created by and under the management of the HBO network. They are therefore an example of transmedia narratology, which Irina Rajewsky describes as *“the appearance of a certain motive, aesthetic, or discourse across a variety of different media”* (Rajewsky, 2005). *Game of Thrones* is also a case of adaptation, which has been described by Kamilla Elliot as “incarnational”, allowing a more material access to the franchise. Indeed, for Kamilla Elliot, the incarnational aspect of adaptation *“makes adaptation a process of incarnation from more abstract to less abstract signs. The words, which merely hint at sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell, tantalize readers into longing for their incarnation in signs offering more direct access to these phenomenological experiences”* (Elliott, 2004: 235). However, the recurrent appearances of a feature across media are accompanied by discrepancies in the way they appear. As a matter of fact, different media use different modes of narration. A story such as *Cinderella* is different according to whether it is presented

in book form, is told orally or is recounted in a movie. Hence, for Jan Noel Thon, “transmedial narratology should focus on the examination of various transmedia phenomena and strategies of narrative representation across a range of narrative media, acknowledging both similarities and differences in the ways these media narrate” (Thon, 2004: 26). This is the perspective this work intends to take. Through looking closely at *Game of Thrones*, we will examine the recurrence of certain visual motifs across a variety of media and platforms, paying particular attention to the differences in the narrative strategies employed in each. Nevertheless, we will bear in mind that, despite these discrepancies, all these transmedia phenomena are essentially involved in telling the same story. Indeed, for Claude Bremond, we should clearly differentiate the story from the medium in which it is being articulated:

[Story] is independent of the techniques that bear it along. It may be transposed from one to another medium without losing its essential properties: the subject of a story may serve as argument for a ballet, that of a novel can be transposed to stage or screen, one can recount in words a film to someone who has not seen it. These are words we read, images we see, gestures we decipher, but through them, it is a story that we follow. And it could be the same story (Bremond in Ryan, 2004: 1).

This study of a transmedia franchise will focus on the transmedial aspect but still observe how the features of transmedia narratology fit into the whole story. Contrary to views expressed by many contemporary observers, we believe that even practices apparently as trivial as merchandizing can be considered to be parts of a story and, potentially, enriching elements for both the franchise and its fans. According to Marie-Laure Ryan: “the study of narrative across media [...] focuses on the embodiment, that is to say, the particular semiotic substance and the technological mode of transmission of narrative. Its categories are language, image, sound, gesture, and further, spoken language, writing cinema, radio, television, and computers” (Ryan, 2004: 1). In the present work, we will add two more components to these categories: products and platforms.

In order to spread the narrative across diverse media forms, HBO had to create recognizable features that would anchor the different media products and platforms within the same storyworld. To do so, HBO-*Game of Thrones* has developed a particular visual identity for the franchise. The aim of this chapter is to uncover what this visual identity is and to establish whether the storytelling devices and techniques across the various media platforms are consistent with the visual universe established by the television show. Is there a coherent visual identity in all the products associated with HBO’s *Game of Thrones* or can we find semiotic breaches in the storytelling when we compare the respective media presentations?

2. Game of Thrones' storyworld

In order to answer this question, we first need to determine the various elements that combine to make up the franchise's "visual universe" and to establish what we mean by "HBO-*Game of Thrones*' products and platforms". So far, we have distinguished three main types of merchandizing associated with *Game of Thrones*: 1) HBO official merchandizing, the type that is produced by the network and sold on its official website;¹ 2) HBO-*Game of Thrones* licensed artefacts, items made by third parties but recognized by HBO as official products and primarily offered for sale on the official website; 3) unofficial merchandizing, including *Game of Thrones*' products not made by HBO and sold on other platforms, and fans' own creations. To these, we shall also add the various official and fan-made websites, forums and social media pages.

These cross-media developments have proved to be necessary in order to respond to the demands of fans and to those of the market. As Matt Hills claims in *Fan cultures* (2002), fans, in spite of their resistance to rampant commercialism, are never really able to distance themselves from the commodifying practices that surround their object of fandom. Transmediality is thus required to improve fans' experience through their deeper immersion in the world that has been created by HBO. In addition, these objects and platforms serve another purpose: they help advertise the forthcoming release of the next season of the show while keeping the fans immersed in the *Games of Thrones*' storyworld. It can be argued that the products and platforms that HBO has developed round *Games of Thrones* provide proof of fans' engagement with regard to the fandom universe, reinforcing Hill's claim that fans are "commodity-completists" (Hills, 2002: 19), that is to say, they are always looking to possess as much as they can of their object of fandom.

We are using here the word "immersion", and not "expansion", contrary to what is generally used for other objects of fandom. HBO-*Game of Thrones* indeed presents an experience of transmedia narratology, but its narrative is classically constructed. This means that the official transmedia experience of HBO-*Game of Thrones* does not develop the storyworld, nor does it expand the fans' knowledge of it. The world of *Game of Thrones* does not expand further than what the series shows on screen. *Game of Thrones*' official universe (we are here setting aside the fan-made creations which are the subject of another chapter) allows fans to immerse themselves in it, particularly through the various official platforms, media and products. However, it doesn't allow fans to either discover an expansion of it nor to expand it themselves, for nothing in these products and platforms is new to the storyworld. Everything in the official universe is drawn from the show and it

1 <https://www.hboshopecu.com/fr/fr/emissions/game-of-thrones.html?rel=1>.

is thus already known by the fans. The only exception to this assertion is *Game of Thrones*' video games, which are both expansions of the storyworld and immersions into it. As a matter of fact, the video games allow fans to dive into the fictional world of *Game of Thrones* while creating new stories for the player to discover. They create minor side stories linked to the major narrative strands of the series. However, gamers cannot set out on their own journeys to discover more about the world of *Game of Thrones*. They need to stay on the path created by the developers, which narrows down their freedom and thus the expansion of the universe.

We need, then, to clarify what we should include in HBO-*Game of Thrones*' products and platforms. In this analysis, we will only look at HBO official, licensed products and platforms, in other words *Game of Thrones*' official merchandizing and websites. The products include the 25 pages and 386 articles of merchandizing that can be found on the HBO European online shop.² This comprises both HBO-produced items and the HBO-licensed products that can be purchased from the HBO store. These licensed products are the Funko and Dark Horse collectibles³ and the Risk and Monopoly board games.⁴ Since the *Game of Thrones* video games have been made by different companies and they are sold on various platforms but not on the HBO website, they will not be included in this study. The platforms studied are the official HBO-*Game of Thrones*' websites, composed of the *Game of Thrones*' website on HBO platform⁵ and the *Game of Thrones*' Viewer's Guide website.⁶

3. Transmedia extensions and paratexts

Promotional websites and merchandizing products are described as "transmedia extensions" by Mittell (Mittell, 2015: 180). These "extensions" of the universe are also examples of paratexts, in the sense proposed by Genette and Gray. A paratext is any media that surrounds a text. Hence, websites, products, images, videos, sounds can be regarded as paratexts. According to this definition, HBO-*Game*

2 On September 8th, 2016, there were 25 pages and 386 articles of official and licensed merchandizing on the HBO EU website: <https://www.hboshopeu.com/fr/fr/emissions/game-of-thrones.html?rel=1>.

3 The collectibles used to comprise both Funko and Dark Horse items, but Dark Horse collectibles are currently disappearing from the HBO store in favour of new Funko artefacts.

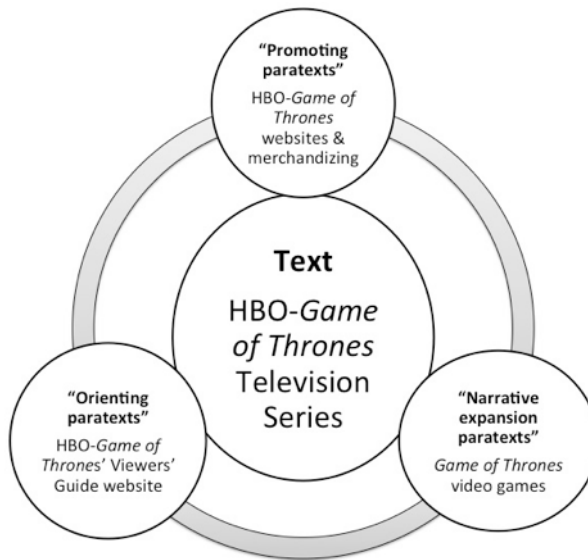
4 There is now also a Clue board game, but it is not available yet on the European HBO shop.

5 *Game of Thrones* on the HBO platform: <http://www.hbo.com/game-of-thrones>.

6 *Game of Thrones* Viewer's Guide: <http://viewers-guide.hbo.com/game-of-thrones/season-6/episode-10#>.

of *Thrones*' products and platforms are indeed both "transmedia extensions" and paratexts, for they are media texts encircling the television series while also extending its storyworld beyond the television screen. Mittell distinguishes three types of paratext: the ones that "promote, introduce and discuss a text"; the "orienting paratexts that serve to help the viewers make sense of a narrative"; and the paratexts that are "sites of narrative expansions", which is to say paratexts that "expand the storyworld and extend narrative engagement with the series" (Gray, 2010: 181). To clarify the notion of paratext, we have produced a graphic that helps make sense of what are the 'official' paratexts surrounding the *Game of Thrones* series:

Figure 1: the "official" paratexts encircling the *Game of Thrones*' television series



If, as we have seen, *Game of Thrones*' video games work as "sites of narrative expansions", the merchandizing and platforms fall into the two additional categories. HBO websites can be considered "orienting paratexts", for they help viewers better understand the series and the most recent episodes. They evolve and change alongside the series to keep the viewers updated on what has happened in the show. As Ryan states: "*digital media do not simply place us in front of a static text; they situate us inside a system that continually produces a dynamic object*" (Ryan, 2004: 330). *Games of Thrones*' websites embody these digital dynamic objects. HBO merchandizing, which is a type of commodified artefact in its

own right, works as a paratext that promotes the series. But this kind of promotion is not just an attempt to provide an illustration of the series: it also adds a further narrational dimension. For Kamilla Elliott, “*the commercials are themselves narratives: narratives of appliances that create desire, solve problems, and persuade consumption through echoing narrative threads in the adaptation*” (Elliott, 2004: 229). *Game of Thrones*’ official merchandizing material tells a story to create desire. This story echoes the one being told in the show. It makes references to characters and storylines that resonate with fans, hence using affective marketing to sell products. Moreover, it refers to the show through visual elements that provide further reinforcement of HBO-*Game of Thrones*’ identity. Furthermore, both websites and merchandizing work in support of HBO’s own branding strategy, for they reinforce it at the same time as they promote the series (see Bourdaa, 2014: 1). Transmedia narratology is thus a way for HBO to develop *Game of Thrones*’ storyworld but also to reinforce the branding strategy of the network through “*the display of its logo, its motto, its colours*” (ibid.: 3), that are indeed a feature of HBO-*Game of Thrones*’ products and platforms. However, this is not new. Transmedia strategies are becoming an inherent part of many televisual productions, be they HBO or not. What HBO has achieved, even if it was ahead of its time in so doing, must still be regarded as a form of marketing. If HBO benefits from the transmediality of *Game of Thrones*, the main identity that is displayed across media is the one of the show. This is why it is so important to discover the constituent features of this identity if we want to come to a better understanding of how this transmedia universe is created.

4. HBO-*Game of Thrones*’ visual identity

In order to see if there is coherence between the series’ storyworld and the products and platforms developed by HBO, we first had to analyze the aforementioned items and compare them to the series so we could distinguish HBO-*Game of Thrones*’ visual identity. So far, we have identified six features that characterize this identity.

The first one is the use of a specific, highly recognizable font for the title of the show. The series also creates a medieval atmosphere that is evidenced by the presence of heraldry, swords, castles, period clothing and grooming as well as the appearance of person occupying special social positions (king, queen, lord, lady, knight...). In addition, the show’s directors make a constant attempt to create a specific ambience by the frequent use of dark colours such as black, grey and brown. However, these colours are not the only ones employed. Brighter colours are used in the landscapes, the gowns and the families’ coats of arms. Nonetheless, some colours come up more often than others, particularly gold, red and

blue. In the show, the colours of the family coats of arms often seem dirty, as if covered in dust, mud or darkened by the night. Moreover, the names, symbols and colours of the great Houses are unique and recognizable. Finally, the names of the characters have now become household names (Stark, Lannister, Tyrell, Targaryen...). These names are associated with the actors' voices and faces, because the latter are the first visual and physical embodiment of George R. R. Martin's fictional characters.

As previously mentioned, there are obviously similarities and differences in the way individual media narrate. Some visual and narrative features will be used on certain objects and platforms and not on others. As David Herman observes: "*Medium-specific differences between narratives are nontrivial but only more or less firmly anchored in their respective media; intertranslation between story media will be more or less possible, depending on the particular formats involved*" (Herman, 2004: 51). Nevertheless, despite medium-specific differences, there should be enough recognizable features in each medium so that audiences can associate the right medium with the right storyworld. Taking the example of *The Matrix*, Jenkins claims that "*the [Wachowski] brothers had to envision the world of The Matrix with sufficient consistency that each instalment is recognizably part of the whole and enough flexibility that it can be rendered in all of these different styles of representation. [...] No given work will reproduce every element, but each must use enough that we recognize at a glance that these works belong to the same fictional realm*" (Jenkins, 2008: 113). This claim, then aimed at *The Matrix*, still resonates for current transmedia franchises, including *Game of Thrones*. Let us then have a look at *Game of Thrones*' products and platforms and analyse their use of these visual identity features.

5. Visual identity, official merchandizing and online platforms

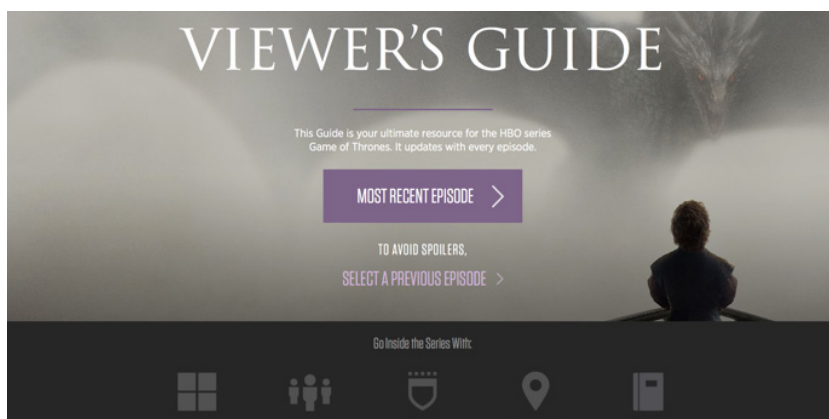
At first glance, we noticed that all HBO-*Game of Thrones*' products and platforms, with the exception of the HBO website, use the specific font characteristic of the title of the show. The HBO website keeps using the by-default font of HBO.⁷ The title's font becomes a key feature in the visual identity of *Game of Thrones*. However, it is worth noting that this characteristic is so representative of this series that it is even used by unofficial products and platforms, thus blurring the line between official and non-official transmedia extensions.

Most official merchandizing and platforms also make use of the dark colour theme: for instance, one can find grey and black tee shirts and black and dark red

7 HBO website: <http://www.hbo.com/game-of-thrones>.

mugs in the HBO shop.⁸ The Viewer's Guide website makes particular use of this dark atmosphere by employing black, grey and snow white colours for its background, pictures and graphics.⁹

Figure 2: HBO *Game of Thrones*' Viewer's Guide website (screenshot by Julie Escurignan)



When dealing with Houses and characters, products and platforms use the heraldry found in the show. Heraldry often goes hand in hand with the use of House colours. These features can be considered the signifiers that help audiences understand which House is being referenced. Hence, combined together, they create a sign in the Barthesian sense, that refers to a specific House. Indeed, in *Game of Thrones*, a House is a sign represented by its name and its visual signifier: logo and colour (Barthes, 1957). For example, the House Tyrell is represented by a yellow rose on a green background. The combination of the two colours makes an instant visual reference to this House. A golden lion on a red background is associated by fans with House Lannister. To these, we can add the various mottos of individual houses, which complete the signs: House Tyrell is linked to the motto “Growing strong”, while House Stark makes reference to the saying “Winter is coming”.

Merchandizing and platforms also use visual representations of *Game of Thrones*' actors: collectibles representing characters use the picture of actors in the packaging. The objects themselves are made to closely resemble the actors of the

8 HBO-Game of Thrones' mugs: <https://www.hboshopecu.com/fr/fr/emissions/game-of-thrones/tasses.html>.

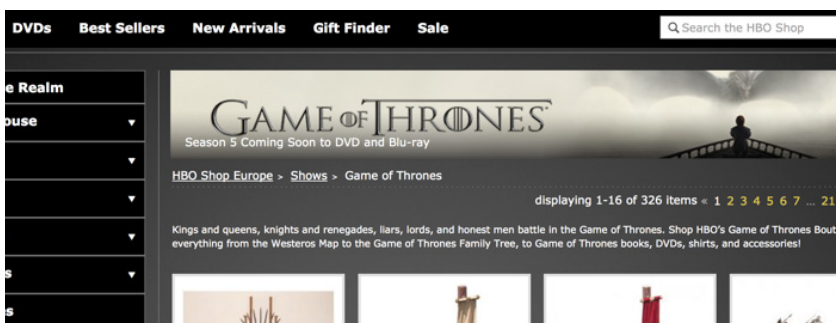
9 Viewer's Guide front page: <http://viewers-guide.hbo.com/game-of-thrones/season-6/episode-10>

show; other artefacts such as magnets show actors' pictures on them; platforms like the Viewer's Guide provide pictures and videos of the actors-characters.

Therefore, HBO-*Game of Thrones*' merchandizing succeeds in conveying some key features of the show's visual identity. These features are of course visible in the objects themselves but they appear even more strikingly in the artefacts' packaging. As the first point of visual and physical contact that the buyer has with the object, it seems logical that so much creative attention is paid to the design of the packaging. It has to stand out on a shelf and clearly signify to the buyer what the product is about, while at the same time immersing him or her in the show's universe. *Game of Thrones*' packaging is the paratext that displays the most features of the series' identity: the title's font, the atmosphere, the specific colours, and often the names, blazons and colours of the Houses as well as the name and picture of the actors when needed.

Regarding the online platforms, it is worth noting that they display the visual characteristics of the show. They do so principally through pictures from the series, the re-creation of the harsh atmosphere and the use of the title's font. This is a way to directly link the visual text (the series) with its on-screen paratexts (the websites). There is visually a straight connexion between what the audience sees on television and what it finds in the paratexts surrounding the show. However, the HBO-*Game of Thrones*' website is hosted on the same platform as the other HBO shows, which makes the re-creation of the atmosphere less all-enveloping. This is particularly noticeable with the online shop that allows moving from shopping for this series to shopping for other HBO shows with a click.

Figure 3: HBO *Game of Thrones*' shop website (screenshot by Julie Escurignan)



Game of Thrones' atmosphere has not been reproduced on the European website (in contrast to the new HBO-*Game of Thrones*' American website), where only the name of the show, a background image at the top of the page and a dark background remind the buyer of where he or she is. The online shop does not immerse the buyer in the show's storyworld. This may constitute a problem in terms of mar-

keting strategy. Indeed, the attempt to involve potential buyers in the world they wish to purchase can lead to more transactions. If no offline shops can include the purchasing audience in an on-site environment, it could be considered the online shop's duty to do so. To offer a comparison, the *Harry Potter* franchise has an immersive online shop that re-creates the atmosphere of the movies,¹⁰ while providing an on-site experience in places such as the Shop on Platform 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$ at King's Cross, or the Warner Bros Studios. On the contrary, the Viewer's Guide website¹¹ fully re-creates the *Game of Thrones*' atmosphere through the use of the well-known font, colours, pictures and videos from the show as well as the display of interactive maps of Westeros that follow the evolution of the series. The attention to detail is pushed so far that it is possible to change the website's language from English or Spanish to Hodor,¹² [spoiler] even if the character no longer exists. This is a wink to fans showing that if the industry wants to make the effort, it can create a fully immersive and interactive entertainment product that enhances fans' experience.

6. Visual identity and licensed products

Game of Thrones' licensed merchandizing visual coherence is more questionable. Board games mix two identities: the one of the original product derived from the game franchise, and the visual characteristics of HBO-*Game of Thrones*. The latter is displayed though the use of the series' name, title's font, logos, colours and Houses. This creates a product that not only immerses the user in the *Game of Thrones*' storyworld but also offers a combination of two worlds. This situation is particularly obvious for the two *Game of Thrones*' licensed board games: Monopoly and Risk.¹³

The Funko collectibles raise even more questions: the figures do not resemble the show's actors at all. They only use certain major physical features of the characters to allow people to recognize them: white hair for Daenaerys Targaryen,

10 Harry Potter official online shop: <http://www.harrypottershop.com>.

11 Game of Thrones' Viewer's Guide website: <http://viewers-guide.hbo.com/game-of-thrones/season-6/episode-10#>.

12 Hodor is one of the secondary characters that stirred the most emotion amongst fans. A servant of House Stark, Hodor becomes simpleminded as a child after a trauma that leaves him unable to say anything but the word "Hodor". He dies in Season 6, while at the service of Bran Stark. The Viewer's Guide platform offers the possibility to change the whole website with the word "Hodor".

13 A third licensed board game has come out: Game of Thrones Clue. It is however only available on the US HBO Game of Thrones' online store.

dark clothes for Jon Snow, metal hand for Jaime Lannister. The packaging itself is quite simple, with minimal visual features that make a link with the HBO series: the dark background, the use of the title's font and the name of the character are the only ones. The packaging's purpose here is just to provide a pointer towards the right fictional universe.

Nevertheless, this situation should not come as a surprise for Jenkins. Indeed, as he claims:

Current licensing arrangements ensure that most of these products are peripheral to what drew us to the original story in the first place. Under licensing, the central media company sells the rights to manufacture products using its assets to an often unaffiliated third party; the license limits what can be done with the characters or concepts to protect the original property (Jenkins, 2008: 105).

As we have seen with Monopoly, Risk and the Funko collectibles, only some features of *Game of Thrones*' identity are used in licensed products, corroborating Jenkins' idea. He is critical of the current licensing system and observes:

The current licensing system typically generates works that are redundant, watered down, or riddled with sloppy contradictions. These failures account for why sequels and franchises have a bad reputation. Franchise products are governed too much by economic logic and not enough by artistic vision (ibid.: 105).

In this work, we have not looked at redundancy or contradictions but at the appearance of visual features that would anchor licensed products but also official merchandizing and platforms within the same *Game of Thrones*' storyworld. What we have noticed, though, is indeed the prevalence of economic logic in the creation of this commodified universe, where packaging and marketing strategies play a crucial part. Arguing for co-creation in *Convergence culture* (2008), Henry Jenkins may be on the right track. So far, co-creation only implicates creators working with other artists, an equation from which fans are ruled out despite their obvious creativity across different media sites. If economic logic truly belongs in media industries, maybe artistic vision is more to be looked for in fans' creations.

7. Conclusion

So, is there a coherent visual identity in HBO's *Game of Thrones*' products and platforms? There is no doubt that HBO recognised the importance of some visual coherence existing in all of the official *Game of Thrones*' paratexts. Even if each

media displays the visual characteristics differently, these features anchor the products and platforms in the *Game of Thrones*' storyworld, allowing audiences to know where they stand. However, it is yet to be determined if *Game of Thrones*' transmedia extensions can be considered to be transmedia storytelling, turning *Game of Thrones* into a transmedia storytelling franchise, or if they are rather a mere itemization of the series' identity, allowing only fans' immersion into it. In any case, there is still room for improvement in order to reach full visual coherence in all of *Game of Thrones*' manifestations. There is even more work to be done to achieve a complete immersion of the fans in the franchise's universe. Indeed, as HBO's website has shown, the network still has trouble immersing its fans in the world put on screen. However, with the advent of privately owned immersive experiences of *Game of Thrones*, it is in HBO's best interest to start its move on this battlefield. Because when you play the *Game of Thrones*, you win or you die.

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Biography

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Vidding and its Media Territories: A Practice-centred Approach to User-generated Content Production

Simone Tosoni and Mariana Ciancia

Abstract

“Vidding” is the practice of synchronizing a song with excerpts of one or more visual texts (usually a TV series or a cult movie), so to confer new meanings to the video materials. This form of user-generated content usually explores some peculiar aspects of the original materials (the evolution of character or of a relationship), or to confer them new meanings.

Originated within the media fandom ecosystem, the vidding phenomenon has been so far mainly analysed from the points of view of audience reception within fan cultures and of gender and feminist studies. The present preliminary study focuses on the Italian context and aims to explore vidding as a media related production practice. Such perspective brings to the forefront questions concerning the role of digital technologies in the production process, in the distribution of user-generated content, in the emergence of shared aesthetic and stylistic quality criteria, as well as in the circulation of the specific competences required by the practice.

Keywords User-generated Content, Vidding, Practice Theory, Making, Media Territories

1. Introduction

Media scholars have since long observed how we live in a participatory culture (Jenkins, 1992; Jenkins, 2006; Dery, 1993; Lessig, 2008; Miller, 2011; Delwiche and Henderson, 2013 eds.), with digital media allowing people to express themselves, contributing to their beloved storyworlds (media fandom) or criticizing contemporary mainstream cultures (culture jamming). Together with fan fiction, fan movies and machinimas, vids are an example of these forms of user-generated contents.

Vidding is “*a form of grassroots filmmaking in which clips from television shows and movies are set to music. The result is called a vid or a songvid*” (Coppa, 2008: 1.1). In this specific kind of user-generated content originated in media fandoms, music is used to interpret and give new meanings to the visual source edited by the vidder (Coppa, 2011).

As we will show in section 2, vidding has been so far mainly analysed from the points of view of audience reception within fan cultures and of gender and feminist studies. The present preliminary study aims to address it as a production practice, focusing in particular on the understudied Italian context. Addressing it as a media related practice (Couldry, 2012) allow us to shed light on how vidding is performed, reproduced and stabilized thanks to shared competences and symbolic meanings, as well as to the support of specific assemblages of different media platforms and other technological tools.

Under a methodological point of view, we draw on the practice-centred approach advanced by Elizabeth Shove, Mika Pantzar and Matt Watson (2012). As the section 3.1 will show, practices are conceived as stabilized performances whose constituents are heterogeneous elements such as *materials*, *competences* and *meanings*: our focus on vidding will be similarly threefold. Moreover, our specific research interests as media scholars drives us to introduce the methodological concept of “*media territories*” as the assemblages of media devices, platforms and services adopted in the practice.

The preliminary results of our inquiry, which we present in section 3.2, also aim to deepen the understanding of a specific aspect of practice theory. According to Shove, Pantzar and Watson (2012), in fact, practices may forego relevant transformations when they become connected together to form a *complex*, an “*integrated arrangement [...] [of practices] including co-dependent forms of sequence and synchronization*” (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012: 17). The case of vidding allows us to shed light on the changes occurring in a practice when it moves from one *complex* to another one: in this specific case, from the complex of practices of fan cultures to the complex of practices of video making.

The final section will be dedicated to some final remarks on the case study and to some previews of the future developments of our research.

2. Vids as gendered cultural artefacts

“In 2005, the year that YouTube was founded, media fans celebrated the 30th anniversary of vidding at Vividcon, an on-going convention dedicated to vids” (Coppa, 2008: 1.4). Vidding is in fact a form of DIY remix that precedes the digital era, dating back to the mid Seventies. At that time, Kandy Fong (ibid.) and other *Star Trek* fans – mostly women – started to create slideshows of their favourite series, where still images were accompanied by songs played by tape recorders. In the Eighties, still images were replaced by VHS footages produced by VCRs’ tape editing.

The phase of digitalization of vidding – the one we will focus on – gained momentum only with the new century and the diffusion in the consumer market of non-linear editing software tools: Movie Maker was distributed for the first time with Windows Millennium in 2000; Apple released Final Cut Pro in 1999 and distributed iMovies with Mac computers starting from 2003; Sony Vegas 2.0, the first version with video editing features, was released in 2002.

In the last decade, media scholars have started to devote an increasing attention to the phenomenon, addressing it mainly from two perspectives.

A first strand of research explores vids as cultural artefacts, addressing in particular the sophisticated textual and symbolic competences required for their reception. As Francesca Coppa clarifies (2010):

Many people still don’t “get” fan vids, seeing them either as incomprehensible mashups or mere celebratory slideshows. In fact, vidding, like most forms of remix, is about critical selection and the editing eye: deciding what to put in and what to leave out. Vids can make very sophisticated arguments about the source text’s plot and characters, and even its ideology. While some vids are edited to broadly emphasize certain themes, images, or characters, and are thus easily understandable to the uninvested spectator, other vids are made specifically for fellow fans who are assumed to be familiar not only with the source text but also with the conventions and established aesthetics of vidding.

On the same line, Jenkins remarks that “[i]f commercial videos encourage spectators to take pleasure in the decision to ‘stop making sense’, as some critics have claimed, fan videos demand the active participation of the viewer as a precondition for making meaning of their quick yet logical progression of images” (Jenkins, 1992: 237). For example, viewers are supposed to be able to relate the song’s mood and lyrics to the fictional character(s) and to their inner feelings and desires (ibid.: 235). In this sense, vids don’t reflect only the producer’s personal creativity and competence but, by encouraging the co-construction of meaning between vidders and vidwatchers (Turk and Johnson, 2012; Turk, 2010; Hills, 2002), they reflect also the common culture of the fan community (Jenkins, 1992: 223).

For the competent user, a vid is “*a visual essay that stages an argument*” (Coppa, 2008: 1.1). Such an argument can scrutinize peculiar aspects of the original text, like a character’s motivations and evolution, or a relationship – actually shown in the show or just hypothetically imagined by fans. Yet, it may also articulate a broader critical discourse on the values ideologically implied in the source materials or, more generally, in the contemporary media culture (Svegaard, 2015). Moreover, these arguments are normally able to activate discussions between the creator(s) and the community, and within the fandom community itself (Turk and Johnson, 2012; Turk, 2010), fostering and strengthening the elaboration of a common culture.

The second main strand of research is, in turn, concerned with the gender issues implied by the phenomenon. From its very beginning, in fact, vidding is an almost exclusively feminine form of user-generated content production (Coppa, 2008; Cupitt, 2008; Freund, 2011; Tralli, 2014). This has led scholars to focus on the role of women as cultural creators (Byerly and Ross, 2006; Butler, 2002; Bacon-Smith, 1991) and on the related possibility – both for producers and viewers – of criticizing and deconstructing gender stereotypes. On one hand, vidding – where women act as the main consumers and producers – would be in fact a “*minor audio-visual practice*” (Tralli, 2014: 408). On the other hand, however, it would open for women a space of appropriation of a hegemonic language (Johnston, 2000; Butler, 2002) – the audio-visual language – to question mainstream media texts. Such a possibility would make vidding a precious form of cultural expression also for the LGBT community (Kreisinger, 2012), where it would be used to criticize the dominant heteronormativity.

Concomitantly with these two main strands of research, scholars have interrogated vidding in relation to topics of key relevance for contemporary participatory cultures, like issues of copyright and fair use (Lothian, 2009; Tushnet, 2013; Freund, 2016), media literacy and education (Stein, 2014; Winters 2014), and digital cultural artefacts preservation (Framow, 2014).

However, while the literature on vidding as a gendered cultural artefact is quickly becoming more and more vast, the specificities of vidding as a practice have been so far left mostly unexplored. This leaves unanswered questions concerning, among the other topics, the specific forms and the evolving dynamics of the production process of vidding; the role played in it by digital technologies; the shifting forms of assemblage of online platforms and services used by video makers to support the practice, to circulate their products, to stay in contact with other practitioners and with their audiences; the emergence and transformation of shared aesthetic and stylistic quality criteria; the definition and circulation of the competencies required by the practice.

3. Vidding as practice

In this section we present the preliminary results of the on-going research we are conducting on vidding as a production practice in the Italian context. The first subsection, dedicated to methodology and methods, clarifies the main tenets of the specific brand of practice approach we are adopting and the specific research methods we are employing for our research. In the second subsection, we compare the practice of vidding as intertwined in the complex of practices of fan communities to vidding as intertwined in the complex of practices of video making.

3.1. *Methods and methodology*

To address the aforementioned gaps in the current understanding of vidding as an activity of content production, we adopt a practice-based perspective. Looking at vidding as a “*media related practice*” (Couldry, 2012) means first of all to conceive it as a stabilized arrangement of joined bodily activities, “*a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings [...] linked in certain ways*” (Schatzki, 1996: 89). For complex “integrative practices” as vidding, these ways encompass “*understandings*”, “*explicit rules, principles, precepts and instructions*”, as well as “*‘teleoaffective’ structures embracing ends, projects, tasks, purposes, beliefs, emotions and moods*” (ibid.: 89), that altogether form the “organization” of the practice. This perspective leads the researcher to focus at the same time on the articulations of actions – media related or not – performed in vidding and on the socialization and learning processes that enable practitioners to acquire the skills required to perform the practice itself.

As media scholars, we are especially interested in the forms of technological mediation involved in the activities in which vidding is articulated. Moreover, as vidding is a spatially dispersed practice, mostly undertaken by solo (but interconnected) practitioners, we are interested in all the forms of mediated learning and socialization that sustain and reproduce it. The specific brand of practice approach elaborated by Elizabeth Shove, Mika Pantzar and Matt Watson (2012) seems particularly apt to address these aspects. The authors propose a threefold approach which draws on Andreas Reckwitz’s understanding of practices as interdependent correlation between “*forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know how, states of emotions and motivational knowledge*” (Reckwitz, 2002: 249). Together with a focus on *competences* – including both “*knowing in the sense of being able to evaluate a performance*” and “*knowing in the sense of having the skills required to perform*” (ibid.: 23) – and *meanings* as “*the social and symbolic significance of*

participation at any one moment" (ibid.), they propose a specific attention to *materials*, "*encompassing objects, infrastructures, tools, hardware and the body itself*" (ibid.) as integral constituent of a practice.

Some of these tools are media devices, platforms and services. Drawing on previous works (Tosoni and Tarantino, 2013; Tosoni and Ridell, 2016), we refer to these ensembles of specific material elements (in which we include software applications) as "*media territories*", carved out by practitioners from the general mediascape to be employed in a stable way within a particular practice (in our case vidding). In this respect, media territories are more specific than the broader concept of "*media diet*" (see for example Pozzali and Ferri, 2012), that refers to all the media devices, platforms and services commonly employed by a subject, or a category of subjects, in their daily lives. Using the spatial metaphor of "*territories*" we intend to underline how these media assemblages represent also the mediated sites in which practices unfold, contributing to define their overall spatial arrangement.

Audience studies, and in particular the tradition stemmed from Silverstone's domestication theory (Silverstone, 1994), could contribute to practice theories by addressing the way in which these media devices, platforms and services are appropriated within the media territory of a specific practice, along with the meanings they acquire, the uses they forgo and the specific competences they require (for an example of a similar perspective applied to digital music consumption, see Magaudda, 2012).

Finally, the approach to practices proposed by Shove, Pantzar and Watson has been specifically tuned up to tackle the dynamic evolution of practices, which involves both stabilization and transformation, resulting therefore particularly apt to approach vidding as a research object. As we will see, in fact, throughout its recent history, vidding production has foregone a major transformation, moving from the complex of practices of fan cultures to the complex of practices of video making. Under this point of view, our contribution to practice theory will be the attempt to clarify what happens to a practice when it moves from a complex of practices to another one.

Based on this methodological and theoretical framework, the on-going research employs a plurality of integrated methods, each of them aiming to shade light on the aspects we have discussed:

1. In-depth qualitative interviews to Italian vidders (n=5 of the 10 subjects we expect to interview), aiming to retrace the main and general constituent elements (competences, meanings and materials) of vidding as making, as well as the career of the practice and of the subject as a "*practice carrier*" (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012). We have chosen our interviewees among the Italian vidders with more views on YouTube: all of them were female, ranging from 20 to 26 years old, living in central and northern Italy.
2. Vidding media territories have been further scrutinized through virtual

ethnography of all the online spaces involved in the practice (YouTube channels, Vimeo, Facebook pages, ask.com, forums), at the beginning identified through a search engine research and then integrated with all the media devices, platforms and services emerged as relevant in the qualitative interviews.

3. To better focus on competences and materials, and on the practice as a nexus of doings and sayings, we have asked subjects to give us a basic training on vidding, producing together a short segment of a video as a part of the qualitative interview. This has been so far possible – for reasons of distance – only with 2 of the 5 interviewees.
4. In order to better complete our analysis of meanings and competences, we have performed a stylistic and content analysis of some (n=25) of the video artefacts produced by the interviewees, or quoted by them as example of very good – or very bad – artefacts.
5. Finally, we have asked subjects to produce technical video commentaries about one of their video artefacts, to be able to address in depth their stylistic and technical features, and the technical challenges of their making.

3.2. Preliminary results: vidding from the realm of fandom to the realm of video making

As anticipated, with the new millennium the practice of vidding foregoes a deep transformation, concerning first and foremost its *material elements*: digital editing of video files replaces VHS and VCRs. In hindsight, interviewees acknowledge the rudimentary nature of the vids in this first phase of digitalization, usually produced with the quite unsophisticated tools released with their operating system: generally, Movie Maker (PC users) and iMovie (iOS users). No particular hardware update is reported, with the exception of the upgrade of the RAM (up to 4 or 8 GB), intensively used by video editing tools, and therefore needed to speed-up the editing process.

Media territories get partially reorganized to support this shift that predated the release of YouTube (2005). After a phase of video capture from VHS and DVD, peer-to-peer (P2P) platforms quickly become the main repository for source materials. Our interviewees mention for example the relevance of iDC++, an open source P2P file-sharing client. Yet, the very centre of the practice's media territories remains firmly occupied by the online space hosting the specific fan community of reference: a forum or a website. Vidders, in fact, are stable members of these communities, usually dedicated to a single, specific TV product, and they actively participate to their complex of practices (Fiske, 1989; Jenkins, 1992; Jenkins, 2006). For one of our interviewees, for example, it's the case of Xandrella.

com, the most popular Italian fan community dedicated to *Xena: Warrior Princess* (2003-still active): “*There were about 4 or 5 video makers in Xandrella.com. I was the most prolific of them. In 3 or 4 years, I produced around 100 vids. I produced a video in a fortnight*” (CS, F, 26).

These online spaces are the main circuits of distribution for the video artefacts (P2P platforms are a secondary circuit), and their members are the vidders’ main audiences. As the same interviewee illustrates:

More than being a real vidder, at the beginning you were more a member of a specific fan community, and its website or forum was the place you belonged to. [...] These websites had a section for videos, usually inside a broader section called something like ‘fan creations’ [...]. Therefore, it was inside that community that you received attention and appreciation. If you did not receive appreciation, it was because you were not good enough [...]. There was no other place where to be visible: that was your only circuit (CS, F, 26)

Under a symbolic and affective point of view (the *meanings* of the practice, for Shove, Pantzar and Watson), this means that producing a vid represents a way to participate to the community and to the collective process of meaning-making. This participation allows the vidder to gain “*subcultural capital, [that] confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder*” (Thornton, 1995: 27). Moreover, this also means that the practice of vidding becomes tightly intertwined with all the other practices carried on within the fan community. For example, vids can foster – or trigger – the discussion among fans about specific aspects of the narrative world or the ultimate meanings of the show. In the same way, the video artefacts reflect tastes and interests that are heating the community at any specific moment, and sometimes they are produced under explicit request of a community member – for example, when a fan asks to scrutinize a relationship between characters. Finally, vids can also be integrated in more complex transmedia products with other fan-generated contents distributed within the community, like when a vid resumes, or introduces in form of a trailer, a fan fiction.

Consequently, in this phase the main *competences* required by the practice are not only the in-depth knowledge of everything related to the TV show (already discussed by fan scholars like Williams, 2015; Jenkins, 1992; Bacon-Smith, 1991), but also an equally informed understanding of the shifting moods, interests and curiosity of the specific community of reference. Coming to a technical point of view, Jenkins underlines how, already in the previous “analogue” phase, “*the techniques [of vidding] are taught, informally, with new fan artists learning tricks working alongside more established video makers. This process is particularly facilitated by the tendency of fans to work in video collectives which periodically initiate new members*” (Jenkins, 1992: 247-248). Actually, our interviewees describe this phase

as characterized by a naïve process of self-learning by trial and error, undertaken without any direct support by other video makers. Similarly, they do not mention that form of “mediated” support represented by those video tutorials that will play a key role for the stabilization of the technical competences of the practice (and thus, of the practice itself) in the subsequent phase, when vidding will enter the complex of practices of video making.

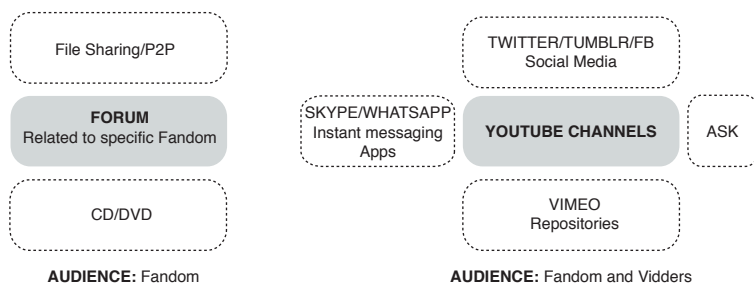
This new phase dates back to the second half of the first decade of the millennium, and is related to the launch of YouTube as a video repository (2005). The platform, in fact, quickly gains popularity among video makers, becoming a key online space to distribute their products. Yet, even if our interviewees acknowledge a continuity in vidding before and after this turning point, the adoption of YouTube is only a part of broader modification that concerns all the constitutive elements of the practice: although remaining related to the fandom realm, vidding gets disentangled from the complex of fandom practices to enter the complex of practices of video making. In this process, it foregoes a vigorous re-articulation.

With the new phase, in fact, specific fandom communities are not anymore the vidders’ only audiences, and not even the most relevant: now recognition and subcultural capital are sought also – and mainly – in the network of video makers: therefore, the *meanings* of the practice radically change. The appreciation from the communities of fans of the source materials – measured by views and “likes” on YouTube – remains relevant, but mostly as a way to raise the attention of the video makers’ network on the vid. As a video maker’s craft, technical bravura and shared aesthetic values gain an unprecedented relevance. Reputation becomes now mainly related to the “quality” of the vidder’s products, acknowledged by other vidders and video makers. For this reason, vidders show a high sense of creative ownership of their artefacts, and they resort to specific sets of sub-practices to discourage unfair appropriation by other vidders. In the most conflictual cases, they can even mobilise and coordinate their network of video makers and fans to induce the “stealer”, or the host platform, to remove the controversial content.

Vidding’s media territories are reconfigured in a way that reflects, and support, the new meanings of the practice. As anticipated, YouTube is now the main channel of vids distribution, and it is equally relevant as a platform of socialization between vidders. Concerning distribution, the repository is often associated to secondary spaces. In fact, vidders deem YouTube’s “fair use” policy too strict and incoherent, leading too often the company to remove vids for copyright infringement. The same vids are therefore published on Vimeo, a platform that is regarded as more flexible in terms of copyright enforcement. While granting less exposure in terms of views, Vimeo is also appreciated as an “elite” platform for video makers and as a valuable way to attract their attention. Other channels are used to maximize personal visibility or to grant online permanence to the video produced: in particular, vidders open and

regularly update personal blogs and pages on Twitter, Tumblr and Facebook. What it is most notable here is that from our online explorations has emerged how vidders are not specialized on a single or on a restricted set of TV shows, like it happened in the previous phase. Their products generally encompass a plurality of sources, targeting a plurality of fandoms. Not surprisingly, our interviewee points also out how “multi-fandom vids” (including source materials from different TV sources) are valued as a way to intercept a plurality of fandoms, incrementing the vids’ potential exposure. Concerning socialization, vidders do not consider the direct participation to a fan community as relevant as in the previous phase. Indeed, the relationships between the vidder and her fan audience are now often mediated by the analytics services provided by YouTube and other distribution platforms. Monitoring and measuring the performances of each vid becomes a new and crucial sub-practice of vidding. Quantitative data are interrogated to get an understanding of the geographical distribution, tastes and interests of the vid’s audience. This is also done thanks to a constant attention to audience’s direct feedback, usually received through personal messages or online public comments. Messages and comments are also a valuable way to become acquainted with other vidders and video makers, and YouTube is quoted as the most relevant online platform for this purpose. These personal contacts are then carried on through other channels, in particular chats and instant messaging services as Skype (used as a chat), Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. Moreover, specific sub-practices create important occasions to strengthen the network of the vidder’s relationships: it’s the case of the organization and participation to international contests, where video makers and vidders are challenged to elaborate their products around a theme (like, for example, “the human body” as in the last year’s “Test Your Skills” contest). Finally, relevant for socializations are also online services like Ask.com, principally dedicated (as we will see) to the exchange of competences and information between vidders (and video makers) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Vidding media territories



Concerning other *material elements*, the new relevance of technical and aesthetic skills prescribes to vidders a specific digital tool: the Windows-only software

package for non-linear editing Sony Vegas. Initially conceived as an audio editor, this tool grants users an advanced control on audio/video synchronization: our interviewees unanimously mention how Sony Vegas allows users “to see the sound wave while editing”, enabling refined forms of rhythmic editing. It is noteworthy that the same description of the tool is also given by iOS users: while unable to run Sony Vegas on their computers, they seem anyhow familiar with the Graphic User Interface of the package, mostly seen in video tutorials. The use of alternative iOS-compatible editing tools, like Adobe Premiere, After Effects or Final Cut (regarded as top of the line for other forms of video making), is described as a not completely satisfactory compromise imposed by the hardware equipment owned by the vidder. Regarding hardware, 8 or 16 GB of RAM are now considered mandatory, together with a good GPU (Graphics Processing Unit) for audio/video data processing. Some of the interviewees mention the purchase of external mass storage units for vids and source materials, but they are not regarded as fundamental. Finally, our (Italian) interviewee expresses some concern for the inadequacy of the internet infrastructure of the country to support the 4K (Ultra HD) video standard, supported by YouTube since 2010 and becoming increasingly popular.

Regarding *competences*, three aspects seem to us most prominent. First of all, as we have already mentioned, aesthetic and technical skills acquire an unprecedented relevance: however brilliant the discourse they elaborate on source materials, sloppily edited vids are now mostly ignored within the network of video makers. These competences circulate within the network of relationships of video makers, thanks to personal (mediated) communications and occasional consultations. Moreover, as we have already mentioned, specific portions of media territories are dedicated to the socialization of competences “between strangers”. Being active on Ask.com, a platform dedicated to questions and answers, is for example a good way to learn specific technicalities of the use of editing packages, to connect to other vidders and to get visibility within the video makers’ network. In second place, a relevant part of the competences required by the practice gets embedded and “materialized” into digital artefacts, becoming a point of reference for the network of vidders. In this way, they contribute to the stabilization and standardization of the competences required by the practices, and therefore of the practice itself: it’s the case, in particular, of video tutorials (distributed in dedicated channels on YouTube) and of “presets”, files that automatically set up the software editor (mainly, but not limited to, Sony Vegas) to reproduce a particular effect or palette of colours. Our interviewees clarify that their use of presets aims more to learn how to set up the editing package than to emulate a specific vid. Producing and distributing tutorials and presets represent a key sub-practice both for vidding and (more in general) video making. Finally, it is important to notice how aesthetic and stylistic features do not depend only on the personal choices of the vidder but, in large part, they are also codified (and pre-

scribed) as shared competences. For example, the use of a plurality of flashy video effects (scene transitions, modification of colours, use of masks and logos, and so on and so forth) has been replaced in time by sobriety and simplicity. What once was appreciated as innovative and glamorous is now dismissed as out dated. A skilled vidder is able to set a date for the production of a vid from its stylistic features.

As we have tried to show, our preliminary findings show how vidding, while being acknowledged by practitioners as the same practice, foregoes a vast restructuration of all its constitutive elements when moving from a complex of practices to another.

4. Final remarks and future research directions

In the present chapter, we have tried to shed light on vidding as a practice, focusing on its “career” from the phase of its digitalization. As we have shown, a main turning point of this career is represented by re-contextualization of vidding into the complex of video makers’ practices. In this case, all the elements constituting the practice forwent vast transformations. Regarding media territories, for example, fan forums lose their centrality in favour of a plurality of communication platforms used by practitioners to stay in contact, to distribute their products, to share information and competences and to promote their work. Most notably, analytics tools are included in the practice to mediate the contact with the fan communities where the practices – and the practitioners – originally came from (see Table 1).

Table 1: The transformation of Vidding practice

	Fandom Complex	Videomaking Complex
Meaning	Vidding as a way to express belonging to a fan community	Technical and aesthetic skills express competency within the videomakers’ community
Materials	Media Territories: Vidders are stable members of specific fandom communities	Media Territories: YouTube is the main channel of vids distribution, and a socialization platform
Competences	In-depth knowledge and understanding of the specific community of reference	General understanding of multiple fandoms and specific technical, aesthetic and linguistic competences

About transformations of this sort, concerning all the constitutive elements of a practice (meanings, materials and competences) Shove, Pantzar and Watson (2012) warn that it is always at least in part an arbitrary decision of the analyst to

acknowledge the emergence of a new practice or to interpret the changes in terms of the evolution of a same practice. In our case, we have followed the principle “*to take practices as anything that practitioners themselves take to be such*” (ibid.: 121) and, with our interviewees, we interpreted this passage as a key turning point in the career of the same practice.

The results we have presented are partial and require further investigations. In particular, our initial interest in vidding in Italy doesn't seem to be fully justified by our preliminary empirical results: the network of relationship that connects Italian vidders to other practitioners, allowing the circulation of competences and the emergence of shared meanings, seems to be fully transnational. Moreover, Italian practitioners do not acknowledge any Italian specificity in the practice – apart from a certain level of dilettantism when compared to the competences of foreign vidders. For this reason, the next step of our research will consist in enlarging the research focus from Italian vidders to the most active international practitioners.

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The Class: Living and Learning in the Digital Age

Sonia Livingstone

Abstract

To understand how, in a heavily mediated society, a “digital thread” is now woven through the fabric of young people’s personal, social and learning lives, I undertook a year-long ethnography with one class of 13-14 year olds. This revealed the intersecting ways in which young people appropriate digital media to find spaces of personal autonomy and agency while their parents and teachers try to deploy digital media normatively to shape young people’s present achievements and future prospects. This is played out through the subtle enactment of variously motivated or problematic connections and disconnections sustained within and between home and school. The result is that digital media – although not necessarily determining young people’s lives – have become a key site of anxiety and struggle between the generations.

Keywords Digital Media, Young People, Digital Media Learning, Ethnography, Agency, School, Dis/Connections

1. Growing up in the digital risk society

How is digital technology – now occupying the eyes and ears, pockets and pillows of so many children – becoming interwoven into the fabric of their lives? Does it mediate connections or disconnections, improvements or problems in young people's lives? I recently spent a year embedded in the lives of an ordinary class of 13 to 14-year olds in a suburban, multi-ethnic, complexly-classed London secondary school (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016). Grounded in the ethnographic method, we spent time getting to know 28 teenagers at home, at school, with their friends and online, to explore how they negotiate the pressures, opportunities and constraints of these intersecting worlds. As a social psychologist, my work has always been motivated by the desire to understand people's lives holistically; across the sites and institutions they are part of; across boundaries from private to public and back again to see how each infuses the other. As a media researcher, I've always wanted to see how people's everyday uses of media may reconfigure their possibilities for agency and imagination, communication and participation, identity and relationships – but to do so by sidestepping the utopian and dystopian hyperbole about the transformations of digital media and, thereby, of childhood, “outing” the notion of “the digital age” and “the digital native” for the rhetoric that it is (Helsper and Eynon, 2010).

In *The class*, Julian Sefton-Green and I positioned ourselves within the structures and practices that have the most power to shape children's opportunities – family, school and peer group – and we listened carefully to how children talk about and find spaces of agency in relation to these. We sought to reveal the subtle embedding of the media in young people's lives precisely by decentring the media as our object of study. This allowed us to recognise that in many ways, children's lives today are not so unrecognizable from our childhoods – engrossed in family, school, friends and humdrum daily neighbourhood life, with its modest excitements, commonplace frustrations and perennial hopes and fears. It allowed us to realise that the rhetoric of the digital-this and the e-that is itself doing discursive work, acting as a lightning rod that encapsulates and reveals both society's problems and the nature of their solutions. Thus technology is promoted as a way of legitimating politicians' quick-fix solutions for so-called “broken schools” or “broken families”. It is imagined by anxious parents as crucial to “getting ahead” or “keeping up” or “being good parents”. The discourse of the digital is even called upon by young people seeking to assert their autonomy as the emerging yet misunderstood “digital generation”.

Somewhere in between the mundane realities of everyday life and the rhetoric of rapid change, our ethnography revealed a host of active struggles to shape young people's ways of living and learning in ways that both reflect and yet are easily masked by the character of the “digital age”, as this chapter will discuss. But first a little context.

This work is located within and funded by the MacArthur Foundation's Connected Learning Research Network (Ito et al., 2013). The network has spent the past five years thinking about the challenges facing education, the inequalities in society, and the coincidence between these major structural problems and the ways in which young people are whole heartedly embracing digital media – especially those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. So, can digital media scaffold new pathways for creativity and participation? Some of the extraordinary youth identified by other projects in the network – actively building gaming communities or organising through fan creativity – indeed suggests new possibilities for connected learning (Jenkins et al., 2016). But what of the “ordinary” young people, the “average” kids such as we met in *The class*? There were few if any hackers, vloggers or entrepreneurs in their midst. So can connected learning open up new opportunities for them? And what difference might that make? This brings me to our sociological framing.

Children, far more than adults, have always had to live in circumstances not of their own making. Young teenagers in particular look for opportunities for agency and self-realisation within structures that are in some ways blind to their efforts and in other ways keen to anticipate and shape their efforts towards particular, often pre-determined goals. The resulting challenges are in some ways enabled but also undermined by today's historical circumstances of late or reflexive modernity – a risk society in which individuals are disembedded from tradition, collectivities are crumbling and new uncertainties and indeterminacies assail us on all sides (Giddens, 1991). This is a historical period, at least in the West, whose contours are defined by the global flows of people, goods, money, technology, ideas and meanings (Appadurai, 1996), by human-created risks (more than natural hardship and disaster) and by immersion in a highly individualised, future-focused, competitive, media-saturated culture in which our experiences and possibilities are visualised and narrated for us in ways that promise greater choice and control and deliver the opposite, generating intense anxiety that further fuels the process of individualisation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Thus it is characteristic rather than unusual that our class lived within a few square miles of each other, within which people speak a host of different languages, melding diverse cultures and encompassing the world's religions. In the school, unusually perhaps, but typical of London as a “superdiverse” global city (Watson and Saha, 2012), the refugee's child sits next to the millionaire's child. In their homes, each child can access multiple large and small screens along with fast broadband but most rarely visit the city centre just a few miles away. It is also a world bifurcated by social class – marked, classically, by the railway line passing through those few square miles of suburb, with half the class living on the right side and half living on the wrong side of the tracks.

For children, late modernity is repositioning children's place in society in a host of ways, visible for example in the reconstruction of family, competitive

pressures on schools, extended transition to adulthood, uncertain employment, and heightened ambitions in celebrity culture (Chambers, 2012). It is also repositioning how society imagines children and childhood – Beck talks of children as representing the last hope of “enchantment” in our cynical lives; Giddens (2006) sees how we invest in and worry about children as our way of investing in – trying to control, even ‘colonise’ – the future. So we have smaller families, and we try to give each child the very best of everything; respecting their rights in the newly democratised family (to use another of Giddens’ phrases) even as we worry that this makes us overindulgent; keeping them indoors and wrapped in cotton wool even as we worry that this saps their resilience; pushing them to learn violin and coding even while remembering nostalgically our own past freedom to stay out all day getting muddy and lost. Lest I digress into an account of all society’s troubles, my point is that the digital both promises solutions and yet is just one particular thread in a much larger tapestry of social change. So how did the digital thread itself through the lives of our class of 28 13-14 year olds?

The methods employed in this project are outlined in Livingstone and Sefton-Green 2016 as well as blogged at www.parenting.digital. Suffice it to say here that our aim in spending time in the key sites that structure children’s lives (home, school, peer group) became the main sites of our fieldwork, with our focus being on the interrelations between them, whether or not underpinned by digital media. The sites intersect because the children move across and between them all, creating connections and disconnections through their daily practices. This matters because, although each site is important for children, they are disconnected from the adults’ point of view. Thus, in ways that turned out to be important, teachers rarely see into the home, or parents into the school, or adults the online or peer spaces of children’s lives. Only the children themselves make the connections in practice – and, in some ways, digital media, by increasingly connecting up previously unconnected activities. Also, of course, for one year, we as researchers moved across the sites, insofar as we were able (we discuss the ethical and methodological challenges in Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016, chapter 2).

2. A day in the life of “digital” teens

Consider, to set the scene, a typical school day. Arriving at school in the morning was stressful for us and the teenagers as we made the transition from sleepiness to being on full alert, from the comfort of pyjamas at home to the stringent rules of school uniform, from family who knows our ways to teachers stationed in crowded hallways checking on conformity with theirs. Fesse was usually late, partly because he played Xbox till late into the night, partly because he relied on his older sister to

chivvy him out of the house each morning. Salma arrived neat and calm, having texted her friends early to synchronise walking to school together, chatting all the way.

For much of the day, the class faced the interactive “smart screen” at the front as teachers integrated YouTube clips and other electronic resources into lessons. You could see teachers are still working out how to do this not only practically but also pedagogically. For instance, they incorporate digital media in subject lessons as a convenient window on the world in geography or history (“look at this country” or “look at that historical period”) at the same time as critically deconstructing text and image in media studies classes. Relatedly, there’s little connection between the teaching of music and music technology in school and the children’s love of music listening or learning at home – Fesse, for instance, his family lacking money for lessons, was teaching himself guitar via YouTube tutorials but his teachers seemed unaware and this effort gained no recognition at school (Sefton-Green, 2013).

Walking home from school turned out to be a significant moment away from adult scrutiny, a relaxed in-between time, often the last chance to talk to friends face-to-face before returning home, only then able to reconnect via digital media. The class liked to stretch out this journey as they unwound from the demanding rhythm of the school day. Giselle told us how she made it a “slow journey,” while Abby said with relief: “We’ll like, go shopping or just, like, go out to the park or something or just, like, just go do anything really, that we feel like doing”. Yes, they had their phones in their hand, checking for messages and sharing updates and jokes. But the point was to do what they felt like doing, and to do it together face to face.

Once at home, homework was often accompanied by Facebook, partly as a distraction and partly for a bit of peer guidance in maths or French. Some became quickly absorbed in computer games – Nick with the school mates he had spent all day with, Giselle on her family’s Minecraft server, Adam with people he only knows in the multi-player game where he felt, finally, that he could really be himself. Abby’s extended family enveloped her in a world of talk about and despite the music and TV playing constantly, while Megan constructed a private space in Tumblr, hours passing by unnoticed. Max, Jenna and Alice would gather at Alice’s house to chat, mess around and talk about Harry Potter, and Shane would go out on his bike whenever he could. Each found themselves drawn, to varying degrees, into their parents’ efforts to gather “as a family”, sometimes over supper or shared hobbies but more often than not, simply chatting in front of the TV, albeit each with phones or tablets at the ready, before peeling off in separate directions.

The “ordinary diversity” of teenagers’ lives is thus threaded through with digital media but not really about them except insofar as they serve to connect or disconnect people in meaningful or frustrating ways. In the book we develop such observations to argue that young people no more wish to be constantly plugged in than do the adults around them. What they want, rather, is to have the choice when

and where to disconnect from the often rule-bound and sometimes conflictual world they find themselves in. In other words, using digital devices has become teenagers' way of asserting agency: choosing not to listen to sometimes bossy parents or annoying younger siblings or seemingly critical teachers; choosing to reconnect digitally with sympathetic friends or not to miss out on the ongoing peer "drama". The overriding importance of agency is also shown by teenagers' choice to escape the growing digital embrace of their school – for when teachers use digital media in class or contact home via email or the intranet, students are likely to whisper to each other behind their hands in class or act as if they have no idea teachers have posted extra maths exercises on their blog so students can extend their studies in their leisure time. But using digital devices has also become adults' way of trying to reach and guide teenagers – in ways that young people do not always welcome.

3. Learning in the digital age

Most of the families we visited made some effort to anticipate – and support – the learning environment of the school within the home, providing a desktop workstation or creating a quiet corner of a bedroom or living room as a place of study. In so doing, parents tried to imagine what might help their child's learning, usually with little knowledge of the hardware, software or pedagogic practices of the school. One case highlighted strongly the efforts that parents are making to use digital technology to improve their child's prospects. Yusuf was the eldest of four children in a devout Muslim family that had emigrated from East Africa when he was little. His father had been a trained nurse but in London could only obtain work as a ticket inspector; his mother spoke very limited English. At school, we saw that Yusuf worked quietly and conscientiously in lessons and was doing well in math and science. When we visited him at home, we found that two distinct learning practices were high on his parents' agenda. First, his twice-weekly attendance at Quran school, which involved a considerable amount of rote learning (in Arabic) that he did not always fully understand, as well as more open discussion of moral and social issues. Here, progression was measured by learning the suras (verses of the Quran) by heart.

Second, his father had purchased an integrated series of math and English programs on CD for around £3,000 – a considerable expenditure for any family and especially for one with such modest means as Yusuf's. The CDs provided a series of graded activities and tests; when a certain number of tests have been passed, the company that makes the CDs issues bronze, silver, and gold certificates. At home, one of the bedrooms had been turned into a "classroom", with large wall charts marking the children's progress through the tests along with a careful arrangement of further educational resources: CDs, books, worksheets, and

test materials. Yusuf's father referred to himself as a sort of head teacher, and each child was expected to complete a certain number of tests weekly, filling in the appropriate cells in the wall chart. This demanded considerable discipline since Yusuf's father was often absent on shift work, and his mother could not communicate well with the children.

Both the Quran school and the home investment in educational technology mirrored the emphasis on structured learning tasks and quantified indicators of progression that we saw at school in its implementation of national curriculum levels. Yet the school was unaware that Yusuf was engaged in either of these learning activities out of school. Nor was it clear to us that the family's investment particularly aided his achievement at school or his learning for its own sake. This disconnection between home and school learning environments was particularly ironic because in many ways the father was extending the school's logic into the home. At school, the master metaphor for learning was that of "levelling". At its most straightforward, this meant assessing student progress on the national curriculum through reference to standardised grades (called "levels"). But as a discursive practice, and as a metaphor for progress, it was thoroughly embedded in school life (I overheard a teacher ask a student: "have you been levelled for art yet?"). This was enabled through the efficient operation of the digital and networked School Information Management System (as discussed in Livingstone, 2014). This system was used to encode the students' attainment and behaviour on a continuous basis, with multiple data points entered for each child each day. The sheer effort of maintaining the system meant teachers spent a lot of class time staring at the computer, with both students and also teachers becoming subject to constant surveillance and monitoring.

Learning, thereby, became instrumentalized – if it could be levelled, it counted – but if it could not (informal or home learning, for instance, or cultural knowledge outside the curriculum) it just didn't count, literally. Parent-teacher evenings became an extraordinary discursive exercise of working out, through often fraught parent-teacher negotiation, whether what a child had learned outside school could somehow be recorded in the system and thus valued by the school. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Yusuf's father liked the school's standardized approach to learning. But so did many of the others – many children could tell us what level they were for each subject – including their actual level, predicted level, target level and stretch level! As Salma explained: "It's quite good because they keep what track, like, if you're going on track. All your levels, they know all your levels and they know if you have to boost it or you're doing good. So I think it's good that they have all that". And middle class Adriana's dad explained to us carefully that visible metrics make the school fair: "Given the kind of school it is and the kind of intake it has... you know, they have to be fair and they can't just sort of selectively be disciplinarians for the people who they think might be trouble and let the others do what they like".

We were tempted to argue that the school exemplified the inexorable logic of a mediatized institution of surveillance and control, imposing a relentless regime of discipline and the standardisation of learning that reduced knowledge to test results (Rawolle, 2010; Livingstone, 2014). But since the families liked the system, we found ourselves wondering whether growing up in an individualised society where traditional anchors have become disembedded, and the struggle for success is acutely felt, perhaps this system offered a welcome clarity and even a sense of justice. Can one really ask today's risk-averse parents to experiment with flexible and unproven forms of learning and assessment when the payoff is risky?

4. World Challenge: connections versus disconnections

One of the advantages of spending a full year with the class was that we could follow how some events developed slowly, over time. In such ways, the subtle patterns of connections and disconnections – both desired and problematic – could be traced across the sites of home, school and peer group. For instance, at the start of the school year the whole year group of some 250 13-year-olds were invited to participate in a “World Challenge” – a two-week trip to Malaysia for those who could win the competition to enter and raise the necessary (and sizeable) funds to participate. The prize was to see the rainforest and learn about the lives of people in developing countries – it promised “an amazing journey of self-discovery”, connecting individual and collaborative activities across school, home, and community, locally and globally, through digital networks (for a more detailed account, see Livingstone, 2015). Around one-third of our class entered the competition, with a seemingly sensible set of decisions resulting in just a handful being selected – all from middle-class homes, mostly white.

Our interest was in the “digital” dimension of the World Challenge. The participants were meant to connect with each other locally and globally to co-ordinate shared activities and monitor progress. Several digital networks were established to enable this: an email network for the participants and teacher at school; an intranet to record their progress and funds raised; a website to explain about the wider Challenge, with forums to network with those in other schools. Yet we observed a catalogue of minor but telling problems over the year, and for us they exemplified related difficulties of digital technology that we witnessed in classrooms, after-school clubs and efforts to connect school and home. We watched the teacher try to demonstrate the World Challenge website to the students on the day that the school's internet went down. On another day she had forgotten her password. When she posted meeting minutes on the school's intranet, it turned out that the students did not know how to access it. And so on.

This is not to say the project failed – it was successful. But it succeeded as a highly local, largely “offline” effort. The young people met face to face after school to review their progress and discuss the next tasks. They organised fundraising events at school (a parent quiz night, a cake sale, an Easter egg hunt) and in their neighbourhood (babysitting, car washing, bag-packing in an upscale supermarket). Only after they finally got to Malaysia were the photos of the trip delightedly uploaded to Facebook for all to see.

So isn't this the digital age? Well, yes, but the imperative to connect is not as straightforward as often supposed. For, while digital networks can connect home and school, youth and adults, local and global spheres, both teachers and young people have a lot invested in keeping their lives separate, under their own control and away from the scrutiny of the other. For instance, we suggested to both the teacher and the students that it would be helpful to set up a Facebook group to co-ordinate World Challenge activities. The teacher thought this a good idea, but worried that it would give the students access to her profile, her personal life. Unbeknown to her, however, the students had already set up a Facebook group to co-ordinate themselves, but they didn't want to give a teacher access to their profiles either!

Since the school, as we have seen, was very competent in handling the school Information Management System, we cannot conclude that the problems of the World Challenge reflected limitations less of skill than of will. Interviews with teachers revealed they precisely did not want to use digital media to connect to students and parents. To protect their time, their privacy, their authority, and to avoid the influx of mess and muddle that they imagined was dominant at home. Still, it isn't that nothing is changing for young people in the digital age. The World Challenge, as with use of the School Information Management System – although undertaken conscientiously and often pleasurably, surely reinforce the ethos of instrumentalized knowledge, individualised competition and reproduction of social advantage, bolstering rather than transcending barriers between home and school, and far from managing to realise the potential of digital media to scaffold new forms of learning or build new pathways to opportunity.

5. Conclusions

Now that digital networks underpin and enable social networks, it seems that the logic of the digital age dictates that connection is good and, therefore, disconnection is bad. In our public and private lives, at micro and macro levels, getting more connected is called for, planned for and celebrated. Connections are heterarchical, agentic, creative. Many hope that the affordances of digital, networked technologies can be harnessed to connect disaffected or “underperforming” young people

with exciting learning opportunities, or disillusioned teachers with innovative ways of engaging their students, or marginalised families with knowledge traditionally accessible only to the privileged. But how many connections do people need or want? And do our institutions yet know how to sustain them? After spending a year with the class, it became clear to me that, on the one hand, there are plenty of reasons why disconnections could be positive and connections intrusive, and, on the other hand, plenty of reasons why connections could be improved – better mediated digitally, but also better connections across home and school, child and adult.

In our book we concluded in terms of 3 C's. First, a dominant theme was competition – the competitive individualism of the aspiring middle-classes, now spreading also to encompass the diversity of families including many poor ones. This often led to enthusiastic adoption of digital media goods along with the latest digital skills; but the vision is not necessarily that of connected learning, and it certainly doesn't promote social justice. Undercutting the pressure to compete we also saw various forms of conservatism, with a little "C", as parents sought reflexively and children more instinctively to resist the onward rush of social change, shoring up traditions, evading the demands of commercialism, remembering to value conversation, face-to-face where possible, and finding tactics to resist the reach of the digital. Digital media were often appropriated for these purposes too, although often not particularly creatively. The third C is for connections. If we are to get more ambitious for our children, and if we are excited by the potential of digital media to overcome barriers to interaction, enabling hybridity and flexibility, it will be vital to respect people's conservative desire to protect traditional interests, find better ways to undercut the pressures to compete, work with rather than against young people's imperatives as agents, and make a more compelling case for the opportunities that shouldn't be missed.

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Videogames as a Political Medium: The Case of *Mass Effect* and the Gendered Gaming Scene of Dissensus

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Abstract

Videogames scholars rarely engage with concepts from political sciences to explain the presence of political themes such as gender within the medium. In this chapter, I intend to fill this gap and argue how videogames are “political”, supported by an analysis of the videogame trilogy *Mass Effect* and interviews conducted with ME players in Brazil. I argue that videogames are often part of “scenes of dissensus” regarding societal debates, based in Jacques Rancière conceptualization of politics as defiant of the consensus created by the police order. In the first part, I will argue that videogames are political in three axes: production, content and consumption. At the production level, videogame politics of production are correlated to a shift in the industry after the crash of the 80s. The content axis derives from production choices and discusses the prevalence of physical and symbolic violence narratives. The consumption level unveils the dynamics of production and consumption as they affect gamers’ experience of play and everyday political conversation. The second part of this chapter discusses a particular dimension of the political, namely gender. The discussion focuses on the core elements of this scene of dissensus within videogames, from its brief gendered history to the three phases of gender research in videogames (Richard, 2013) and its main points of contention. The third part of this chapter focuses on a case study to clarify the dissensus and the “political” within the boundaries of gendered gaming using the trilogy *Mass Effect* as a case in study. The analysis follows two axes: production-content, discussing game mechanics and in-game representation of female characters, and content-consumption, discussing the perceptions of gamers regarding *Mass Effect* gendered content in relation to their wider knowledge of videogames culture and informed by their personal experiences as gendered beings.

Keywords Videogames, Scene Of Dissensus, Gender, Mass Effect

1. Introduction

Defining politics is a complicated task: as Heywood (2013: 2) argues, the term is “loaded” with several understandings of what politics stands for circulating in society. Heywood argues that politics as an “arena” and as a “process” are the two main broad approaches in political research. The former is a research approach that refers to a “place” where we study the “science of government” and other public affairs that are situated in a confined, institutionalized space. The latter is concerned with the dynamics of political action within virtually endless spaces in society (ibid.: 2-3). The concept of politics that is adopted here is grounded in Rancière’s distinction between the police order and politics as a dynamic of dissensus. It is concerned, firstly, with politics as a “process”. Nonetheless, Rancière’s conceptualization of politics does not refuse the importance of institutionalized arenas and “formal” state politics, as they are also places of dissensus.

In *Ten theses on politics* (Rancière and Corcoran, 2010), Rancière’s core argument is based on the opposition to politics that is seen as conditioned by power. Rancière criticizes the idea that politics is about those in power and argues that the “without part” is essential for politics to exist. Politics is, therefore, not about specific power struggles, nor is it a simple opposition of ideologies and goals, but it is “an opposition between logics that count the parties and parts of the community in different ways” (ibid.: 35). The “police order” and “politics” are the labels Rancière uses to refer to these opposing logics. Their discrepancies appear through the “distribution of the sensible” (Rancière, 2004). For the police order, the distribution imposes norms and rules onto the bodies, dictating how groups and individuals should behave and act in society. The police order is not “a social function”. It is neither an institution nor a state apparatus of repression, but rather a “symbolic constitution of the social”. Politics, then, is the disruption of this constitution that happens through the partaking of the “without part”¹ in society.

Democracy, he argues, is “the very institution of politics itself” (Rancière and Corcoran, 2010: 31) as it is played out in the tension between the police order and the voice of those “without part”, the *demos*, or those “who speaks when he is not to speak [...] the one who partakes in what he has no part in” (ibid.). The tension manifests itself as a dissensus, not as a dualist conflict, but as a “gap in the sensible itself” (ibid.: 38) often lived by the “without part”. Rancière’s work demonstrates simultaneously the imbalances of who retains the right to speak within society and the subtle forms through which the unheard deal with the police consensus.

1 The “without part” are those groups and individuals outside the sphere of visibility in society. Minority groups, such as women and LGBTQA+, for instance, are considered “without part” in this definition as they remain at the margins of society while struggling to be heard and seen, of practicing politics as political beings.

Rancière understands the imbalance as not just a matter of power, but *also* as a consensual establishment of societal roles.

This chapter focuses on a particular societal realm outside institutionalized politics, namely videogames, raising the question whether, and in particular how, videogames are political. Taking Rancière's theoretical framework as a starting point, this chapter will first explore the academic literature on the political aspects of videogames in general, using three axes – production, content and consumption. A second part will zoom in on (the literature on) the gendered scene of dissensus within videogames culture. Lastly, a case study on the videogame *Mass Effect* is used to illustrate the gender politics of videogames.

2. Videogames and politics

If we understand politics as a scene of dissensus that stretches beyond the realm of institutional state politics, how do videogames fit in this scenario? Videogame's political potential appears, for example, in its content and through its correlation with other cultural products. It is also present in how certain production values work in the development sphere. The effort towards reframing the medium discourse, from an entertainment-only device to one that allows serious issues to be raised, manifests this potential. Recently the games industry started to explore more possibilities in independent yet successful games such as *This War of Mine*² and *Papers, Please*³ – both having the “unseen”, the “without part”, as key characters in the debate of warfare consequences for the population, in the case of the former, and immigration policies, in the case of the latter. I present these political dynamics within videogames culture using three axes: production, content and consumption.

Starting with the production axis, we can say that videogames are produced by a “mass entertainment” industry grounded in ICT developments. Production costs are high, as they demand specialized expertise and expensive machinery. This is especially true for the industry of “Triple A” games – akin to blockbusters in cinema. The demand for profit adds another layer of cost to the equation: a “Triple A” game must be able to return on investment and, simultaneously, consider the generation of extra funds for new projects. Even if its history is recent, videogames,

2 Although data on the overall sales of the game are difficult to gather, the developers, 11 Bit Studios, affirm that in only two days from its release the game already paid itself through its sales. According to data from SteamSpy, *This War of Mine* has sold, up to the 4th of October 2016, 1.413.904 copies.

3 *Papers, Please*, released on 2013, sold 1.521.053 copies on Steam, but it is also available as an iOS app, therefore its sales figures might be higher.

as an industry, went through a severe crisis during the 80s. After a blooming start as a new industry, the crash of the 80s became a turning point and almost ended videogames at the time (Wolf, 2008: 103-106). However, the rebranding of videogames by Nintendo, defining it as a toy, caused the industry to breathe once again.

Ultimately, the crash defined the politics of production: videogames became a certain type of content, developed with a certain demographic in mind, defined through marketing research, in order to create faithful consumers that wished for well-defined content crafted for them. The political in the production axis manifests itself in at least two aspects: the first is the politics within the developers' teams, related to its organizational hierarchies (Kerr, 2006; Kline et al., 2003) and power struggles (Dyer-Witherford and De Peuter, 2009), but also to its mere composition. For instance, development teams are mainly comprised of white men: the International Game Developers Association report informs that more than three quarters of developers identify themselves as Caucasian males (Weststar and Andrei-Gedja, 2015: 9). The remaining quarter is populated by Asians and Latinos, with African and African Americans constituting only 2.5% of the workforce. Secondly, the politics of production affect the decision-making processes regarding the production and release of certain games over others: which videogames will be sold to the carefully constructed audience, how much potential profit will be made from that title and so on (Kerr, 2006). These considerations affect, for instance, the content of the videogames that prevail in the industry. Focusing on a young-male demographic from the start, Nintendo and other companies decided on developing certain kinds of games that became their golden pots.

Content also matters in this discussion, which brings us to the second axis. During the early days of videogames, technology did not allow a great variety in mechanics and narratives. However, videogames rule-based system and military origins have made it, from the start, a source of competition (*Pong*) and violent conflict (*Spacewar!*). Where the first is often seen as an interesting and healthy aspect of videogames, the second has been widely debated in academia by scholars working on media effects and media psychology (Anderson et al., 2010; Ferguson et al., 2008), but it is also a common theme in other media. Violence in videogames has triggered a key and society-wide political debate, which is, by now, contested within videogames themselves. *Undertale* (2015), for example, proposes a discussion on the use of violence as problem-solver in videogames. It is possible to spend most of the game without engaging in violent action against other players, solving almost everything through dialogue – except for the final boss fight where you need to use violence, a shift constructed narratively through the gameplay until the fighting moment.

Of course, not all games rely on physical violence to motivate gameplay, but they might still rely on a more surreptitious form of violence, at the level of the symbolic, which often reinforces several hegemonic ideologies. Symbolic

violence is persistent in videogames, for instance, in the way how certain demographics and minorities are represented, both in terms of graphics and narrative roles. Leonard (2006), for instance, focuses on racism and on the biased portrayal of African and Middle-Eastern males as enemies doomed to be defeated by a stereotypical male hero. Shaw (2014) studies LGBTQ+ players at the “margins” of gaming and argues that representations in videogames are not harmless, as they are part of a broader social and media context where discourses of oppression are constantly reinforced (Shaw, 2014: 2).

The political choices of production are oriented towards what is expected in terms of content, and who is going to consume the said content. This brings us to the third axis: consumption. With varying degrees, from the apparently innocent *Super Mario* to more aggressive games (at both the physical and symbolic level), such as *Grand Theft Auto*, developers have, more often than not, privileged violence-based mechanics, white-male protagonists and the use of elements that speak to male culture overall. However, these production processes and the resulting content do not undermine the participation of the “without part” in videogames culture. Despite the focus on the hardcore male gamer as their primary target audience, secondary audiences come in scope once a videogame has been established, as Kerr (2006: 100) points out. Therefore, it is safe to assume that the videogames audience is considerably diverse – even though said diversity lacks (political) representation, and the without part have trouble making their voices heard within videogame culture. For instance, several studies on sexuality and gaming demonstrate the presence and importance of LGBTQ+ communities within the videogames culture. Their focus is not only on in-game representation (Shaw and Friesem, 2016; Johnson, 2013) and identification (Shaw, 2014), but also on the use of videogames as a place to perform one’s own sexual identity, especially in massive multiplayer online role-playing games (Pulos, 2013; Sherlock, 2013), or as a space for LGBTQ+ political activism (Goulart, Hennigen and Nardi, 2015).

What further complicates this constellation is that, as a medium, videogames are also cultural tokens, “*talk-about-able objects [...] in public conversations about broader societal issues*” (Steinkuehler, 2006: 100). Therefore, the axis of consumption as proposed here is less concerned with who consumes and why, and more with how said consumption is converted into tokens for everyday political conversation (Gamson, 1992), which adds other aspects of one’s experience to this consumption. Gamson’s (1992) study found that people bring to the forefront of political conversation arguments from personal experience, common sense and knowledge of peers, making them clash with what they heard from media discourses. Videogames, as a contemporary player in the media ecology, become part of an individual argumentative repertoire. They add to everyday political conversations when they appear in media discourses, in cases like Columbine, with discussions about the media effects

of violence, or in the case of the 2007 controversy regarding *Mass Effect*'s sex scenes (which were depicted in a Fox news item in the US). They inform long discussions on online forums such as Reddit or in the comments section of news, especially in relation to a "gendered scene of dissensus" that is highly controversial within videogames culture. Moreover, they affect how gamers experience videogames: having their own identities reflected on screen not only provides personal motivations to play, but opens up possibilities of a political shift within the videogames industry.

3. A gendered scene of dissensus

A key theme in political discussion within videogame culture is gender. In this section, I zoom in on this aspect, in order to trace the core elements of this scene of dissensus, starting from its brief gendered history, discussing the three phases of gender research in videogames (Richard, 2013) and its main points of contention. Despite the Atari era marketing (claiming that videogames were "for everyone"), the industry crash during the early 80s was a turning point regarding gender (Lien, 2013; Wolf, 2008). In order to rise again, as a desired product of consumption, the Japanese company Nintendo rebranded videogames as a toy, predominantly focusing on a boy demographic, as the company's research pointed to them as the main consumers of technology. Thornham (2008: 132) argues that the persistent perception of videogame practice as a "boy thing" potentially affected women's adherence to gaming, as they were not expected to play videogames after childhood years.

After the shift towards boys as the initial target audience of videogames, initiated by Nintendo, the female presence within videogames culture became secondary. The marketing discourse no longer defined them as a target, and female in-game representations became more sexualized. A study on videogame covers by Burgess et al. (2007: 427) discusses the prevalence of male characters in the spotlight, while female characters, if/when present, take a subordinate position on the cover. Videogame reviews, both online and in print, also favored the discussion and representation of the male characters, while using hypersexualized female imagery as eye-catchers, as Ivory (2006) and Fisher (2015) argue. Initiatives such as the "pink games" by Brenda Laurel in the 90s, in order to create games oriented to girls, proved that there was a female public interested in gaming, but the stereotypically gendered nature of the games produced within the movement did little to improve matters of representation and inclusion. Laurel's initiative coincides with the first comprehensive publication about gender and videogames. According to Richard (2013: 270), the first wave of gender and games research studied differences in relation to the experience of play and gender. In the process, gender stereotypes prevalent in society became replicated. The second wave, marked by Cassell and Jenkins' (1998) publication

and its “sequel” by Kafai et al. (2008), tackles this critical issue within the first wave and includes a broader social and cultural context to gaming experiences, moving beyond stereotypes (Richard, 2013: 272). The third and current wave is intersectional, where different aspects of one’s identity, for example, are taken into account to analyze videogame production, content and consumption. In doing so, the third wave moves from a “gender study” of videogames to a broader discussion of gender, queer and feminist theories applied to gaming practices (Richard, 2013: 278).

The theme of in-game representations, in terms of character design and storytelling, spans the three waves as the main debate regarding gender. One of the core arguments in this debate, as it is raised by Williams et al. (2009), is the relationship between the dominant male character representation in videogames and the lack of women developers in the industry. They argue that videogame creation relies on the self-identification of developers with the in-game characters, leading to a gender imbalance in the industry (Williams et al. 2009: 828-830). Their findings support Williams’ (2006) previous study, in which he argues that a male-centered circuit of videogames development led to lack of diversity in games content. Recent results of the 2015 International Game Developers Association (IGDA) report shows that a wide gap between male and female developers still exists (Weststar and Andrei-Gedja, 2015).⁴

These claims about a causal relationship are, of course, not the only explanations for the lack of in-game gender diversity. For instance, Anthropy’s (2012) manifesto argues that the main path towards a “real” change in videogames content is not workforce diversity in the development studios, but the popularization of game-making technologies so that potentially everyone could develop their own games mirroring their own experiences and identities. Flanagan and Nissembaum (2014) still defend the change within the professional industry and propose a “value-based” design system that teaches videogame developers, independently of their identity, to create inclusive and respectful games. Shaw’s (2014) work demonstrates that, to a certain extent, these different debates and their proposed solutions regarding content are not sufficient to understand the issue of representation and identification. Her study with several gamers at the margins of gaming – the “without part” – argues that identifying with a character, or having an interesting experience of play, does not have to constitute – and often does not, according to her interviewees – a direct relationship between one’s own identity and a character’s identity. Her study defies common assumptions of representation automatically leading to identification, arguing that representing minorities, due to “quota” or to social pressure, does not always amount to a fair representation of minority issues.

4 According to the report, self-identified female developer comprises 22% of the demographics of game industry, while 76% self-identified as male.

4. Mass Effect and gendered gaming

The last part of the chapter illustrates the discussion above and demonstrates how the political dynamics of production, content and consumption apply to the development and playing of a particular videogame, namely the *Mass Effect* trilogy. The analysis is based on ten interviews with Brazilian players from two cities, Belo Horizonte and Rio de Janeiro, and on a videogames content analysis. The interviewees were selected keeping diversity regarding gender and sexuality in mind, in order to encompass the different experiences of life and play. The analysis used a narrative method approach (Somers, 1994) to extract from each interviewee their stories and experiences, and how they related to broader socio-political contexts and a gendered scene of dissensus. The narrative approach is, according to Somers (1994), a means to “*make sense of the social world*” and “*constitute our social identities*” (ibid.: 606). There is a move, she argues, from a representational narrative approach to a social epistemology and ontology approach which allows the researcher to engage with “*historically and empirically based research into social action and social agency that is at once temporal, relational, and cultural, as well as institutional, material, and macro-structural*” (ibid.: 607). The case study of *Mass Effect* has two components, the production-content axis and the content-consumption axis, to look at the representations of the female characters and the gamers experience with gendered play.

Mass Effect story is set in a futuristic sci-fi scenario where humanity belongs to a complex galaxy-wide society populated by several species. The trilogy, which started in 2007, achieved great success among gaming communities, creating a considerable fan-base in constant interaction, debating the game and creating material based on its lore. As highlighted by Williams et al. (2009: 823), videogames research often shy away from studying the games that are indeed played by a massive quantity of gamer public. Analysing *Mass Effect*, a bestselling and award-winning game, can reveal different facets of videogames culture when it comes to exploring gender politics.

4.1. Production-content axis

As previously argued, the politics of production can become intimately connected with which kind of content will appear in a game. In the case of *Mass Effect*, a high budget “Triple A” game, production decisions regarding gender are of particular interest. The game is developed by Bioware, a company reckoned among gamers by its good reputation on listening the fan-base and fostering dialogue with them in order to “*further improve the quality of the game components on which the studio*

built its reputation” (Heineman, 2015: 2). *Mass Effect* lead developer Casey Hudson says that Bioware’s games intend to tackle gamer emotions through their identification with the game’s characters, which turns this into an “informal” company police rather than just a neutral matter of content creation (Heineman, 2015: 6).

To achieve this objective, a set of diverse characters is needed and has been delivered, to a certain extent, throughout the trilogy. The first step was a customizable main character when it comes to gender and sexuality. Unlike several other RPG’s, where such change matters little in terms of gameplay and game content, *Mass Effect*’s emotionally engaging narrative does add flavor to this choice, moving beyond the pure game mechanics. Hudson values the possibility that players were given, as he believes games “*can allow you to explore how you feel [...] but also about how you might do things that you can’t do in real life (e.g., to role-play a character of a different gender)*” (Heineman, 2015: 6). For some of my interviewees, in particular for the female interviewees, customizable characters are deemed necessary, as they allow the player to digitally perform their own identities. It is seen as an important move towards content diversity.

In a critique of how *Mass Effect* naturalizes too many matters of gender and sexuality, Angelina states, however, that these issues do not hinder the game’s qualities and her gaming experience. As a bisexual/asexual woman, she claims that her own identity “influenced (my) way of playing any game”. She favors Role Playing Games in her gaming choices. My male interviewees would often play as woman too, and experience this gender performance, at least, to an extent. Chester’s reaction to his choice to perform a lesbian female is interesting as he admits to himself that he falls into a stereotypical erotization of female homosexuality when doing so. On the other hand, Ron, a gay male, argued that, grounded in his identity, he desires to play as a female and lesbian character because the game allows him to.

Regarding design decisions, however, the game still relies on common tropes in relation to gender imageries. Jeremiah, an enthusiast fan of the female character Jack, a powerful biotic with a very interesting back-story and development, is critical about her design, as she “wears a suit that covers 0.5% of her body and you can question if that is really needed”. Jack’s design is also an issue for Robin, who considers it to be “awkward” and “very sexualized”, considering that “she was in prison; it (the clothes) has a bad tone”. Alice also points Jack’s lack of clothes as an issue, but understands that her tattooed body is “a clothing” in itself that aligns with character personality.

Interviewees often considered the representation of female bodies a major problem in a game that is still perceived as “progressive” regarding gendered representations. Rahna referred to a *Mass Effect* art book during the interview, outraged by the design options available to different female characters concluding that the final choice “could be worse”. She questions why the different designs

for women are variations on how to better portray cleavage, while male characters such as Garrus have several designs of his battle scars and “bad ass” looks – a typical male trope of militarized bodies.

4.2. *Content-consumption axis*

The consumption axis, as it is utilized here, is concerned with the relationship between videogame play and gamers use of its content as argumentative tokens to discuss gender issues. Considering videogames as part of a gendered scene of dissensus allows us to understand the role that the medium plays in reinforcing dominant gender discourses. Videogames have a usual preset of protagonists that Robin, a transgender male, described as the “40-year-old bearded man that lost his family” trope and several variations of unlikely heroes that are always male. In this regard, *Mass Effect* brings to the scene a series of contradictions. The representation of female characters sparks mixed feelings: Rahna believes that the sexualization of women in any game, in order to please men, is unnecessary and meaningless, but *Mass Effect* is still able to create interesting female characters that “are sexualized, but strong, they have a history behind them”. This does not ignore, however, the existence of broader problems within gaming, where, she says, “there is still a lot of resistance, a lot of people doing stupid stuff, a lot of women being harassed in online games”. Videogames are simultaneously a site of consensus – with defined (yet implicit) rules about who can/should play, which forms of bodies are/should be represented – and a site of dissensus, as “the police order” expectations are often challenged by the “without part” who wish to create a welcoming space for themselves within videogames culture.

Videogames as tokens for political debate about gender are an important tool of self-affirmation for the female demographic. My female interviewees had a similar discourse of wanting to feel represented, arguing that this debate should go beyond the gamer community itself, as it could potentially bring in new players. Representation, as Angelina says, is very important for minorities in gaming:

And this (diversity in *Mass Effect*) influences my gameplay a lot because I need this representation I don't even say in regard of “MY” bisexuality, but of the no-heterosexuality. [...] It influences a lot, primarily if there are characters openly non-white or non-heterosexual. You fell more... attracted to (have) a relationship, of any sort, with those characters. I think it is important, necessary, and it's past the time for this (diversity in games) to happen.

Male interviewees, in contrast, present a discourse of relative support to diversity – that representation is needed – but a character being men or women does

not matter much to them when playing. Some prefer to focus on the mechanics, instead of “forced romances and dialogues” that feel “unnatural” to them. This discourse is in tandem with societal discourses of media representation where those who are overly represented do not seem to grasp the urge of minority groups to be represented. For Jeremiah, however, videogames tackling the gendered dissensus cannot be stopped, as this would imply a regression that “does not fit videogames as a medium anymore”. He highlights that the gamer public is “not only politically conservative, but also conservative on understanding what is a videogame”, seeing it as just entertainment and refusing their “socio-political aspects (*because*) they think it is a perversion of the essence of videogames”.

5. Conclusion

This brief analysis of *Mass Effect*’s production, content and consumption allows a dialogue with Shaw (2014) findings, to an extent. My interviewees tend to adopt a political stance that in-game representation is necessary, and, for them, it also leads to identification. Their position conflicts with those demonstrated by Shaw’s study, where her interviewees state that a character “could be a bunny for all I care” (Shaw, 2014: 98) and perceive character development in terms of narrative to be the primary factor regarding representation/identification. *Mass Effect* is a game that promises to deliver both in-game representation of minorities, compelling character development, and opportunities for the players to identify with diverse characters. If Bioware still fails on delivering less stereotypical representations of female imagery in terms of design, they seem to be able to provide a set of strong characters from both genders that appeal to gamers.

The interviewees perceive the matter of being represented, or not, on screen as a political matter, which is related to the evolution of videogames medium and their consumers. From a simple graphical representation that is fair and non-sexualized to the development of strong female characters that rupture expected stereotypes, videogames can be key tools for diversity politics. The responses from my interviewees also demonstrate how their perception of these matters goes beyond a single game. Shaw states that games researchers should look beyond the text, and I want to add that games researchers should look beyond the ludic form of gaming, in order to understand the importance of representation and identification, because “*subjective reasons for play and personal preferences*” (Shaw, 2014: 109) play a major role in one’s experience with a videogame. My interviewees built on their own experiences with videogame culture in general to discuss the issue of gendered dissensus in videogames: *Mass Effect* is simply a starting point for their arguments.

Within videogame culture, the “without part” are struggling to rupture the “videogames police consensus” regarding women, in the three axis of production, content and consumption. My differentiated set of interviewees allows me to see some of these conflictual positions within the realm of consensus and the constant push for dissent. My female and transgender interviewees use a more political discourse regarding issues that affect them directly, while the male interviewees barely comment on the issue, unless provoked to do so, with the exception of Jeremiah, who assumes to have been subjected to good influences from his friends (and from videogames), changing his world views. To which extent videogames’ role on the gendered scene of dissensus can lead to society-wide improvements remains to be seen, but the current changes within the videogames scene demonstrate that the gamers and the industry may have started, in this “scene of dissensus”, to slowly rupture the police order consensus about gendered gaming.

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Biography

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SECTION 2

STRATEGIES AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF MEDIA AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

The Spanish Contribution to the Study of Cultural Industries. The First Steps

Montse Bonet

Abstract

Between the introduction of the term “culture industry” in the late 1940s by German thinkers as Adorno and Horkheimer, and the promotion of the concept “creative industries” at the end of the past century, a group of French scholars developed complementing critical approaches in the 1970s that offered a platform for a robust, specific theoretical approach that Spanish authors would further develop. The article offers a review of the most relevant contributions of these authors, focussing on the Spanish ones. To do this, an exhaustive bibliographical review was carried out and two principal Spanish representatives were interviewed.

Keywords Cultural Industries, Communication, Culture, Political Economy of Communication and Culture, Spain

Professor Enrique Bustamante (2009: 5) states that the “cultural industries” concept “*has spawned and continues to create abuses as well as deformations or excesses. [...] But that probably occurs with all ambitious concepts of the social sciences, which not only evolve like living beings, but rather also are twisted, diverted and, at times, manipulated*”. Effectively, the term as well as the theoretical approach known as Political Economy of Communication (and of Culture) or any other, evolve, mutate and adapt themselves to each context according to the historical moment. Within this historical context, one of the elements that is frequently forgotten is the idiomatic one, that is, in which way the same approach can evolve with distinct nuances according to the language used to publish and extend knowledge.

1. From a cultural industry to cultural industries

Even though the term “cultural industry” has become widely accepted, any study of this industry should be considered in the general context of economic approaches to culture. Attempts have been made for almost 50 years to find out about, classify, understand and provide a robust (albeit not unified) theoretical discourse for these types of industry. The term “cultural industry”, even though still being the most widely used term, is not the only one that serves to refer to the same thing (Jones, 1989). In the United States, in 1962, the economist Fritz Machlup spoke of the knowledge industry, a term which served for him to refer to the specific weight of this industrial sector within the Gross National Product, more than to propose discussions on the commercialization of culture. The German Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1969) spoke of the industry of the manipulation of the conscience. Even more ambitious was the conceptualisation of information society of Marc Uri Porat, who tried to define a new type of society, marked by the advent of telecommunications, in the 1970s (Porat, 1978). The Spanish teacher and researcher, Daniel E. Jones, specialist in media system, clarified that:

[T]he concept of just cultural industries can make one think of an excessive preference for only some of the phases of the productive process, focused on fabrication. At the same time, if reference is only made to ‘culture’ and not to ‘communication’, the impression is given of a certain forgetting of the sub-system of the means of mass communication, a key piece of any contemporary social system (Jones, 1989: 137).

The very first analyses of cultural industries spring from the reflections of exiled German thinkers like Adorno and Horkheimer, who coined the term “culture industry” in 1947. In the book *The culture industry* (1967) Adorno said that they had chosen this term to ensure that no-one could mistake it for mass culture.

Culture created by the masses was one thing, and culture that “creates” masses was another. As representatives of European high culture, these German thinkers’ critical approach is widely known, as is the intellectual astonishment that some of them felt on discovering mass communication research in their host country (the United States). Confronted with partial or sectorial studies in the field of mass communications research, conceived as isolated units of society, critics decided to analyse and interpret culture in its full societal context; for this reason, critical theory is presented as a theory of society taken as a whole (Wolf, 1987). According to Ramón Zallo (1992), the really new aspect was not the commercialisation of culture, which already existed in the visual and performing arts, or the application of industrial procedures to cultural production, which can be found in the music, film or radio industries, but rather the application of Taylorist principles of labour organisation to cultural production.

In the United States in the 1950s, Dallas Smythe and Herbert Schiller developed a critical approach to the political economy of communications, representing the next stage in the critical approach to administrative research. According to Mattelart and Mattelart (1997), the political economy of communications has two focal points: it starts off as a reflection on the imbalance in information flows between developed and developing countries (Schiller, Ewen, Tunstall, Palmer, Nordenstreng and Varis, among others) and then goes on to analyse – from a second, essentially European focal point in the second half of 1970s – a greater link between culture and capital in the form of cultural industries. This European focal point was represented by theoretical contributions of scholars from three countries: the United Kingdom, France and Spain. According to Mattelart and Mattelart (1997: 84), 1978 was an important year: it was then that the study of the Grenoble group, led by Bernard Miège, was first published, producing a relevant change: “*The notion of ‘cultural industries’, adopted by the European Culture ministers meeting in Athens, makes its entrance in the administrative announcements of a European Community organism: the Council of Europe*”. Finally, according to the authors, in the 1980s cultural industries were converted into a topic of interest in distinct academic communities, among others in Québec and Spain; in the latter a few sociologists employed the critical approach during the final years of the Franco dictatorship.

In an exhaustive table, Juan Luis Millán Pereira (1993) sums up the various schools of thought forming part of the information economy. Out of a total of 14, here we would like to underscore the political economy of cultural industries, represented by Patrice Flichy, Ramón Zallo, Enrique Bustamante, Nicholas Garnham, Bernard Miège, Graham Murdock, Peter Golding and Giuseppe Richeri. According to Millán Pereira, their main contributions are the concept of cultural industries, the approach to cultural production, distribution and consumption, and the political economy – or critical – perspective.

Graham Murdock and Peter Golding (2005) opt for a critical approach “*which necessarily engages with empirical research*” (p. 61). The authors define critical political economy (to distinguish it from mainstream economics) thus: it is holistic; it is historical; it is concerned with the balance between capitalist enterprise and public intervention (this detail is of particular interest in Europe, where traditional public broadcasting monopolies are the norm) and it goes beyond technical issues of efficiency to engage with basic moral questions of justice, equity and public good. For his part, Nicholas Garnham (2005) recalls that the political economy of communications approach was especially important in the United Kingdom during market liberalisation and deregulation in the 1980s and 1990s, focusing on the analysis on the dynamics of the cultural sector, based on the symbolic and intangible nature of its products, which was often used as an excuse to justify its regulation. Effectively, the peak of the critical approach coincides with a decade characterized by the increase of ownership concentration in media, the liberalization of telecommunications and the audiovisual de-regulation.

A similar effort to construct a classification was made by David Hesmondhalgh (2002) on the basis of the work produced by Vincent Mosco (1995), one of the leading successors of Smythe. Hesmondhalgh reviewed the theoretical perspectives of the approach to culture (cultural economics, liberal-pluralist communication studies, sociology of culture or cultural studies) and devoted a section to political economy approaches (in the plural), proposing a division between the Schiller-McChesney tradition, exemplified by Schiller, Chomsky, Herman and McChesney, and the cultural industries approach, into which the French and British would fall.

We firmly believe that it is fair to add to this list the Spaniards Zallo and Bustamante as well as the Québécois contribution by Gaëtan Tremblay and Jean-Guy Lacroix (1997) to the logics of cultural industries. To complete the table, we would need to add the contributions made in the late 1990s by the Latin American school of thought by César Bolaño and Guillermo Mastrini, among others, which is closer to the American tradition than the European one. This current arises as a reaction to the theories of development and modernisation; hence their links to the United States. As Mastrini relates (2013: 35), the critical school had great influence in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, but “*some simplifications and excesses brought about a reaction, in the 1980s, that almost completely eliminated economic analysis, considered to be economistic and deterministic*”. This critical perspective, nevertheless, rapidly reappeared, just when the concentration and control processes by part of the large communication groups were being consolidated in the area.

2. Main contributions in Spain and the French connection

According to the main actors in the Spanish school, Enrique Bustamante (2016) and Ramón Zallo (2016), the beginnings of the political economy of communication and culture in Spain and the studies on the Spanish cultural industries cannot be understood without the French connection. Bustamante remembers that the idea to set up a European communication research group arose already in the early 1980s when he came into contact with academicians from France, Great Britain and Italy. In 1982, they decided to focus the research work of the group on the changes that culture and communication were undergoing with the new technologies (at that time: cable television, videotexts, teletexts). The research was originally based in France because Miège and Musso had obtained some funding. Philip Schlesinger and Nicholas Garnham joined the group, at a time in which British scholars had already formalized the rupture between the classic school of cultural studies and that of political economy and had created the journal *Media, Culture and Society*. Some Italians, most notably Giuseppe Richeri, and Germans entered the group, but the hardcore nucleus was in France and Great Britain. Without any other help than the money in France to pay for transportation, they began to investigate public television, new technologies and social communication. For that, it is appropriate to briefly remember the principal contributions of the French scholars, basically Patrice Flichy and those of the so-called Grenoble school.

In terms of cultural industry products segmentation, Patrice Flichy (1980) divided them into cultural goods and *culture du flot* (“flow culture”), which Fernández-Quijada refers to as the “Flichian binomial” (2007). On the one hand, cultural goods are products sold in a market, each of them having a specific value in use connected with the personality of the worker or workers that conceive it. This is the case for records, films, videos and books. On the other, “flow culture” refers to products characterised by continuity and extent of dissemination. Today’s products render yesterday’s products obsolete. They are products that move between culture and information (press, radio, television, etc.).

For their part, Miège, Pajon and Salaün (1986) classify them according to five logics: in keeping with Flichy, the first two are the logic of edition and the logic of flow production, apart, that is, from the press, which forms the third, independent logic; the fourth logic is computer software production and the fifth is the delayed broadcast of live shows.

Research in communication was evolving in Spain. Grenoble and Great Britain had already worked in culture and communication and also in a vision of the political economy of communication, alternative to the predominant currents that existed at that time, above all the functionalist ones (which separated communication from culture). This was what they adopted in Spain (coinciding with the

moment in which Bustamante met Ramón Zallo around the middle of the 1980s and directed his doctoral dissertation). According to Bustamante (2016), the great contributions of the Spanish researchers of that time (who were dedicated to this) were, above all, the study of media concentration and its effects on communication and culture production and consumption, as well as the lack of pluralism as its main direct consequence. Their approach coincided very well with the Grenoble school and the already mentioned British one, offering “*a more complex vision, Marxist or neo-Marxist, but more complex of reality, and we contributed many things in the empirical study on Spain and Europe but, also, to a great extent, we provided a theoretical approach on how contemporary culture behaved in its relations with the communication media*”.

For his part, Ramón Zallo (2016) began his trajectory in the world of communication with the study of the economics of communication and culture, moving from Marxist postulates that believed that all stemmed from the processes of work and valorisation. That let him tackle a definition of the distinct cultural industries by branches. That was the basis of his doctoral dissertation (later converted into a book). His relationship with Bustamante at the end of that decade yielded, as a result, not only his doctoral dissertation but also a work considered fundamental and that both of them coordinated, *Las industrias culturales en España* (*Cultural industries in Spain*).

Zallo defines cultural industries (1988: 26) as a “[...] *set of branches, segments and auxiliary industrial activities producing and distributing symbolic goods conceived by creative labour, organized by the valorising logic of capital and ultimately destined for consumer markets, and which also plays a role in ideological and social reproduction*” (English version from Lacroix and Tremblay, 1997: 44). The most characteristic feature is that its products are symbolic and ideological content. The same author does not consider industries that supply physical media, technical equipment or communication networks to be cultural industries, despite the fact they are closely related and they represent one of the greatest sources of profit in the audiovisual industry. Moreover, unlike other classifications, Zallo includes advertising, even though he points out that it is the only cultural industry that does not have its own distribution channels and therefore needs other industries (especially media industries) to distribute its products. Zallo (1988) establishes his proposal for a segmentation of cultural industries on three basic premises: labour processes, capital valorisation processes and product characteristics. Furthermore, he takes as the basis the “branch” segment (Zallo, 1992): a dominant technology within a specific production process, expressed in a creative product (or series of creative products), a funding method and social practice.

Other authors like Juan Carlos Miguel (1993), whose PhD dissertation was directed by Zallo, propose a segmentation of cultural and media industries that acts

as a complement rather than a replacement. It is segmentation by “lines”. A line is a form of vertical integration (total or partial) encompassing the whole process that a product goes through, from the time it is conceived (or even earlier) to the time it reaches the consumer. As an example, we can study a company or group that controls the whole production process, from paper manufacturing to newspaper distribution. If it only controls the part upstream from the product (conception and production), this is what French scholars call *amont*. If it controls the part downstream from the product (broadcasting and distribution), they call it *aval*. Miguel argues that analysis by lines is complementary and helps us arrive at a better definition of the dynamic space in which media groups operate (Bonet, 1995 and 2007).

Regarding the classification proposal put forward by Zallo (1988 and 1992), and following that French connection above mentioned, within industrialised culture (craft culture, independent culture and other industrial segments also exist) we find five separate cases: *discontinuous edition industries* (Flichy’s cultural goods), two representations of “flow culture”, which are *continuous edition* (press) and *continuous broadcasting* (radio and television), as well as *advertising* and *video production*. Zallo did not consider these two latter as cultural industries strictly speaking, but two industry segments closely related to them.

3. Discussion: why Spain matters

The Spanish contribution here outlined should be put into context, as always, because it depends on a specific political, social and cultural situation at a very determined historical moment. Those years, the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, were those of inaugurating democracy in Spain, opening itself as a vast field still to be investigated. For example, the doctoral dissertation of Bustamante, which will later become a seminal and fundamental work, *Los amos de la información en España* (*The lords of information in Spain*), brought not just a few problems to the author and it was one of the detonators by which he became dedicated to university teaching and research. Spain was still a young democracy with very thin skin. Both his personal and professional trajectory as well as that of Zallo is an accurate reflection of how the democratic Spanish University was being constructed, though still with too many Francoist hindrances.

Both scholars have insisted on the fact that it is an error to separate communication and culture. For this reason, sometimes, the critical perspective continues moving within the limits of the logic of the name. “*The logic of the dominant thought and its hegemony have been precisely in that fissure, such that communication continues being basically political, but culture is a commercial terrain. In this way, cultural policies are only cultural, but never communicative, and*

communicative policies are those of the market and there is now nothing to do” (Bustamante, 2016). According to Zallo (2016): “*Political Economy of Communication is an expression I have never liked. I prefer Political Economy of Communication and Culture, the word ‘Culture’ was missing [...] Communication is part of culture [...] And Cultural Industries is one part, because the performing arts, creative arts, traditional arts and crafts are not in them... all of which has to do with social relationship*”. In fact, we could consider that this is one of their great contributions.

It is obvious that the first contacts between these academicians and the French, British, Italian and even Quebec scholars laid a basis for a good and fruitful relationship for the further development of critical Spanish political economy of communication and culture by Bustamante and Zallo. Nevertheless, upon being asked why they are so little cited and recognized outside of the Latin American and French circles (especially in the 1990s and 2000s, when their careers are more consolidated), Bustamante (2016) uses the concept of “marginalization” in the context and in the historical moment. There was a double marginalization, according to him: at the beginning of the 1980s, France “sheltered” them when both the topic and their critical perspective were very marginal; additionally, French was the dominant language of culture (he notes that even Schlesinger and Garnham spoke in French during the meetings).

In the second place, their works, often originally published in French, were rarely translated, and as the academic world has become more and more dominated by English, they are little known within the English speaking academic community. Their work has had much more influence in the Latin American world. Zallo (2016) agrees that such an idiomatic bias exists and admits, with the perspective that time gives, that it could be said that each country specialized a bit, though not in a strict manner. For example, he notes that the British were always very preoccupied in analysing the influences and structures of power; the French mainly dealt with the “insides” of the cultural industry, the way it is produced, and the Latin Americans greatly focus on the social preoccupation of some topics such as media concentration, etc. For its part, as Bustamante notes, this idiomatic bias might be because English researchers do not usually know any other language but their own. Moreover, he adds, they do not cite only due to idiomatic questions but also because some authors and topics were very marginalized.

Finally, it should be added that the studies of political economy of communication and culture in Spain were in those years basically “masculine” and, although not in an exclusive manner, very centred on the audiovisual line.

The insistence that the critical analysis of culture and communication should not be separated, the classification and the exhaustive study of each and every one of the cultural industries, the division between industrialized and non-indus-

trialized culture, as well as the defence of public service and critical perspective could be the principal contributions of the Spanish researchers in the early years of democracy – and still today.

Currently, there are more people conducting research from this critical perspective. Although it continues to be comparatively a minority approach, it is experiencing an important moment in many countries of Latin America.

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Biography

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New Scenarios in News Distribution: The Impact of News Aggregators Like Google News in The Media Outlets on the Web

Tania Lucía Cobos

Abstract

The chapter proposes a discussion about news aggregators and new digital business models such as *infomediation*, in the context of the new scenarios of news distribution on the web. In particular, it analyses the case of the news aggregator Google News: its impact, criticisms, conflicts and actions. From a broader point of view, how the *Fifth Estate* – represented by multinational technological companies on the internet, Google in this case – challenges, transforms and reassesses the *Fourth Estate* – represented by the large and small media outlets – and it imposes its conditions on a dynamic of *coopetition* or symbiosis between them in the so-called era of web 2.0.

Keywords News Aggregators, News Distribution, Digital Journalism, Google News, Media Companies

1. Introduction

The *Fourth Estate*,¹ a term often attributed to Edmund Burke in 1787 (but also to Henry Brougham in 1823-4 or Thomas Macaulay in 1828), alluded to the power exercised by the press on public opinion and its role as the first vehicle of revolutionary ideas in Europe (Galán-Gamero, 2013). “*The press has been the grand instrument of the subversion of order, of morals, of religion, and I may say of human society itself*” (Burke, 1826: 145).

Over subsequent years and the technological developments that led to the appearance of the other mass media, the term *Fourth Estate* came to refer to a range of media outlets, including press, television and radio. In 1948, Harold Lasswell identified that the mass media exercised four functions in society – 1. Environmental monitoring; 2. Correlation with the environment; 3. Transmission of culture and, 4. Entertainment (Wright, 1986: 15; Lozano, 2007: 25) – that brought out the power of the media outlets and their influence on public opinion. Behind this *Fourth Estate*, which is neither absolute nor hegemonic and carries with it its own constraints, contradictions and varying ranges of action, are the organizations or media companies and finally their owners.

The internet emerged in the last two decades of the 20th century and it was characterized as an interpersonal media and as a mass media (Cardoso, 2010: 128); for someone it was a new media, while for others it was a convergent media. Its impact has been vast, deep and transversal in all areas of society. Dutton (2009) proposed that it has given rise to the *Fifth Estate*, and technology companies, particularly those that have their base of operations on the internet, as the actors behind it.

The *Fifth Estate* is based on permanent technological developments in hardware and software that together make possible a wide range of digital services interconnected in real time and usually at zero cost in terms of money. This empowers the citizens with instruments to make their voice heard in exchange for allowing the tracking, through algorithms, of their personal information, behaviors and digital consumption with different objectives. A power that, by promoting a relationship of dependence with others sectors of society, influences, determines, indicts and controls. It is also a power that defies, transforms and revalues, among others, the *Fourth Estate* and its large and small players, imposing its conditions. More fundamentally, we must keep in perspective that media outlets, at least a large part of them, are a business and seek financial benefits and capital accumulation (Castells, 2009: 109).

1 The *First Estate*, the clergy; the *Second Estate*, the nobles; the *Third Estate*, the commoners.

2. The economics of the mass media

The development of the mass media “*is linked to the formation of complex production units adjusted to the laws of industrial production and commercial activity [where] the mass media become companies*” (Torres, 1985: 70-71). Consequently, “*such corporations are fully integrated into the market; in them the pressures of shareholders, managers and bankers are simultaneously manifested to be productive and profitable in strictly economic terms*” (Lozano, 2007: 61).

In this dynamic, news is one of the types of merchandise or goods produced and distributed by media outlets, and advertising, which has been present since the birth of each mass media, is still today the main form of financing of these cultural industries. “*From the economic point of view, what the informative good offers is only one thing: space or time. A space or time filled with two elements: news and publicity*” (Torres, 1985: 64).

The news is by definition “useful”: it is due to be an idea, event or current issue that interests the public. It is a “rarity” because its use is limited, its production is expensive – considering it requires prompt coverage, capital, resources and an organization to produce it – and it is perishable, since its validity expires a few hours later and becomes a historical asset (Torres, 1985: 51). In addition, its cost of distribution is high and the speed and efficiency of this phase determinates its perishability too. The distribution requires a sophisticated and costly organization to serve a massive and widely dispersed demand in space (Torres, 1985: 63-64).

On the web, not only have appeared new forms of news content distribution that increases their exposure to new audiences – such as news aggregators – but costs have also been reduced. The distribution of news has ceased to be an exclusive task of the media outlets to get executed by new players too, such as multinational technology companies, especially from United States. This also has meant the emergence of new business models such as the *infomediation* and with this the *infomediaries*. It should be remembered that monetization and return of investment that allows sustainability and profit is the goal that guides today any company in the so-called web 2.0. Media outlets have also explored new business models in this environment. One of these is the sale of content to third parties that has involved the intention to charge those who use it and do not pay for it – like news aggregators – either through contractual agreements between the parties or protected by laws issued by the respective authority.

3. News aggregators and *infomediatio*n

Digital intermediaries, *cybermediaries* or *infomediaries* are in the information business (digital intermediation, *cybermediation* or *infomediatio*n). They collect and organize large amount of data and they act as an intermediary between those who want the information and those who to provide it but they do not own the products or services that are sent directly from the supplier to customers (Bayonet, 2007: 11-12). Their profits are based, among others, on the information they collect about the audience's behaviors and digital consumption. The customers use them with a great level of trust because of their perceived neutrality, and they can create value by the aggregation of products and services that were traditionally offered separately (Del Águila, Padilla and Serarols, 2007: 189). *"This sounds initially a neutral and entirely positive role. But intermediaries can, through the way they carry out this activity and the charges they levy, exert significant influence over their suppliers and customers"* (Foster, 2012: 25).

Winer (2002) defines news aggregators as *"a software that periodically reads a set of news sources, in one of several XML-based formats, finds the new bits, and displays them in reverse-chronological order on a single page"*. In a more recent view, Isbell (2010: 1) poses *"at its most basic, a news aggregator is a website that takes information from multiple sources and displays it in a single place"* and Foster (2012: 25) affirms *"news aggregators sites generally provide a carefully selected (or curated) package of news stories from different providers"*. Examples of these are Yahoo! News, Bing News and Google News, respectively owned by multinational technology companies from United States Yahoo!, Microsoft and Google.

News aggregators are closest to establish themselves as a news media. This takes place in the way they operate, by choosing the content they want to deliver, licensing it (or obtaining it on a voluntary basis) from agencies, individual contributors, other news sources, and sometimes originating news content themselves and providing under-branded news content packages carefully curated to their customers or users (Foster, 2012: 6 and 25). So, from this perspective, news aggregators could be considered as global media outlets, and in this sense they simultaneously promote homogenization and differentiation of markets, leading to centralization and, at the same time, to dispersion of power (Cardoso, 2010: 133).

In order to obtain the information, they do not make any kind of payments neither maintain a formal relationship with the authors of the news content, although in a very few cases they may have a direct commercial relationship with some suppliers (Athey and Mobius, 2012: 2). Users can search within or browse content categories, where the news is grouped so that ones of the same topic, but from different news sources, appear together (Legerén, Herrero and Arboledas, 2011: 67). News aggregators argue they enhance media outlets visibility, web traf-

fic and the possibility to increase their profits through digital advertising and subscriptions. In addition, they claim to offer variety and diversity to the users, as well as personalization and geolocation of news.

Some multinational technology companies on the internet – like Google – in their role of *infomediaries* exercise *infomediation* through, among others, news aggregators, like Google News. The relationship between Google and mass media organizations – particularly the press – presents the characteristics of a situation of *coopetition* (Rebillard, 2010) or symbiosis (Lee and Chyi, 2015), that is, cooperation and competition at the same time. Both sides are forced to collaborate because one needs the services of the other, causing huge disputes between the *Fourth Estate* and the *Fifth Estate*. These *cybermediaries* companies act as digital gatekeepers, controlling information flows, selecting, sorting and distributing digital content (previous step of the selection of news media that will provide it) and in so doing, they have a potentially deep impact on how the people take part in and think about their democratic society and culture. This gatekeeping role is often beneficial to consumers, helping them find relevant content and access to new ideas, but it is also restrictive when a gatekeeper controls the access terms of the information or restricts the scope of available information (Foster, 2012: 6 and 27).

The functioning of news aggregators has not been free from criticism and controversy, mostly about the quality of the aggregate news sources. The accuse of spreading propaganda by ranking news from government-sponsored sources in countries without press freedom. Advertisements placed next to headlines, thus benefiting from the original content of others. Without guarantee of traffic, because users can feel informed just reading headlines and first lines, so they do not click to read the complete news. The practice of deep-linking involves avoiding the homepage of the website, where the most expensive advertising is located. Highly personalized news allows readers to isolate themselves from a wider discourse. It affects copyright in digital editions. It steals web traffic and audiences from the news media websites, among others. (Galbraith, 2008: 199; Madsen and Andsager, 2011: 4-5; Chiou and Tucker, 2010: 1-3)

4. Google News

Google News is the Google-owned news aggregator developed by computer engineer, now ex-googler, Krishna Bharat, following the Google Search experience during the September 11 attacks in the United States (Battelle, 2005: 143-144). Bharat and his team developed the StoryRank algorithm, based on the PageRank algorithm, to track, aggregate and organize news information obtained from diverse news media. Google News was officially released in September 2002.

Google presents Google News as a computer-generated news service that collects headlines from more than 50,000 news sources from around the world, grouping similar news stories and presenting them according to the interests of each reader, offering personalization and a broad variety of perspectives from which to choose. By clicking on the news, the user accesses directly the news media website where it was published. Articles and multimedia content are selected and catalogued using a computer system that evaluates, among other things, the frequency with which the news appears on the internet, plus the sites in which it is included and other characteristics such as freshness, location, relevance and diversity. In consequence, it claims to classify them independently of political views and ideologies.

This news aggregator shows *snippets*, made up of the news headline with a link to the webpage where it is published, the name of the news source, the first lines of the news and a thumbnail. Accompanied by video galleries, photos and related headlines (only the headline linked and the name of the source are shown), news from different suppliers are grouped according to its theme. Users can access the service for free and effect searches or explore its different sections: Top stories, World, Country, Business, Technology/Science, Entertainment, Sports, Health and More top stories.

Google News claims to have 72 editions in 30 languages, to index more than 50,000 news sources around the world and to have 1,000 million unique users a week accessing the service (Bharat, 2012). It generates monthly more than 10,000 million visits to the different news sites indexed in the aggregator (Collado, 2014). In 2015, it reported that it supported 37 languages and covered 45 countries (Kemler, 2015). However, Google News has not become the dominant platform that was initially expected and social networks like Facebook are now more important for news distribution (Bouza, 2014). Even so, in the rankings of the websites with the highest traffic in the world, such as Nielsen/NetRatings (also Alexa), Google News, in the current events and global news category, always ranks in the top twenty positions, featuring also Yahoo! News (Stanyer, 2009: 206).

The functioning and proclaimed neutrality of Google News has been questioned. It does not distinguish between reliable and unreliable news sources, it does not discern as to what or what is not news and it can be mocked, blurring the distinction between news and promotional material (Galbraith, 2008: 199-200). Automation does not guarantee objectivity (Cassin, 2008: 113). The operation of StoryRank is a corporate secret, some influencing elements are known, but how exactly it works is unknown to media publishers (Rebillard and Smyrnaiois, 2010: 174).

The form of presenting the news devaluates the media outlet brands and it does not transmit to the readers the degree of authority or authenticity of the information and, with time, it can turn the news into a product without differences (Auletta, 2009: 102). The practice of deep-linking sends traffic from Google News focus on one internal webpage instead of the whole website (Carlson 2007: 1022-

1023). The aggregator establishes a rivalry between the news grouped by the user click and elements as a longer fragment and the inclusion of the image increases the possibility that an article is chosen over its competitors (Dellarocas et al., 2015: 1).

Other criticisms include the bias given by a technical factor (Segev, 2008; Bui, 2010; Foster, 2012); the preference and visibility of the news from large, traditional and popular media outlets; the supposed diversity, since many news sources in Google News replicates news agency cables that have already been added (Carlson, 2007: 1025); the perception of reliability despite not producing content, even above the media outlets that provide it (McDuling, 2015); the possible low conversion rate of clicks compared to the time the user keeps navigating the news inventory; the reinforcement of the dominance of United States point of views and the challenge of the right to communication (Segev, 2008), among others more.

5. Google News and news media

In 2004 Google News faced the first of a long chain of conflicts in the United States, European Union, Latin American (Brazil) and Asia (China), some of which are still persisting. Google, regarded as an arrogant company and abuser of its dominant position, has responded, publicly and privately in different ways, signing agreements or maintaining an inflexible position. Such conflicts show the complex and disparate relationship of *friendenemies* (friend/enemies), maintained by Google News and the news media, specifically with the press.

Its detractors argue that it is responsible for copyright infringement, theft or misappropriation of headlines, first lines and photographs, using them without monetary recognition neither licensing such content to the original authors. Besides, it has been accused of attack against quality journalism: the free distribution discourages the user from paying for the news information and breaks the payment wall strategies, as well as leaves the media outlet with all the production costs of the news while the aggregator only assumes the benefits of the distribution. In addition, it has been accused of theft of audience by offering a product similar to a news media but without producing any original content, and instead becoming a reference site for users to come and read the news by accessing through it. Another accuse is the depreciation of the brand of the media outlet, because the user, seeing the news listed together, might not distinguish between one and another news source when deciding which to click.

The grouping of the headlines and first lines make the user feel satisfied about quantity of information, so he/she does not need to click to read the news in its entirety. It negatively affects the advertising revenues of news media when the insert of advertisements next to the news and their content providers do not receive a portion

of the generated profits. Also making Google News the homepage and linking to internal pages of media outlets, the homepage of the latter, where the most expensive advertising is usually located, is devalued to the advertisers. For small news sites, the increase in non-local traffic does not help when advertising is based on local visitors.

To mention some conflicts, in 2004 the Chinese government blocked access to Google News China, so Google eliminated the news sources censored by them. Between 2006 and 2009, Google signed licensing agreements with some news agencies – AFP, AP and others – to close litigation. After legal disputes with Copie-presse and other Belgian media organizations between 2006 and 2011, in 2012 Google signed a cooperation agreement that did not include payment to publishers for aggregate news. In 2006, Danske Medier opposed to Google News Denmark because they disagreed with deep-linking practice and because would not be signed licensing agreements, such edition still does not exist. In 2008, disputes arose with publishers in France, ended in 2013 with the creation of a fund of 60 million euros contributed by Google. Between 2009 and 2010 at least Google News US English edition showed advertising – Google AdWords in search results – that caused great discomfort because there was no sharing of profits. In 2011, the newspapers partners to the Associação Nacional de Jornais (ANJ) opted to voluntarily withdraw from Google News Brazil by failing to reach an agreement with Google. In 2014, Google News Spain was closed down as a result of the conflicts that took place with reformed Spanish intellectual property law that obliged Google to pay the media outlets for content in an irrevocable way.

Google has taken actions in parallel. Since 2010, it has provided funding for scholarships and prizes in the area of digital journalism. In 2014 it signed an agreement with Local Media Consortium (LMC) in the United States for the use of its advertising tools by the local newspapers partners. In 2015, Google launched the Digital News Initiative (DNI), a fund with 150 million euros for several activities with European publishers. In the same year it launched the News Lab, a program to bring Google tools to newsrooms. In addition to mention in speeches and press releases its permanent willingness to help media outlets, particularly the press, these initiatives have been perceived as an effort by the company to improve its relations with the publishers in some geographical areas.

6. Conclusions

This chapter is a contribution to a little researched topic in the area of digital journalism such as news aggregators are: a new scenario to news distribution, and in this particular case, Google News and its economic and social impacts. The discussion provided above has helped to identify five clashes between the *Fourth*

Estate – media outlets – and the *Fifth Estate* – multinational technology companies on the internet:

1. The inevitable technological dependence and its policies of “help” that reinforce it.
2. Distribution of the advertising revenue.
3. Competition for the audience.
4. Irruption of territories.
5. The subtle or explicit influence on public opinion.

Besides, this analysis on Google News shows some reasonable doubts. What appears to imply diversity of sources implies diversity of approaches in information as well or there are only multiple sources that offer same or similar information? Does the availability of news should not be compensated? Are the media outlets transferring their attributes of reliability and credibility to this news aggregator? And what to extent has Google News influence in shaping public opinion?

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Biography

Tania Lucía Cobos is a PhD candidate in Communication and Journalism at the Department of Journalism and Communication Sciences, Autonomous University of Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain) and she was awarded with a Colciencias scholarship (Colombia) for PhD studies. Her field of research focuses on journalism and new media (social networks, mobile journalism, news aggregators among others). Her PhD dissertation explores the relationship between Google News – a news aggregator owned by Google – and the Ibero-american media outlets. She likes Japanese animation and she has done research on that topic too. She also writes fantasy and science-fiction stories. Her blog is <http://tanialu.co>

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“We Need to Keep Moving”: Strategies of News Media to Attract Young Audiences in Germany

Leif Kramp

Abstract

Which kind of news sources is favoured by young media users? Which kind of information mediation is popular among them? And how is the news paradigm changing? Established news organisations struggle in part heavily to enthrone young target groups for journalism. At the same time, social media are increasingly providing alternative ways of addressing audiences. This chapter uses data from a qualitative survey among editors-in-chief of Millennials news media in Germany to discuss how editorial strategies change with respect to the perceived transformation of audience expectations by journalists.

Keywords Millennials, adolescents and young adults, media use, journalism, audience expectations, editorial strategies, opinionated news

1. Introduction

What should newsmakers know and what should the general public expect from them? These not at all trivial questions were discussed by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel in their textbook about the “elements of journalism” that became an instant hit in journalism education when it was published in 2001 (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014). Initially, the book took an exhorting stand to strengthen the self-assurance of professional standards in the professional field of journalism, first and foremost about accuracy and neutrality in serving the public by thorough and reliable reporting – against the backdrop of the historic recession of the US press market in the first decade of the 21st century, when many newspapers had to cease regular distribution and thousands of journalists lost their jobs (cf. McChesney and Nichols, 2010). In recent history, however, the book – now in its third revised edition – turned into a resource in search for solutions. Why have so many young media users turned their back on traditional news sources? How and where could newspaper publishers, radio stations and television companies, despite stark drops of their market penetration, attract those users who can be attested a relatively high demand of orientation in their actual life phases, when they start their college or university education, when they start a family or when they want to get a foothold in their job? And how can journalism practice evolve – without harming its core principles – to still be able to reach out to future generations of users?

Kovach and Rosenstiel point out that, despite the importance of professional rules and principles in journalism, the way in which journalistic practice is conducted always remains a matter for negotiation: each generation creates its own journalism, largely marked by technological progress that assist in making production and distribution more effective (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014: 19). If only for demographic reasons, younger age groups have a more important role, especially in the USA: the absolute number of Millennials, born between 1981 and 2000, is today larger than the post-war baby-boomers (c.1946-1964), or the so-called Generation X (born 1965-1980) (see Fry, 2016; Howe and Strauss, 2000). The significance of Millennials is, for all regional differences in demographic profile, not to be underestimated in the development of markets: for the year 2020 a Generation Y is already foreseen that will make up half of the working population and whose behaviour and way of thinking will change the world economy (GoldmanSachs, 2013). Therefore, this chapter will discuss the transformation process of journalism taking the example of two news outlets that – by trying to target young audiences – alter their approaches towards the news paradigm centred around an idea of neutrality and objectivity (cf. Maras, 2013).

2. The state of research on the use of media by adolescents and young adults in Germany

In Germany, social media platforms and services are extraordinarily popular among adolescents. We can see a persisting turn by young media users to closed online contexts using social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram, together with communication services like Whatsapp or Snapchat. The special features of media use by people under 30 have been demonstrated by two long-run studies tracking the transformation of media use in Germany; these have in part shown that, for decades, there has been a great difference between younger and older parts of population in the way they use media relating to information, entertainment and communication. Since 1998, the JIM study (Jugend, Information, (Multi-)Media) of the Media-Pedagogical Research Network Southwest (Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest, MPFS) has surveyed the way in which young people use technological means of communication. Every five years, since the early 1960s, ARD and ZDF's long-term study of mass communication has surveyed those of 14 and above regarding their media use and what they think of news media services.

Mobile digital media distribution is, of course, everywhere now, but there is great variation in demand and take-up. The long-term study of mass communication by the ARD and ZDF shows up changes in habits of media use and the attitude of the German population to mass media services (Krupp and Breunig, 2016). One of the largest and most serious changes that have taken place is that in the 14 to 29 year-old age group, where the gradual integration of the internet into everyday life becomes apparent. The amount of media consumption per day by adolescents and young adults has steadily increased: in 1995, at the beginning of the internet, it was five hours and ten minutes; by 2015 this was nearly eight hours including TV, radio, newspapers and internet. The authors of the study consider as the most decisive reason for this general increase in use the universality of digitally-networked media technology which, given the increased significance of social media, has obliterated the distinction between individual and mass communication (*ibid.*: 34, 42). By comparison with other kinds of media, the use of the internet remains constant at a high level throughout the day, only declining late in the evening. Here, too, there is a clear difference with the general population, where internet usage over the day is half as extensive, and where the traditional types of media have their classical time of day: newspaper and radio in the morning, TV in the evening (*ibid.*: 37).

The motivations for use also differ a great deal between younger and older sections of the population: younger people get a lot more entertainment from the internet than the general population; they have a stronger sense that they can join in; they are more easily distracted by it; more often they find its use relaxing; when they use it they do not feel alone. Moreover, 14 to 29 year-olds habitually use the internet

much more than the average, reinforcing the greater familiarity with online media behaviour among these younger age-groups (ibid.: 142, 305). In short: the internet is an “*all in one medium*” (ibid.: 133) for mutual as well as produced media communication, whether this last is from digital providers, but also TV, radio and newspapers.

The personal connection of young users to the internet as a technological infrastructure of mediated communication has a great deal to do with the fact that their interpersonal exchanges take place mostly on line. For users under 30, mutual communication (chat, posting, sending emails or using messaging services) is by far the most important online activity: 87% of users asked would miss being able to communicate via the internet, whereas only 38% would miss the ability to read newspaper websites, and 40% would miss news from search engines or internet providers (ibid.: 135). While two-thirds of the 14 to 19 year-olds would not want to be without it, the figure for 30 to 49 year-olds is about half of it, and less than a third for those over 50 (ibid.: 289).

As the JIM study shows (MPFS, 2016), the majority of 12 to 19-year olds mostly used search engines (Google usually), but also videos streamed on YouTube. Facebook and Twitter are more strongly represented as relevant sources of information among 16 to 19 year-olds. Genuine news sources – sites run by newspapers, magazines, TV stations or email providers – are much less strongly used to search for information (ibid.: 41). The study reinforces the paradox thrown up by the long-term study on mass communication: the younger people surveyed declared that the most reliable medium for information was the daily paper, although they hardly have ever read one (MPFS, 2016: 13). This has been explained by a culturally-transmitted mythology (Krupp and Breunig, 2016: 130), or as a transfer affect following positive experiences with online services from newspaper publishers (ibid.: 125). Young people who, faced with contradictory reporting, would favour the internet, could, however, in the JIM study name only six original news websites as the most trustworthy source of information out of a total of eleven. Among the most-often named sources of information were Google (mentioned by 2), Facebook (3), YouTube and Wikipedia (5) and Twitter (8). The journalistic providers named were *Spiegel Online* (1), *Zeit Online* (4), *Bild.de* (6), *Welt.de* (7), *ARD.de/Tageschau.de* (9) and *ntv.de* (10) (MPFS, 2016: 14).

Using this material, the following topics appear particularly relevant to the issue of new services for young media users and their expectations:

- The use of a marked variety of media services is part of the everyday life of adolescents and young adults.
- Young people are the so-called “early adopters” of digital media services.
- Digital media and technology dominate very much everyday life for the young target group.

- The young target group has a markedly higher usage of digital media than older generations.
- The young target group accesses the internet mainly by smartphones, on the move and not in one place.
- The social life of the young target group is for most of them closely connected with digital media use. A great deal of internet use is taken up with reciprocal media communication.
- Classical news providers, especially public-sector broadcasters and daily newspapers, enjoy a high level of trust among young media users.
- This relatively high level of trust in classical news providers among adolescents and young adults is not reflected in actual use; only a small part of the time daily spent using media is directed towards new media.
- Young users search for, and find, alternative non-journalistic sources of information.

The surveys also demonstrate the existence of a demographic gap with regard to the use of media types. Young media users have opted quickly and intensively as internet pioneers in using its varied and multifunctional services, and so they have turned away from traditional news media services; by contrast, the habits of older media users have changed more slowly. They do discover innovative media for themselves, but much later, in some cases years later. And so, digital media transformation happens at different speeds. Habits that have become medially ingrained over a long period take a long time to change, and they do not really change fundamentally.

The resulting demographic upheaval in media use presents very severe problems to publishing houses: while on the one hand younger people want flexibility, creativity and an experimental spirit from them, the older generations want to rely upon a constant and coherent product. Stefan Plöchinger (2017), a member of the chief editorial team at the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, refers to this as the open and unfinished nature of the transformation in media use, the rapid rate of change in media development and online services being driven forward in particular by younger users: “*Young readers use the net quite differently from the way older readers do. While journalists are still talking about the best way from print to online, the reality has already moved on*”. The need to balance the demands by different age groups becomes all the more difficult if young users, from the point of view of the publishing house, seem to be an unreliable or at least volatile target group, whose motives, media preferences and brand preferences form a poor foundation for the development or adaptation of information products.

3. Adolescents and young adults in the focus of the news industry: leading questions and data basis

Since the 1980s, there has been a steady decline in the number of younger readers for newspapers, and the press has accordingly taken an interest in the expectations that adolescents and young adults have for the distribution and presentation of news. Newspaper publishers have long puzzled over the paradox that younger media users continue to express the greatest trust in the news provided by the classical media form of the newspaper, although this is not reflected in the actual figures for media use. To begin with, the industry relentlessly pursued a three-pronged approach: the co-operation with schools in newspapers projects (“Newspapers in School”); the inclusion, in their regular papers, of pages or special supplements addressed to children or to youth issues; special offers and subscriptions for print and online media for school students, in further education as well as completing training (see Körte, 2006; Kubitzka, 2006).

In October 2014, the US lifestyle portal *Buzzfeed* opened up a German website with editorial offices in Berlin, and this gave renewed impetus to the efforts by newspaper publishers to reach young media users. In 2015, several existing news-sites opened special versions for young people: *Zeit Online: ze.tt*; *Spiegel Online: Bento*; *Handelsblatt Online: orange by Handelsblatt*; *Bild.de: BYou* and more. A crowded field quickly developed, including established youth brands such as *jetzt* belonging to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. This sudden rush to develop separate online products for adolescents and young adults was explained in part by the need to avoid alienating a loyal core readership for the classical press while addressing a rather different message to a younger age-group (see Wang, 2015). The new brands aim to employ themes more related to the daily life of young people, experimenting with presentation and forms of address on different media platforms.

This chapter makes use of a partial data set from a survey of senior editors of digital news outlets whose work is explicitly directed to adolescents and young adults. The data was collected as part of a large-scale qualitative study, commissioned by the German Association of Newspaper Publishers (Bundesverband Deutscher Zeitungsverleger, BDZV), focused on the media use of adolescents and young adults from the “Millennials” cohort, and its implications for what might be offered by newspaper publishers (Kramp and Weichert, 2016; Weichert and Kramp, 2017a). Interviews were carried out between March and August 2016, based on guidelines involving six thematic clusters: risks and opportunities for journalistic practice of digital innovation; character and expectations of Millennials with regard to the use of news media; forms of publication and distribution; reception and participation; content, story-telling and forms of

presentation; strategic and prognostic perspective with respect to the further development of ideas for editorial services.

The following questions will be discussed: what conclusions do responsible editors come to regarding the media behaviour of their young target audiences? What are the assumptions of the editors regarding the expectations their audience have of a given kind of news offering? What kind of editorial strategy is there in shaping their offerings for adolescents and young adults?

4. Changes to ideas about content distribution, audience engagement and separation of news and opinions

Since 2012, media managers and journalists have regularly been travelling to the USA seeking new ideas for their news offerings and looking for successful concepts that can be an inspiration for them. They search for media innovations, so they engage in visits, workshops and discussions with pioneering journalists and those involved in the development of media technology, getting information about new digital trends and methods of reaching a target audience (see Mielke, 2012; Chefrunde, 2015; Hamburg Media School, no year). Journalistic start-ups that explicitly address media users up to the age of 35 have been an increasing source of interest, a group that established news providers reach only with difficulty. New ventures such as Mic, NowThis or Vox Media are primarily financed with risk capital, so they can experiment with new editorial approaches without there being a need to be funded by advertising or subscription (see Wu, 2016; Kramp and Weichert, 2017; Weichert and Kramp, 2017b).

Unlike the established publishing houses, these companies have an increasing number of employees, and their editorial structure and distribution focus are strongly oriented to the assumed needs of a younger audience. So far, there have been only few such start-ups in Germany, focusing upon Millennials and seeking to position themselves in the market independently from established news organisations. Nonetheless, given the dramatic change in media use in younger groups up to the age of 30, since 2015 there have been a number of new initiatives aimed at those aged between 14 and 30. Here predominate subsidiaries of established media companies that create their own news brands for a younger public. However, international providers are also expanding, and some of them, primarily from the USA, have entered the German market: besides *Buzzfeed*, among others there is the *Huffington Post*, working together with the Burda Media Group. Now we will look at the strategies followed by one of these imports – the lifestyle and youth magazine *VICE* – and by a subsidiary of a German newspaper publisher: *jetzt*, linked to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

4.1. *Striving for emotional authenticity: the example of VICE Germany*

VICE began in 1994 in Montreal as a subcultural monthly magazine based in the skater scene, but since then it has grown into a worldwide media corporation. It began under the name of *The Voice of Montreal*, and was explicitly oriented to street culture, with topics such as skateboarding, punk, hip-hop or pornography. One of the magazine's founders, Suroosh Alvi, was quoted as saying before moving to New York: "*What is offensive to us is being bored*" (cited in Picard, 1998; cf. also Kiper, 2015). In 2015, *VICE Media*, when it had already become a diversified multiplatform corporation with recording and fashion labels, its own film and TV production firm, TV broadcasters, various online sales outlets and a book publishing business, was valued at \$4.5bn as an unquoted company. (see Winfrey, 2015)

The German-speaking online-editorial office for *VICE.com* in Berlin employs about a dozen journalists. In total, over 150 people work in different locations of the firm in Germany. Tom Littlewood, chief editor for *VICE Germany*, considers that his target audience of those between 19 and 35 has a clear preference for "the new". He thinks it is important to remain unpredictable in choosing topics and in addressing the audience, and not to rely upon presumed recipes for success:

I think it would be wrong to believe that the data tells us who our readers are and what they really want. If we are talking about Millennials, then that would be a big mistake; for this target group, you have always to find something new. [...] We need to keep moving. (Tom Littlewood, *VICE Germany*)

According to Littlewood, when making substantive and strategic decisions the experience of the editorial team is important. The team is mostly made up of newcomer journalists from the Millennials cohort. Littlewood considers very important for the choice of issues not only the age composition of the editorial staff, but also the language, the presentation, the general attitude of authors and presenters and the way they deal with social media:

I'm a member of this generation myself. We all are, in this office. That is a basic condition if you are to be successful in reaching the target group. How could we reach young people if we were not ourselves in a similar stage of our lives, if we did not know from our own experience what the typical questions, problems and wishes are that concern this target group? In my view, you are condemned to failure from the start if there is a distance between the editorial group and the public, just from the point of view of age. That cannot be overcome by any forced effort to understand a target group. (Tom Littlewood, *VICE Germany*)

Littlewood is critical of the increased interest on the part of German media companies in seeking to sell younger audiences between 15 and 35 a customised version of their news services. It looked like an admission of failure, as if media companies wanted to "*do something for young people*" because they had "*messed up and now were trying to understand a lost public*". In this there is a strong assumption of the relevance of the *authenticity* and *plausibility* of journalistic projects, something that is not primarily expressed in content and mode of address to a public, but also through the biographies of journalistic communicators. Here, we have the presumption on the part of the editorial group that young people will favour their own contemporaries in seeking specific ways of the mediation of news, since such providers will be closer to their own *generational reality*.

Editorial activities must not only reach the target group, but also comprehend the heterogeneity and contradictoriness of its everyday life. Littlewood sees his editorial team as "*part of the youth and their mentality*". The target group expects an authentic attitude, a youthful philosophy that is lived very day, "*not only on the surface, but within*". The editorial team at Berlin *VICE* mainly adopt a dialogical concept based on personal responsibility to convey the right attitude, sense of closeness and interest in constructive discussion. The individual journalist is a recognisable person for his or her public:

We have to think from the point of view of the user: anybody who thinks a story especially good or shit will very much want to be able to speak to the author about it. [...] We want to be approachable. And we want to be friendly. And I think that happens best if people who have told a story, who were there, have collected information and recorded something or written it down, come into direct contact with the users. (Tom Littlewood, *VICE* Germany)

According to Tom Littlewood, openness to self-criticism is an important requirement for the successful implementation of this kind of internal and external editorial culture of communication: "*We don't think that everything that we have ever done is right, we are open to being convinced of the opposite*". A connection to the brand can be systematically built with programs that achieve the right level of *emotional authenticity* and a degree of *ironic distance* on the part of the editorial team, in this way echoing the sentiments of the individual user.

At the same time, Littlewood sees the future role of journalists being greater than of presenters – and not only because of the dialogue with users of social media. Journalism has always had the task of facilitating social understanding, of guiding and developing the social conversation. That is now becoming more dynamic. There are many new digital resources and a range of online services intended to improve the mediation of content as well as mutual communication: young users actively adopt these and so this activity attracts the attention of journalists.

Here, according to Littlewood, *VICE* relies on social adoption in the age group. “*If something new comes on the market it has to first of all find its place. It only gradually becomes apparent how users will use it.*” Newly-emerging services and related instruments enter the toolbox of the editorial team through young members of staff and their peer groups.

4.2. *A youth subsidiary with a changing history: the example of jetzt*

In 1993, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* started publishing a youth section as a printed weekly magazine. After nine years, when the printed issue ceased publication, *jetzt* developed into a fixed part of the Munich paper’s digital marketing to young readers. From 2002, the offering appeared only as a website called *jetzt*. From 2011, there was a revitalization as a regular bi-weekly *jetzt*-page in the printed edition of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, but this – again – ceased publication in 2016. It was explained that “*two pages devoted to being young*” in the printed edition were, “*given the networked world of today [...] no longer appropriate*”; but also, because it was not clear whether the pages were actually read by young readers, or more by their parents and grandparents (jetzt, 2016).

Christian Helten has been editor of *jetzt* since 2013, and for his information about user preferences relies on the services of social media monitoring, which is supposed to “track down” those who might be interested among a dispersed target group. The larger platforms, among which Facebook sets the standard, are, as he suggests, the most important points at which the target group can be assessed. Helten resists treating the public being addressed in terms of a fixed age range, since both younger and older readers should be addressed, so long as they have an interest in supposedly “youth” issues and they are open to a casual form of public address. All the same, in terms of content, those addressed are typically in the phase of life from 18 to 30, a phase that begins with leaving school. Interest in needs and expectations of this target group tends to be greater among the editorial team of *jetzt* than among the editors of the printed paper, where there is an absence, typical in the media, of thought about the details of media use among young audiences, and so circumstances and contexts of this play a lesser role in editorial strategies of the parent newsroom.

In choosing its topics the editorial team of *jetzt* tries to orient itself closely to the interests of its target group as registered in its own content, and reflects this perspective in its reporting. The knowledge gained about thematic interests and media habits of young people beyond its own offerings tries to anticipate changing preferences regarding information and media behaviour, and to react by adapting its own services. Simply the decline in user numbers shows that interest on the part of the readership in interacting with their fellow readers in the *jetzt* online

community has changed. Helten attributes the noticeable decline in user activity within the online community to the gradual premature ageing of existing members who were once very active, but who already in the era before the rise of Facebook to the biggest international network simply "grew out of the idea" as they matured. At the same time, younger users had not found their way into the community: they had grown up with Facebook. And so, what had been the great success that *jetzt* had seen in building the community and interaction, the "*jetzt* cosmos", was now obsolete. He argues that the young target group is not only receptive to "*superficial and amusing entertainment*", but is also looking for order and inspiration – in the form of classical reportage, or portraits of people whose story is emotionally moving, and so something that would be shared with a circle of friends.

Even *jetzt* has to prove itself in the impact evaluation, but Helten maintains that this must not mean giving up an aspiration to high quality. There was a positive response from the firm itself if the team was the first to publish an exclusive, or if items were cited by other media, especially international ones. This was part of the way that the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* worked, its "brand", and reflected its continuing interest in the youth segment. All the same, there was a wish to differentiate oneself from the printed paper in tone and way of writing. Editorial contributions that in their subjective colouring showed a clear position were especially welcomed by a younger public, since one reader could identify with it while it irritated another. Helten maintains that "*ultimately, we are not, as is more usually the case with more traditional news media, bound by an uncompromising neutrality, but rather prompted to publish whatever moves us.*" Without an emotional connection, you do not get noticed in social media, says Helten. Only when you have got the attention of young media users you can start to arouse their interest and give them something that they take seriously, he observes. The mediation of news is, therefore, mostly oriented towards the reflection or constitution of a personal attitude of the respective journalist. The emphasis on subjectivity is meant to lead the way to an "emotional connection" with the young audience. It is Helten's impression that the "*target group is admittedly relatively open and confident, but also in search of an attitude*". He observes that stories providing such an orientation function are more successful than others. Therefore, *jetzt* does not pursue an editorial strategy that puts in the foreground the chronicler's duty, but opinion and attitude that is reasoned and still holds the author and the newsbrand accountable for his or her statements.

The task that *jetzt* has been given, to broaden the appeal of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* among school-leavers, students, and those in their first jobs, has not been made any easier by the creation of other youth channels by other media companies (*Bento/Spiegel Online*, or *Ze.tt/Zeit.Online*). In an effort to mark themselves off from the almost unavoidable substantive clashes with the new competition, the editorial team at *jetzt* abjures the new representational forms such as "listicles",

journalistic pieces in the form of lists that are supplemented by gifs or memes (see Vijgen, 2014; Tandoc and Jenkins, 2015). Nonetheless, Helten wants to keep a close eye on the market, so that he can anticipate any changes. The youth magazine has an experimental function within the business of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, seeking new platforms and services in regard to their journalistic potential: *“if there is something new that is promising, we have to begin experimenting as quickly as possible, to see whether we can actually use this channel for our purposes”*.

5. Conclusion

Mobile, socially-networked, in dialogue: the way in which young people use media has set off a process of organisational learning in news organisations. This does not only involve the development of new skills when dealing with emerging services, but also includes the transformation of the way in which these organisations see themselves as professionals and how they see the public. The cases here discussed, however, show that this learning process is not everywhere treated as a task for existing editorial structures, but that it also involves the creation of new editorial structures and more distinct ideas of news distribution. This is at least the case with the creation of youth-oriented media by established news organisations.

These case studies also highlight the fact that the turn to a younger public is by no means a recent phenomenon, but is more a reaction to a transformation in media usage that has been going on for twenty years. There was, from 2014 to 2016, an unprecedented upsurge in new companies and new initiatives in the German digital news sector; newspaper publishers, however, were already aware of the need to attach young people, perhaps school graduates but ideally even the younger, to journalistic brands. Given the intense competition with non-journalistic providers of news and entertainment, and the limited budget of young media users, a number of ways of reaching this target group were tried out. The editorial strategies are, therefore, also varied, if one discounts the more or less uniform age range addressed, although varying quite markedly by gender, social stratum and educational level.

Most obvious is the general and marked orientation on the part of editorial teams to the social media activities of their users. While their own presence on the web was not questioned, it no longer was the point around which the address to the public and editorial content turned. The new media brands do not use social networks platforms and services for their own marketing purposes only, e.g. to attract young users to the offers of their website: they integrate the publication instruments of other platforms so that they might attract their target audience with original content on their favourite platform in order to get into a conversation. Editorial teams have begun to make systematic use of user feedback when planning

their agenda, trying to extend the number of channels for dialogue and their actual reportage; but in so doing they also seek to bind more closely the user to the news brand. This is all in pursuit of the effort to gain a more exact understanding of the expectations of the target group regarding the distribution and mediation of news in an attractive manner, and to act on this understanding.

Another common feature is the composition of the studied teams, which is closely related to the age structure of the target group. This has necessarily led to a comparatively low average age of the teams. This is connected not only to the intention of reducing the communicative distance between the editorial team and its public, but also has to do with the skill in using social media that young journalists share with the target group. Here, the classical mode, in which young journalists began with comparatively little experience and were trained and advised by older colleagues, is no longer relevant: these new young teams need a different path of development. Editorial management, here, presumes that employees, given their affinity with digital media, will develop skills of their own accord, something that lends emphasis to the experimental nature of the projects and of new forms of presentation.

So far as content goes, both news media seek to develop their own profile, in part to differentiate themselves from their competitors. In their reportage, however, they share a common feature of news reporting that has been confirmed by media research: *VICE* and *jetzt* focus upon the everyday socialisation of young people and a strong opinionated and attitude-centred reporting of their (young) editorial staff. This results in a high level of subjectivity and emotionalism in the presentation of issues, something that is marked by a personalised form of address and a casual tone. The same approach is used for all topics, whether dealing with popular culture, advice, or social and political problems.

Both news media dealt with here adopt a partisan and opinionated form of reportage, in contrast to the ideas of neutrality and balance in the classical forms of news distribution. This might be regarded as the outcome of the aforementioned generational negotiation (cf. Kovach/Rosenstiel 2014: 19) on how journalism needs to perform. This can be explained by the need to create in the market as clear a difference as possible from established news outlets, so that a popular brand identity can be developed in the young target group. However, in his forty years old seminal work about the separation of news and opinion, Klaus Schönbach concluded that a "synchronisation" of neutral reporting and commentary might lead into a vicious circle ("circuitus vitiosus") of fictitious events – or "fake news" in more recent terminology (cf. Schönbach, 1977: 161). Schönbach outlined a highly dysfunctional transformation process that could profoundly threaten public discourse if there would be no efforts for correction and comprehensive reporting. With their intentional blurring of borders between news and commentary, *VICE* and *jetzt* try to meet the demands of adolescents and

young adults who get their information from a broad variety of non-journalistic and presumably biased sources on the (social) web. Whereas this tendentially volatile and erratic information behaviour poses not only an economic threat to the news organisations, but also to the societal self-understanding, especially among younger age groups, the purposeful use of opinionated news as a subjective form of news mediation, together with the maintenance of journalistic principles like accuracy, source transparency and reliability, might be an effective way to strengthen the bond between younger publics and journalism as a cultural practice.

However, it is still entirely unclear, given the existing competition among journalistic and non-journalistic information sources on the web, how successful these editorial strategies will be in the long run. This will have to be addressed by further empirical research.

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Biography

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Bourdieu in Greenland: Elaborating the Field Dependencies of Post-colonial Journalism

Naimah Hussain

Abstract

The scarcely populated island of Greenland offers a unique opportunity both to study the complex dependencies and tensions of contemporary “global” or “trans-national” journalism and to test and develop the explanation power of one key theoretical framework, *field theory*. With only one (national and public) broadcaster and two weekly newspapers, the journalistic field in Greenland is small, exposed and vulnerable. It is embedded in the broader political, economic and professional field dynamics of Denmark, the former colonial power. For instance, the legislation and the organizational structure of the media are inherited and a flow of Danish visiting journalists and editors keep up the norms and the value system of the field. At the same time, Greenlandic journalism operates in a nation of its own with distinct characteristics: small size, politics of the bilingualism, tight local networks with a small elite and close ties between reporters and possible sources shape the field practically, professionally and socially (in a specific, local way). These tensions between the “global-colonial” and “local” capitals and capacities are negotiated and managed in the everyday practices of newsrooms. There is almost no previous research on Greenlandic media in general and journalism practice in particular. Mapping this small but contested field allows us to highlight some of the key analytical strengths of Bourdieu’s field theory and its ability to capture the dynamic actor relationships in such a complex, structured space. At the same time, however, the “post-colonial” realities of Greenlandic journalism can help us to pose some questions about the limits – or the need for further development – of Bourdieu’s initial sketch about the journalistic field. This chapter tests the analytical concepts of *capital* and *habitus* by putting them to empirical work through an ethnographic study of practices and structures of news making in Greenland.

Keywords Bourdieu, Greenland, Journalism Practice, News Values, Field Theory

1. Introduction

There is almost no academic research on Greenlandic media and journalism practice (Rygaard and Pedersen, 1999; Karlsson, 2008). However, the Greenlandic media system can be seen as a fruitful object of study for opening crucial contemporary practical and theoretical questions about the journalistic field. Due to its size, it is uniquely accessible for thorough empirical scrutiny. Due to its historical dependency from Denmark, it can be seen as an example of an emerging national field of its own, partly embedded in another, dominant national field – an example of postcolonial media context. This chapter argues that an analysis of the Greenlandic journalistic field – by applying Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory and its key concepts of *field*, *capital* and *habitus* – can open new insights on journalism practice and the workings of national media in Greenland. At the same time, putting these concepts into empirical work in a Greenlandic context offers a chance to reflect more generally on the interplay of journalistic, political and economic fields of the small and young nation thriving for independence. Greenland’s media system, understandably, is a small one. There is only one national radio and television station, the public service broadcaster *KNR* (*Kalaallit Nunaata Radioaa*), providing daily radio news and TV news bulletins Monday through Friday. It also has an online platform, *knr.gl*, although not a very active one. The only other large actor – and the only real competitor for *KNR* – is *Sermitsiaq.AG*, a commercial media company publishing two independent weeklies, *Atuagagdliutit* (AG) on Wednesdays and *Sermitsiaq* on Fridays. It also runs the news website *sermitsiaq.ag*. The web outlet proudly calls itself “the most read news media in the country”. In addition to these two major actors, there are 17 local radio and 5 cable TV-companies, some of which have had news bulletins in the past, but now they mostly send music, quiz shows and very little journalistic content, primarily driven by local (non-trained) forces and financed through commercials. Currently *Nuuk TV* offers local daily news on weekdays from the city and the area of Nuuk and are planning to expand to other cities. Most other such actors, however, do not produce or distribute original journalistic content. Greenland has a long history of mass media or shared media, dating back to 1861, when *Atuagagdliutit* was first published (Stenbaek, 1992), and a strong tradition of small local newspapers often sporadically published by volunteers in the local communities. In the past there were up to 20 of these smaller publications (Karlsson, 2008; Stenbaek, 1992); at the moment, however, this number has fallen drastically. In this chapter I will uniquely draw on empirical examples of journalism practice at the three national media, primarily at the PBS-broadcaster *KNR*¹.

1 The empirical examples derive from the data collected for the author’s ongoing PhD-project with the working title “Media and journalism in Greenland – a study of journalism practice in a small, postcolonial society” (Roskilde University, planned submission).

Drawing upon the critical work of Pierre Bourdieu and journalism scholars that have followed his lead, I study journalism practice in Greenland in a field perspective. However, as the national Greenlandic field is partly embedded in the Danish, a central theme of this chapter is to think and to test *how the field theory approach is applicable in a double setting such as the Greenlandic*. One could perhaps talk about “a field within a field” (Benson, 1998; Benson and Neveu, 2005).

2. Bourdieu and field theory in journalism studies

Bourdieu did not publish much work directly discussing media. The much criticized (Benson and Neveu, 2005; Willig et al., 2015) *On television* (Bourdieu, 1998) and his contribution in Benson and Neveu (Bourdieu, 2005) are the clearest exceptions. However, his work on social practice and cultural production has proved useful in analysing media as it enables a nuanced empirical understanding of social practices and power (Willig et al., 2015). Thus, in my work, I draw inspiration from a host of journalism and media studies scholars that have applied Bourdieu’s theoretical framework (Benson, 1998; Benson and Neveu, 2005; Couldry, 2003; Couldry, 2005; Schultz, 2007; Willig, 2012; Willig et al., 2015; Hartley et al., 2011; Hess and Waller, 2016; Sjøvaag, 2013; see Willig, 2012 for extensive review). These scholars have shown that Bourdieu’s ideas are useful in analysing media, particularly when considering journalism as cultural production. His framework also helps us empirically understand media practices in the Greenlandic national media outlets. It suggests looking at these practices as part of a structured system of social relations and using Bourdieu’s key concepts of *capital* and *habitus* as analytical tools helps us in understanding how Greenlandic and Danish journalists in Greenland work, think and act.

As a starting point, the theory directs us to consider the journalistic field – or any field – as a micro cosmos. In the case of Greenland, this space is on the one hand a reflection of the local “national field” as such: the field of journalism reflects the logics and the structures of power that can be traced in the national field as well. However, the rules and values of this micro cosmos cannot simply be reduced to the national field and its broader relations of power. Thus, Bourdieu breaks with the deterministic tendency of social (class) theory and instead perceives society as structured into a range of differentiated, semi-autonomous fields – each with its relatively specific logic and set of rules. This means that for the actors each field consists of and is constituted by a *particular* hierarchy of rewards and forms of recognition. All fields direct actors to operate with a capital that is somehow specific to and unique to that field. Hence, the concept of field does not refer to a structure but to a *structuring* mechanism (Benson, 1998) where the struggles and competition between actors

within each field maintain the hierarchies (Schultz, 2007). As social agents are “playing the game” they are oriented not only to-wards winning but also in maintaining the existing hierarchy of the field (the rules of the game) which help them obtain and sustain a position according to the logics of the specific field. However, the re-wards of “playing the game” need to be desirable for the agents in order to close ranks (Willig et al., 2015). In the journalistic field the struggle to achieve the front page or an exclusive news story is for instance considered highly desirable (Schultz, 2007).

Field theory also assumes the existence of other fields as a necessary and structuring condition for the field that is analysed. This also highlights the facts that not all fields are equal. Some fields in society are more dominant than others – just as some agents are more dominant within a given field. In his broad sociology, Bourdieu argues that the logics of the economic field (and in some degree the political field) dominate the cultural field (Bourdieu, 1998; Benson and Neveu, 2005). The same argument also applies to journalism. Though we are interested in the journalistic field and its influence on journalistic work and practice, field theory demands us to understand this power (the rules and values of the journalistic field) as strongly structured and conditioned by the economic and political fields (Benson, 1998). A simple example of this would be the increase of influence of commercialization and the way “good journalists” – also increasingly in the eyes of their colleagues – are the ones who are able to attract large audiences. Another key way to assess the autonomy of the journalistic field would be to see to what extent journalists might refrain from taking a critical stance towards dominant political viewpoints. Thus, a key question for journalism is the relative of *autonomy* or *heteronomy* of their field. The autonomy of the field – the focus on the quality of the journalistic product itself – is never absolute, but to the degree that journalism is a field, it is somehow differentiated and recognizably distinct from the logics of the fields that condition it (Bourdieu, 1998; Benson, 1998: 470).

Looking at social practice via field theory, then, the concept of *capital* becomes crucial, as fields can be differentiated according to the specific combination of capitals (economic, political, cultural) whose significance is specifically ordered in a given field. For instance, the artistic field will acknowledge and value other forms and combinations of capital than the economic or the scientific field and so on (Benson, 1998). Thus, an actor’s position within a field is determined by the amount of capital, “*the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintances and recognition*” that one holds (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 119).

Key insight into how capital translates into actor’s position and action opens up through Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*. It can be defined as personal dispositions on “*sensing, perceiving, thinking, acting according to models interiorized in the course*

of different processes of socialization” (Benson, 1998: 467; Bourdieu, 1984: 165–166). Habitus is not only based on the individual life experience but it is crucially also a product of societal standardization, division into social classes. As a “*structuring structure*” it is made of categories, standards and distinctions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 1984: 166). An actor’s habitus can be defined as a sense of one’s own position as well as a sense of others’ positions (Bourdieu, 2007). An actor in the field of journalism, for instance, acquires a “journalistic habitus” in order to identify why certain stories are chosen, why they are valued and why certain stories are written in a certain way. Becoming a journalist means mastering “*a specific, professional game in a specific professional field*” (Schultz, 2007: 193; Benson, 1998).

Even though agents have individual life stories and a self-perceived sense of independence, the notion of habitus underlines the sociological aspect: that is to say, social agents always act within the structures of the surrounding social space. Thus, social practice is never completely free but always structured. In order to do well in a given field, newcomers in a field have to try to adjust to the existing rules and to learn from the established agents in the field. While this underscores the power of the field over the actor, it also reminds us that habitus is not *unchangeable*. A habitus can develop and evolve. In general, scholars have shown that the journalistic field requires acceptance of the rules and values of the agents who are inclined to establish themselves, and so the agents will rather conserve or reproduce than challenge the logics of the field (Benson, 1998; Willig, 2012; Benson and Neveu, 2005).

A common critique of field theory has been that it is deterministic. This led Bourdieu, particularly in later discussions, to argue that field theory *does* leave space for individual agency and unpredictability – although this *possible* change or transformation of a field by new agents is still limited within the given structures at hand (Bourdieu, 2007). More clearly though, Bourdieu distanced himself from the narrow Marxist orthodoxy by claiming there *is* some autonomy *within* the fields. Field theory can thus provide us with an approach in analysing not the individual journalists, but rather *all* journalists or media organizations and the implicit codes and assumptions they share.

3. Journalistic habitus in Greenland: field notes

When applying field theory, one needs to bear in mind the historical and academic context of the sociology of the theory: French society of 1970s and 1980s and the debates about how to understand and explain modern society in that dominantly national context of a powerful European country with an imperial history. A question then arises as to (whether and) *how* it makes sense to apply Bourdieu’s conceptualizations in a context as different as today’s Greenland and its journalistic

field. This points to two directions. First, one must reframe the use of field theory in the light of the empirical data (Willig et al., 2015: 58), continuously ask questions and make qualitative inquiries into the field in question. Second, in addition to such empirical validity checks, re-contextualization of field theory to new contexts can also benefit from a dialogue with other strands of social theory. In the case of Greenland, I suggest that the empirical realities of Greenland can usefully point to discussing field theory in relation to the postcolonial theory.

Drawing on the analytical tools of *capital* and *habitus*, then, we can begin to ask questions concerning what kind of capital is acknowledged in the Greenlandic journalism field and what the “local” habitus of a Greenlandic journalist looks like.

Journalistic habitus is a complex empirical question. On one level, there is a deep, internalized understanding of what is considered good journalism and what is not proper in the space of the newsroom. The “news habitus” is then defined as “*a practical mastering of the news game involving a strong, bodily sense of news-worthiness*” (Schultz, 2007: 193). At the same time, there are some explicit values corresponding to the journalistic “professional” habitus. In a western-democratic media context, for instance, the notion of objectivity in reporting is central. Similarly, there are some clear journalistic hierarchies. For example, political and financial news are seen as more important than entertainment or gossip news (at least in media that consider themselves “serious”). At the same time, it is also important to see the forms of capital as dynamic. While a strict structuralist would argue that individuals are born and set into certain classes with certain habitus, seeing fields as spaces for *games* also emphasizes possibilities of mobility and change within these boundaries. Such negotiations in the everyday life of journalists also became visible in my own data collection at *KNR*, the Greenlandic PBS.

One of the key struggles emerging from the empirical data is the tension between a “local” and a “non-local” news habitus. Hess and Waller (2016) have also operationalized this question in their studies of three local newspapers serving small towns in Australia. They have identified a form of local knowledge (e.g. knowing “the direction the river flows”) immanent in the local journalist’s experience. This is a form of capital that the “fly-in-fly-out” journalists will never truly master, such as the local logic, people’s life stories, family relations, or the history of the geographical space. To be local, then, is to have “*a grounded connection with, and understanding of, a physical place and its social and cultural dimensions that is practical and embodied*” (Hess and Waller, 2016: 264). In a field-theory perspective, having a local news habitus implies commanding “*specialized knowledge and experience of what makes a place and the people within it ‘tick’*”. This is required to build legitimacy as an authoritative public voice and to meet the audience’s special information needs (Hess and Waller, 2016: 264).

In the case of Greenland, the question of local habitus is further complicated

by the fact of Greenland being a postcolonial society, with a history of 200 years of Danish rule. Empirically, one shortcut to understanding this condition would be to look at the ethnical differences between the local, Greenlandic population and the Danish immigrant population. However, this is an almost impossible task, since the two groups are so closely linked throughout 200 years of shared history and genetics. Thus, it quickly becomes difficult to define what it means to be “Greenlandic” or “Danish” in Greenland. A large number of the population are children of mixed marriages or relations, and they consider themselves a little of both or somewhere in between. All Greenlanders have Danish citizenship, and so residency statistics are not useful. Some have argued that mastering the Greenlandic language is an indication of belonging, but even this is a complex issue in Greenland, as there are ethnic Greenlanders (or Inuit) born and raised in Greenland who do not master the language due to for instance schooling.² These are all issues that need to be taken into account when looking at the specific field.

At the same time, one can elaborate the idea of power in the newsroom with the help of Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*. A Danish editor might have more power and a better understanding of the newsroom values he guides the editorial work within.³ A newly arrived Danish reporter might rise in the profession quicker due to an internalized understanding of which values carry weight within the field. But such power hierarchies cannot be explained by ethnicity alone (which a strict post-colonial paradigm might argue). Rather, the *habitus* of the agent is formed by the personal, unique history as well. Has the reporter in question been trained at a local or a national media outlet during his or her professional education? Is he or she from a small town or a large city? For example, a Danish reporter residing in Greenland says in an interview⁴ that his insight into the small state issues of Greenland is deeper and better than the journalists coming from big cities, because he is originally from a small Danish town where everybody – like in Greenland – knows everybody (he himself, for instance, has personal ties with the town mayor of his home town). This personal trajectory, then, helps him understand the local reporters he is working with. Another example of how to question the explanatory power of ethnicity is whether the Greenlandic, local reporter is of a mixed Danish-Greenlandic background and fully bilingual or does he or she have Greenlandic as their mother tongue

2 Educational politics have changed now, but earlier it was considered a large advantage to master the Danish language in order to be able to take higher education in the (free) Danish system for Greenlanders.

3 All leading news editors are Danes at the moment, all though it is hard to make such an ethnic distinction, they are all born, raised and trained in Denmark at Danish news media, even though some of them have resided in Greenland for years.

4 The interview was conducted in September 2016 for my PhD-dissertation.

hence struggling in the newsroom during editorial meetings all held in Danish.

As a way of illustrating more concrete empirical aspects analysing the “post-colonial journalistic field” of Greenland, I want to briefly take up three preliminary findings from my ongoing field work. Rather than aiming to explain them, I offer these points to open questions related to the complexity of the “field within a field” I am studying.⁵

3.1 *The question of language*

The most striking evidence of the Greenlandic journalistic field being a “field within a field”, and closely intertwined with Danish norms and values, is the question of *language*. The dominating language in news work is Danish. Editorial meetings in newsrooms are for the most part conducted in Danish, the reporters are mainly working in Danish – except when interviewing with sources who only speak Greenlandic. This makes mastering the Danish language an absolutely essential skill and capital to hold (or achieve) in order to prosper as a journalist. At the same time, however, the bi-lingual reality is a controversial theme in the country as a whole. The quality of media language has created much debate over the years, most recently as a member of Parliament brought the subject to political debate by suggesting a political intervention in order to improve the status of the Greenlandic language in media (Karlsen, 2016). The Greenland Language Secretariat has also openly criticized the quality of the translations. This is a key question, as newspaper articles in the two weeklies are *first* written in Danish, edited and then versioned by professional translators, who are not journalists (Mediearbejdsgruppen, 2010).

During one of my interviews, a local journalist talked about her great love for the Greenlandic language. She considered the love of language being one of the main reasons for going into journalism in the first place. Ironically, however, she notes how this is not possible to carry out in practice, as all her work is written first in Danish (in order for the editor to proof read).⁶ Another reporter told me that he began his career working in both languages. This, however, took him twice the time as he was actually doing double work. In the end, he gave up on his high lan-

5 The data consists of field notes from observations studies at the national radio- and TV-station KNR, from 17 qualitative interviews with editors, reporters, interns, former reporters, the journalist union and more, from attendance at media seminars, informal conversations with journalists in Nuuk and Copenhagen, media debates in the public, and also from my own insight into the field as a former member of the journalistic field in Greenland (I’ve worked as a reporter and later as a journalism teacher in Greenland for 5 years before starting the official research).

6 The interview was conducted in September 2016 for my PhD-dissertation.

guage ambitions and began working only in Danish in order to get feedback from the editor, in full realization that his skills in his mother tongue would deteriorate in time. The same narrative came up in several conversations with journalists.

The role of language, however, is not restricted to writing and style. Some local reporters also find it difficult to partake in editorial meetings that aren't conducted in their mother tongue, as it is difficult to shift between the two very different languages. As one Greenlandic reporter puts it in an interview:

The Danish journalists and the Danes in general talk incredibly fast and a lot. They dominate a lot and talk a lot. So sometimes it can be hard to get a word in. Not because I have problems with it, because we take turns when talking about what we're working on. Sometimes I just don't say that much. Maybe it's a Greenlander-thing, that you don't just talk and talk and talk, like the Danes (laughs) but it doesn't give me any problems in terms of the work I'm doing.⁷

3.2. *Quoting stories*

A second example of post-colonial dependency of the Greenlandic "field within a field" being is the number of quoted stories from Danish media. Based on an earlier pilot study (Hussain, 2013) and observations, the use of Danish angles and Danish news sources in Greenlandic media is noticeable. There is a clear pattern of favouring quotations from Danish media (maybe because the editors are more oriented towards Danish media landscape and the dominant news stories in the Danish press) rather than, for instance, the neighbouring countries of Canada, USA or Iceland). Partly this orientation makes sense, as there are still very close political ties between the countries, just as there is the common language. But often the quoted news stories are not at all directly relevant to the Greenlandic public. For instance, a story on how many Danish athletes are competing in the Paralympics is quoted in the evening radio news (at *KNR* on September 19th 2016).

There are also examples of extensive use of Danish sources in the news. For instance, Danish experts on finances, municipal issues often presented in Danish media, are asked to analyse parallel Greenlandic issues without having prior knowledge of the distinct characteristics of the Greenlandic municipal or financial system. Nevertheless, the editors try to be consciously careful in not using too many Danish experts on Greenlandic relations. The editors – reflectively recognizing the way the postcolonial condition and heritage frames and structures their action – often share an assumption that the general public is sick and tired of listening to Danes telling them what is right and what is wrong.

7 The interview was conducted on September 20th 2016 for my PhD-dissertation, other interviews confirm.

3.3. *Local knowledge – local habitus*

Following Hess and Wallers (2016) idea of journalists with a “local habitus”, it is also interesting to study the demography of the agents of the Greenlandic journalistic field. At the moment, there are approximately 35 people working with full time news journalism in Greenland. Some of them have no formal professional journalism training.⁸ A number of these are trained Danish journalists who shift to Greenland to work as reporters – but usually only for a few years. The phenomenon of high staff turnover has existed for many years (and not only in journalism), and has been debated and criticized for just as many. For instance, when establishing a separate Greenlandic journalist education in late 1970s and early 1980s it was a distinct wish from the committee that Greenland could finally be “rid of the newcomers” from Denmark and instead fill the media positions with local labour with local knowledge, language skills and understanding of local customs and way of life (Lauritzen et al., 1981; Uju., 1981).

When my interviewees discussed the general differences between the “newcomers” and the “locals”,⁹ many prejudices and presumptions on both sides became visible. For instance that the “newcomers” or “outsiders” were seen as more aggressive and critical towards news sources, whilst the locals less so (for more see Hussain, 2018, forthcoming, and also Tróndheim, 2002; Wagner Sørensen, 1993). One Danish editor describes the cultural differences in these words:

There is sometimes a tendency that newcomers arrive on the four-o’clock-flight with a “know-it-all” attitude. Maybe they aren’t aware enough of the fact that they are taking the Greenlandic culture and squeezing it through their own Danish lens, where they see things in a very Danish way [...] It can be a real problem here in Greenland, where there are a lot of migrant professionals. We seem to overlook news stories, correlations, questions that would make sense for the Greenlandic audience, but don’t necessarily make sense for the Danish editor. Or he simply doesn’t see them, he doesn’t understand the context, or the cultural significance.¹⁰

8 4 journalists at each of the two weeklies, 2 at the web news desk sermitsiaq.ag, around 20 in total at the news outlets (radio news, TV news and web news) at KNR and 4 at Nuuk TV. The numbers are gathered through interviews with the managing editors of KNR and Sermitsiaq (June 2015) of Atuagagdliutit (June 2016) and web editor (September 2016).

9 This distinction is somewhat generic as some of the Danish reporters have resided in Greenland for more than a few years and they integrated into the local society, whilst others stay for only 1-2 years, just as Greenlandic journalists are of mixed backgrounds and some of them, for instance, have lived and worked in Denmark for some years.

10 Qualitative interview conducted in June 2015.

The same editor also described how the way of communicating in Greenland is different. Engaging in contact with sources, he especially notices, can be challenging to the newcomers: “*There are two very different cultures. They are not asking the right way, sometimes you need to ask your questions in a different manner*”. While conscious of these troubles, however, the same editor believed that the migrant reporters have better training and are more skilled than many of the locals. He ended up defending the practical need for Danish journalists in Greenland: “*They (the Danes) are more qualified, they see a complex report and quickly find the critical points*”.

5. Concluding remarks

The scarcely populated island of Greenland offers an inspiring opportunity both to the study the complex dependencies and tensions of contemporary “global” or “transnational” journalism and to test and develop the explanation power of one key theoretical framework, *field theory*. The journalistic field in Greenland is small, exposed and vulnerable, embedded in a broader political, economic and professional field dynamics of Denmark, the former colonial power. The legislation and organizational structure of the media are inherited from Denmark. A flow of Danish visiting journalists and Danish editors keep up the norms and the value system of the local field in Greenland.

At the same time, Greenlandic journalism operates in a nation of its own with distinct characteristics: small size, politics of the bilingualism, tight local networks with a small elite and close ties between reporters and possible sources. All these local contingencies also shape the field practically, professionally and socially (in a specific, local way), also opening up tensions between the “global-colonial” and “local” capitals and the habitus system of the field. These contradictions are negotiated and managed in the everyday practices of newsrooms. An in-depth empirical analysis of this small field can not only show its unique characteristics but also point to more general agenda of future journalism research in similar kinds of complex field conditions. In addition, it can suggest further need to how to apply, problematize and adjust field theory in the increasingly post- or transnational conditions.

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Biography

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SECTION 3

POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION IN CONTEMPORARY MEDIA DISCOURSES

Humanizing Violent Extremism: Journalistic Reflections on In-depth Personalized Narratives of Western jihadists

Anna Grøndahl Larsen

Abstract

The issue of young Westerners travelling to Syria to join the Salafi-jihadist group the Islamic State (IS) has, in recent years, been high on the public agenda in a number of European countries, including Norway. The phenomena of so-called foreign fighters have generated renewed interest in radicalization and why young people growing up in Western, democratic countries come to engage in political and religious violence. One journalistic approach to these questions has been in-depth feature stories, zooming in on specific individuals' lives prior to joining groups like IS, and describing their "path to extremism". Drawing on theoretical perspectives on human-interest framing and individuals in journalism, the present chapter explores this particular way of narrating radicalization and violent extremism. Based on 26 in-depth interviews with Norwegian journalists and a close reading of a selection of in-depth human-interest stories about Norwegians who have joined IS, the chapter explores journalistic reflections on and representational implications of personalized narratives of violent extremism. The interviewed journalists underline that giving extremism a face and a story is crucial to make the audience identify, expand understandings and broaden the range of perspectives within public discourses on violent extremism. This includes humanizing the topic and depicting extremists as regular, complex human beings rather than as purely dangerous and threatening criminals. The chapter furthermore points to how personalized narratives of individual jihadists largely foreground a socialization approach to radicalization, and, in line with interviewees' accounts, suggests that these narratives may add complexity to public discourses concerning radicalization and violent extremism.

Keywords Human Interest, Journalism, Personalized Narratives, Radicalization, Violent Extremism

1. Introduction

The issue of young Westerners travelling to Syria and Iraq to join the Salafi-jihadist group the Islamic State (IS) has, in recent years, been high on the public agenda in a number of European countries, including Norway. The phenomena of so-called foreign fighters have generated renewed interest in radicalization¹ and why young people who have grown up in Western, democratic countries come to accept and engage in political and religious violence.

One journalistic approach to these questions has been in-depth feature stories, zooming in on specific individuals and reporting in-depth on their life stories prior to joining groups like IS, and describing their “path to extremism”. With titles such as *Why did three friends from Levanger end up with terrorists?*, these stories typically highlight aspects of the depicted individual’s personality, their family background and education, previous engagement with crime, drug use, psychological issues, and their process of being presented to and increasingly becoming part of extremist milieus and accepting extremist ideas.

Depictions and, in turn, understandings of violent extremism² are shaped by the frames employed in journalistic reports. Studies have pointed to the manner in which the mainstream media tends to represent jihadists as dangerous and uncivil, foregrounding how “they” threaten “us” (Hoskins and O’Loughlin, 2010). The present chapter takes as its starting point that by emphasizing the life stories of individuals, personalized narratives may unveil alternative understandings of and policy solutions to radicalization and violent extremism than, for instance, stories focusing on the overall threat of IS. Based on 26 in-depth interviews with Norwegian journalists and editors and a close reading of a selection of in-depth human-interest stories about Norwegians having joined IS, the present chapter shed light on how journalists reflect on foregrounding the human aspects of actors deemed illegitimate, intolerant and dangerous, and discusses the understandings of radicalization and violent extremism conveyed through such personalized narratives. In-depth, personal life stories of individuals are not representative of the overall topics and frames present in journalism on violent extremism; rather, they represent one way of approaching and narrating violent extremism and radicalization. Drawing on theoretical perspec-

1 The term “radicalization” generally refers to a process of accepting and/or carrying out violence to achieve specific political objectives. The term came into widespread public use in Europe from 2005 in attempts to understand and prevent so-called “home grown” terrorism. The concept tends, implicitly or explicitly, to be tied to jihadist-inspired violence (Crone, 2016; Sedgwick, 2010).

2 In the context of the present chapter, the term “violent extremism” refers to groups/individuals advocating or employing physical violence to achieve specific political objectives. “Jihadism” refers to a violent revolutionary version of Islam (see e.g., Maher, 2016).

tives on human-interest framing and individuals in journalism, the chapter explores this particular way of approaching and narrating violent extremism, emphasizing journalistic reflections and representational implications of these specific narratives.

2. Human-interest framing and representations of radicalization and violent extremism

The notion of framing highlights how, in presenting issues, journalism foregrounds, excludes and tones down specific aspects, symbolically structuring the social world and promoting specific definitions, causes and solutions to the issues reported (Entman, 1993; Reese, 2001). The human-interest frame has been identified as one of several generic news frames commonly applied in reporting a range of topics and typically include bringing “*a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue or problem*”, including the use of human examples, visual information and adjectives that generate empathy, and/or inclusion of private or personal information (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000: 95). By focusing on specific individuals, personalized narratives make abstract issues more tangible and accessible and enable the identification with and understanding of others situation, feelings and motives (Neuman, Just and Crigler, 1992; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013: 132). Moreover, by employing the human-interest frame, the issues reported tend to be dramatized and emotionalized, favoring victim portrayals of the individuals depicted (Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud, 2015; Steimel, 2010). Thus, by focusing on the plight and perspectives of specific individuals, personalized narratives might broaden the range of perspectives present in journalistic discourses on violent extremism (Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). These narratives might contribute to the construction of “them”, not purely as dangerous enemies to be squashed, but as “*others with humanity*” (Chouliaraki and Orgad, 2011) and as adversaries whose views might be regarded as illegitimate, but who are nevertheless heeded, with there being an inclination toward understanding them (Mouffe, 2000; Eide, 2016).

Understandings of radicalization can broadly be divided into two approaches. The first emphasizes radicalization as an ideological process of increasingly accepting “violent extremist ideas”, whereas the second focuses on social marginalization and socialization into extremism (e.g., Basra, 2016; Crone, 2016; Hörnqvist and Flyghed, 2012). Recent statistics on individuals “frequenting extreme Islamist environments” in Norway largely highlight a group dominated by vulnerable and marginalized individuals with a “difficult childhood and youth”, previous experience with substance abuse, criminal activity and low levels of education (PST, 2016).

The human-interest narrative opens up specific understandings of and policy solutions to radicalization and violent extremism. For instance, in a recent study

of Norwegian public debate concerning foreign fighters³³ in Syria and how to deal with them, Fangen and Kolås (2016) identified two main ways of defining foreign fighters that, in turn, have implications for possible policy solutions. While the first primarily defines foreign fighters as criminals who should be met with legal sanctioning – i.e., largely presenting jihadist foreign fighters within a crime frame – the second largely highlights the human aspects of violent extremism, defining radicalized youth as marginalized members of society who should be reintegrated upon return. Research has furthermore suggested the Western mainstream news media tends to highlight a socialization approach in depicting “domestic terrorists”, focusing on individuals’ personal struggles and motives, whereas “foreign terrorists”, to a larger extent, are portrayed as angry men with ties to terror groups and violent international conflicts (Crenshaw, 2014; Powell, 2011).

A common critique of the person-centered news narrative is that it serves to individualize and de-contextualize complex social issues (see Reinemann, Stanyer, Scherr and Legnante, 2011). This critique is echoed in scholarly discussions of the academic and political construction of the idea of “radicalization”, highlighting that radicalization has come to be seen as an individual process, emphasizing the individual and de-emphasizing broader social and political circumstances (Crone, 2016, Hörnqvist and Flyghed, 2012; Sedgwick, 2010). For instance, Crone (2016) argues that:

(I)ndividualist bias in radicalization theories is reflected in the most common way of understanding a terrorist attack, by looking into the individual life story of perpetrators... But these individual life stories omit both the role of extremist milieus and the role of the broader social context, that is, the influence of the western societies in which the processes of radicalization are taking place (Crone, 2016: 598).

Furthermore, individual life stories of “radicalized individuals” have been criticized for retrospectively taking the biographical details and previous activities and choices of the depicted individuals as signs of radicalization, thus suggesting that “*those concerned were ‘always going to be’ vulnerable to radicalisation*” (Awan, Hoskins and O’Loughlin, 2011). Recent research has however suggested that an emphasis on individuals does not necessarily lead to the omission of social or structural factors (Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud, 2015).

3 Hegghammer (2010: 57-58) defines a foreign fighter as “an agent who (1) has joined, and operates within the confines of, an insurgency, (2) lacks citizenship of the conflict state or kinship links to its warring factions, (3) lacks affiliation to an official military organization, and (4) is unpaid”. The present article uses the term in referring to individuals who (allegedly) have joined Salafi-jihadist group IS, as reported in the news media.

In what follows, the perspectives presented above are drawn upon to shed light on and discuss journalistic reflections on and representational implications of violent extremism through in-depth personalized narratives.

3. Methods

The present analysis is based on 26 in-depth interviews with Norwegian journalists and editors conducted between March 2015 and June 2016, including journalists working for broadcasting, print and online newspapers, mainstream and niche outlets, as well as freelance reporters. The majority of interviewees (19) work for the largest mainstream news outlets in Norway (*Aftenposten*, *Dagbladet*, *NRK*, *TV2* and *VG*), while the others work as freelancers or in smaller local, regional, and niche outlets. Nine interviewees work as news editors, and 17 interviewees work as reporters who have covered topics concerning violent extremism more or less extensively over time in various formats, including news, books, and documentaries. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then sent to the interviewees for approval. The interview transcripts were approved either altogether or with minor adjustments, clarification, and/or provision of additional information. The interviewees are named Editor 1-9 or Journalist 1-17 to protect their anonymity.

The following analysis emphasizes the perspectives of those reporters who have worked on in-depth personalized stories of Norwegian jihadists. Therefore, the views expressed in the analysis section do not represent the full complexity of journalistic reflection on how to present violent extremism. In preparing for the interviews, the author conducted a close reading of selected personalized narratives, and during the interviews, reporters were asked to reflect on these stories. The reading of these stories was also drawn upon in the present chapter to describe characteristics of in-depth personalized narratives. The material consists of written news and feature articles, books, as well as radio and television documentaries.

4. Analysis: reporting violent extremism through personalized narratives – journalistic aims and assessments

Radicalization is a process whereby a person, to borrow the PST's [The Norwegian Police Security Services] definition, "increasingly accepts the use of violence to achieve political, religious or ideological goals". The word seeks to bridge a gap. On one hand, you have young boys from Norwegian neighborhoods. On the other hand, you have fanatical warriors in Iraq and Syria. The mystery is in the middle. It goes beyond the limits of imagination. The PST describes it in general terms. Researchers know more but seldom have access to jihad-

ists in the field. The media struggle to go beyond descriptions of “a regular boy”. What if we zoom in even closer on one Norwegian jihadist’s development? If we collect more pieces of information and put them closer together, will we then understand more? (Sætre, 2014: 12).

The above excerpt from the introduction of an in-depth feature article about a young Norwegian who joined IS, published in the weekly *Morgenbladet*, is illustrative of how reporters reason and explain the aims of personalized narratives of Norwegian foreign fighters in Syria. Overall, individual stories are highlighted as important to shed light on and aim to understand radicalization processes and why individuals come to hold violent extremist views and choose to join terror organizations abroad. In addition, these stories are to some extent driven by the journalistic fascination with the seemingly inexplicable: why “normal” Norwegian boys and girls leave everything behind to fight for terror organizations abroad.

Reporters highlight how stories of specific individuals give a more detailed picture, going beyond superficial descriptions of the threat of terrorism, to shed light on factors that illuminate and might help explain radicalization, including individual motives and socio-economic aspects. Contrary to a broad body of scholarly work, the interviewed reporters do not see person orientation as a given sign of declining news quality but, rather, as an important way of making the audience identify, expand understandings and broaden the range of perspectives present in public discourses on violent extremism. As noted by one reporter:

Human beings are the most specific. They also make for good stories... What is interesting is that you can get much deeper when you concentrate on one person. But the individual has to be interesting in the sense that s/he expresses something broader or is a kind of key person. The individual needs to say something about a larger community... I also think it increases understanding... And people identify (Journalist 11).

Reporters underline that giving extremism a face and a story is crucial to convey the human aspects of violent extremism, and creating audience identification and understanding. Relatedly, by presenting stories of the private and personal lives of jihadists, including these individuals’ own thoughts and perspectives, reporters aim to illuminate individual and social aspects and motivations that may shed light on why these individuals came to hold violent extremist views. A reporter from one of the largest newspapers puts it this ways:

To some extent, you can choose to see them as victim stories. They are human beings, and to understand how they came to be this or why they chose to enlist, you need to understand the human aspects. But for every such story, you get emails where people write “yeah right, ‘of course’ they are victims. Wake up, they are terrorists and monsters”. But I don’t think

so... These are young and impulsive people who I don't think are evil in that way... They have lived in Norway for twenty years, went to kindergarten, school, had jobs, friends, and family who care about them. So there is of course a human side to this that is important to convey (Journalist 3).

Another journalist, having followed a group of Norwegians associated with Salafi-jihadism, over an extended period, notes:

The media has a tendency to portray them [jihadists] as very dangerous. Our thought was that we wanted to "make them harmless" and learn to know them as human beings... The intent was to show that they have feelings, that they have love for their cause, and why they have this love – to show why they are passionate about this; why they went from being completely normal Norwegian integrated youth to become so radical, so extreme in their faith; to find out when and why that change occurred (Journalist 14).

Thus, through personalized depictions reporters aim to broaden the perspectives within public discourses on violent extremism. This entails foregrounding the individuals' status beyond being "extremists", presenting them as regular and complex human beings, not purely as dangerous criminals.

Such representations are however contested and are regularly subject to critical audience feedback. While reporters highlight a journalistic duty to report violent extremism, they are wary of the perceived boundaries of representation and seek to find the appropriate balance between conveying the human aspects of violent extremism while at the same time aiming to avoid legitimizing the actors or undermining the gravity of their acts. In the overall coverage, this entails varying the frames and perspectives brought forth in different journalistic texts, with reporters pointing to the personalized narrative as one among several ways of reporting violent extremism. One reflection on this overall balance is evident in the quote below. It concerns a specific news story based on pictures and posts from the Facebook profiles of Norwegian jihadists who have joined IS and illustrates their opinions, showing how they present themselves and their life in Syria. The reporter points out that the publication of this material, which could be regarded as propaganda, was contested, thus resulting in critical feedback from voices arguing that it was "*(a)n advertising brochure for life in Syria*" (Journalist 1). However, the decision was made to publish it because:

(w)e believed that in order to understand the phenomenon of so many travelling to Syria, we had to show different aspects of it. Who travels to Syria or Iraq only because they want to behead people? Why does an 18- or 19-year old do that? We felt that we should report on some of the things that they say about life there; why they are there; what they do there;

that they also indicate that they are doing fine. That can help us understand why so many are going to Syria – that it isn't just to kill but also because they find a community there that they perhaps haven't found at home... To be able to understand, you cannot just show one side of the story (Journalist 1).

Furthermore, within specific individual narratives, depictions are typically “balanced” in their description of the individuals as “regular” boys/girls while also emphasizing their “deviance” in wording such as “jihadist”, “terrorist” and “IS warrior”.

It should be noted that while reporters regard personalized narratives as an important part of journalism on violent extremism, the production of in-depth stories is foregrounded as specifically resource-intensive. The actors themselves tend to be inaccessible to reporters and journalists highlight the need to work over time to establish relations with central sources, including the actors themselves and sources around them such as family and friends. In recent years, the largest Norwegian news outlets have had designated reporters working to report issues concerning Norwegian jihadist foreign fighters. The smaller news outlets, however, do not always have the resources to carry out longer-term investigative work and tend to report on the issue in a more ad hoc manner. Moreover, while access is highlighted as a general challenge in reporting extremist groups, some reporters point out that access to sources has been made more difficult due to recent policing practices. This relates in particular to one instance in which the Norwegian Security Police Services (PST) seized unpublished film material filmed as part of an ongoing documentary project about IS recruitment. While the Norwegian Supreme Court revoked the seizure, some reporters maintain that the seizure had a somewhat chilling effect on their access to sources. Hence, while reporters foreground the value of in-depth stories of individuals, the possibility to produce these stories is limited by resource and access constraints.

5. Conclusion

The aim of the present chapter was to shed light on and discuss journalistic reflections on personalized narratives of violent extremism. In what follows, some possible implications of the findings in relation to depictions and understandings of radicalization and violent extremism are discussed. It should be noted that due to the relatively limited scope of the textual material analyzed in this chapter, the representational implications indicated below should be further explored including broader samples of texts and/or through more fine-grained textual analysis.

Contrary to a broad body of scholarly work, reporters do not express person orientation as a given sign of declining news quality but, rather, as an important

way of making the audience identify with and relate to “the other”, expand understandings, point to explanatory factors and broaden the range of perspectives within public discourses on violent extremism. This includes humanizing violent extremism and depicting extremists as “regular” complex human beings rather than as purely dangerous and threatening criminals. Overall, interviewees’ accounts and the textual material implicitly or explicitly emphasize a “socialization” approach to radicalization and violent extremism. This largely confirms previous studies of how individual “domestic terrorists” are depicted (Crenshaw, 2014; Powell, 2011). Most prominently, the narratives highlight psychosocial and socio economic factors, including drug use, engagement in crime, marginalization from education and work life, and the feeling of “not fitting in”. Extremist groups are presented as providing the individuals’ with a community, role and sense of social belonging and status that they did not find elsewhere. Whereas broader systemic issues relating to, for instance, the educational system are largely omitted, the social dimension of radicalization is relatively prominent, in particular the role played by smaller networks of friends and acquaintances. This suggests that an emphasis on individuals does not necessarily entail ignoring the social circumstances within which the individuals are placed (cf. Crone, 2016). Scholars have alluded to the manner in which public discourses of radicalization tend to be based on deterministic communication models, presenting vulnerable individuals as radicalized by “external forces” such as the internet or religious preachers (Archetti, 2015; Crone, 2016). Focusing on a variety of social circumstances, experiences, steps and choices in specific individuals’ lives, personalized narratives arguably unveil representations of radicalization as a complex process consisting of various social factors rather than as a process whereby passive individuals are “infused” with extremist ideas and then turn to violence. Hence, in line with the journalistic accounts presented above, humanizing violent extremism may arguably serve to add complexity to public discourses of violent extremism and expand the range of possible understandings of and responses to the violent extremist “other”. These stories are, however, specifically resource-intensive to produce: it is difficult to gain access to sources and the stories are best conveyed in lengthier formats such as journalistic feature articles, books and documentaries.

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Biography

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“Exotic Brotherhoods” in Serbian Media Discourses: The Caucasus

Justyna Pierzynska

Abstract

This chapter discusses the question of constructing brotherhoods of nations in the media in the post-Communist and post-Soviet context. It takes as an example the notions of brotherhood that appear in Serbian media with regard to different nations of the Caucasus (Georgians, Armenians, Ossetes). By examining the ways in which a remote region is represented and made sense of in the popular media, the chapter traces how new elements and nations are written into already stabilized historical narratives and “political mythologies”.

The chapter employs the theoretical lens of popular geopolitics. It is concerned with popular, everyday discourse on and representations of countries and groups. On the example of newspaper articles, TV shows, book publications etc. I show how particular understandings of international brotherhood emerge and what symbolic resources they draw upon. I also position these new brotherhoods in a broader context of Serbian politics and trace their role as political tools for a mobilization of particular kinds of historical knowledge.

The article combines Foucault’s understanding of discourse with Berger and Luckman’s theory of the socially constructed nature of everyday commonsensical knowledge, making use of the analytical apparatus provided by the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (SKAD).

Keywords Serbia, Caucasus, Brotherhood, History, Geopolitics

1. Introduction

International friendships are often understood as a “*cumulative process of building trust, growing affinities and deepening cooperation*” between states by institutional means (Oelsner and Vion, 2011: 131), symbols and language being an important component of this process. According to Krotz, bottom-down friendship building initiatives can only succeed if aided by a presence of “parapublic underpinnings” – various cultural and local initiatives which give more everyday substance, emotion and meaning to concrete everyday experiences of the postulated friendship (Krotz 2002, cited in Oelsner and Vion, 2011). Various media formats, blogs, websites, books, TV programmes etc. are able to create such parapublic underpinnings and contribute to discourses on international friendships and brotherhoods.

This article sets out to explore the everyday mediated constructions of brotherhood between Serbia and its “brotherly nations” from the Caucasus. Those brotherhood constructions are analyzed using popular media material, exploring discourses utilized in the media to construct figures of brotherhood. The examples of Serbian-Armenian, Serbian-Abkhaz and Serbian-Ossetian brotherhoods in the popular media are understood as a special case of geopolitical imaginations, built from existing symbolic stocks of historical knowledge. Such geopolitical imaginations easily become part of “popular political mythology”, which tends to resist change or reform (Ćolović, 2014: 69).

I argue that the creation of “exotic” brotherhoods between Serbia and various Caucasus nations is not a mere rhetorical operation securing some instant political gain, but a wider phenomenon of cognitive ordering of history. This is important in countries that underwent systemic changes after the collapse of Communist regimes; in those countries, history has been elevated to an important reservoir of social meaning to be drawn from in both national and international contexts (Mälksoo, 2009: 654f). Fotiadis (2014: 265) states that the emergence of new brotherhoods is typical for times of crisis and change, when old meaning regimes collapse and new alliances are sought. The “parapublic underpinnings” of this process are instrumental in securing public support for the constant presence of history and historical debates in the media. Politicians, societies, NGOs participate in the publically performed discourse on history and build new brotherhoods with a more or less historical rationale. Brotherhood constructions help redefine one’s own identity and determine the enemy, forming new in-groups and out-groups.

The Serbian case is illustrative in this respect. History is permeating public discourses in Serbia, which is understandable given its turbulent recent transformations, especially the 1990s Yugoslav wars and the secession of Kosovo. In the public and media sphere, a “great leap backwards” is observable to the pre-WWII times, which start to play a guiding role for new political life. The 50-year social-

ist period is often overlooked, omitted from the narrative.¹ I argue that the new brotherhood constructions help to stabilize new history interpretations as dominant, providing new points of reference (e.g. non-aligned internationalism or Yugoslav "brotherhood and unity" being replaced with particular international brotherhoods).

Processes of historicization of the political and the social are often accused of enabling the renaissance of militant nationalisms (Kuus, 2004: 475). They also contribute to the Orientalist view that Eastern European and Balkan nations are characterized by innate historicism and a disposition to interpret social change through the lenses of the past (Mälksoo, 2009: 657). Brotherhood constructions can undoubtedly become political tools used to enhance dominant political narratives, especially defining the enemy (Pierzynska, 2016). However, it is important to realize that brotherhood constructions also play the role of re-asserting one's own agency, which is often perceived as disregarded or even destroyed by international powers in the midst of a "geopolitical game".

The examples discussed here illustrate how various media contribute to such reassertion by constructing new Caucasus-oriented brotherhoods.

2. Serbian historical self and its Caucasus-projection

Serbia has had at least two important "brothers" in the course of history: France and Russia. The Serbian-French friendship was celebrated in Serbia in the 1920s as a remembrance of the French assistance in WWI, but was officially and symbolically "buried" by covering the monument dedicated to this alliance after France took part in the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 (Ćolović, 2014: 70). The Serbian-Russian brotherhood discourse has a long history dating back hundreds of years (Milosavljević, 2002: 267f) and still thrives in the media nowadays (Varga, 2016: 163f; Ćolović, 2014: 69). Varga argues that the Serbian-Russian brotherhood narrative is a symptom of anti-Westernism rather than a genuine concern for values and traditions shared by both nations (Varga, 2016: 176). The "new Russophilia" in Serbia could even be seen as a wider come-back of Russia-enthusiastic narratives in the Balkans (cf. Iršič, 2015). Serbia also entertains more "symmetrical" brotherhoods, e.g. the relatively new discourse on the Serbian-Greek friendship which appeared during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, funded in shared representations of history as a force victimizing one's nation and the need to exercise historical territorial rights to Kosovo and Macedonia, respectively (Fotiadis, 2014: 470).

1 As, for example, during the 2014 Military Parade in Belgrade, attended by Putin, celebrating the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the city from the Nazis. The official speeches of the Serbian officials were mostly dedicated to the memory of WWI, and references to Communist Yugoslavia and Tito's Partisans non-existent (Mihajlović, 2014).

The somehow exotic claims about the existence of Serbian-Armenian, Serbian-Ossetian and Serbian-Abkhazian brotherhood can be understood against this background; they seem to be anchored in the dominating perception of history as an unjust force which only big international players can tame to serve their interests. This conceptualization of history is in line with the naturalized undifferentiated view of geopolitics as the game of the powerful few played over the heads of small nations which underlies the whole historical process (O'Tuathail, 1996: 15f) and legitimizes violent actions as self-defense acts.

Different Serbian media outlets dedicated space to the new brotherhoods, often painting them as a "historical self-defense". The conservative quality broadsheet *Polityka*, liberal daily *Danas*, tabloid *Kurir* (associated with the ruling Serbian Progressive Party), nationalist daily *Glas javnosti*, nationalist weekly *Pečat*, private and state-funded TV stations and many more tackled the issue. Book publications about the Caucasus² and audience comments on websites add to the fuller picture of the discourse.

From the SKAD perspective, the Caucasus brotherhood claims in Serbian media form a special, niche discourse (Keller, 2011: 31) – after all, the new brotherhoods are not fully stabilized. This does not diminish the relevance of studying them, as they provide a new perspective on popular representations of history, geopolitics and the nation, questions of high practical significance in the Serbian "nationalizing state" (Brubaker, 1996: 431). Media constructions of the new brotherhoods necessarily create new popular knowledge about the Caucasus region. Various media contribute with different elements of such knowledge, together forming a coherent view on the postulated commonalities between nations, which legitimize the brotherhood claims. They inform about Caucasus-related associations and events, securing the parapublic underpinnings of the discourse. The pervasiveness of one particular reading of the Caucasus in almost all materials is worth a second thought.

The brotherhood claims include some common characteristics. Firstly, they posit a special spiritual connection between the nations on the premise that Serbs, Armenians, Ossetes and Abkhazians all share one Orthodox faith (which is a problematic assumption because the Armenian Apostolic Church, being part of non-Chalcedonian tradition, belongs to the Oriental Orthodox churches; it is not in communion with other churches of the Eastern Orthodox tradition). Secondly and more importantly, the historical fate of the above mentioned nations is problematized and elevated to the status of the main organizer of all knowledge claims in the discourse. This fate is understood as unjust, tragic, with countless references to freedom fight, national emancipation, constant existential threats from one's neighbors and genocide. Thirdly, the fact that all the discussed nations are in different

2 E.g. *Geopolitika Zakavkazja* (2010), *Hladni mir: Kavkaz i Kosovo* (2009), *Na vratima istoka* (2014) and others.

ways involved in complicated legal and political processes of territorial secession and (non)recognition of sovereignty enables comparisons between them. Very different realities of opposing the secession of one's province (Serbia in the Kosovo case), supporting the secession of another country's province (Armenia in the Nagorno Karabakh case), or having proclaimed sovereignty while being a province of an internationally recognized state (South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia) are brought together into a discursive "knot" so complex that it becomes easy to blur the facts with geopolitical imaginations which are far from factual.

The Georgian break-away republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia are the case in point. They are depicted as victims of Georgian extermination policies, and their independence proclamations as logical consequences of this existential threat. However, the realities of Soviet Georgia and the actual ethnic composition of its autonomous regions are not problematized. Abkhazia and Ossetia are used as extrapolations to represent the recent history of the Krajina Serbs and their self-proclaimed independent state (Srpska Krajina), whose 1995 defeat by Croatian forces caused an enormous refugee crisis. Estimated 200.000 Serbs left Croatia for Serbia in a dramatic march through war-devastated Bosnian territory (Shattuck, 2003: 169). Painful memories of this crisis are echoed in texts which speak about Abkhazia; some of them go as far as to claim a similar expulsion to have happened to the Abkhaz, disregarding the real history of the 20th century forced migration in the Caucasus (Cornell, 2000: 144).

Expulsion, ethnic cleansing and genocide are also main building blocks of the postulated Serbian-Armenian friendship. Armenians and Serbs are proclaimed to be brotherly nations not only because of their Christian heritage, but mainly because of the historical experience of a planned extermination. Contrary to the mainstream Western representations of the Serbs as main culprits for the Yugoslav wars, the self-positioning of the political elite in the media in 1980s and 1990s concentrated on the existential threat to the Serbian nation within the borders of Communist Yugoslavia (Anžulović, 1999: 109f). This belief has somewhat lost its privileged place in the media by now, especially given the pro-EU stand of the ruling Progressive Party and the pervasive government narrative of "looking into the future". However, the new brotherhood constructions bring the past back to the fore. They oppose the acceptance of any responsibility ("guilt") for the recent war. This happens most often in a framework of a "geopolitical analysis", as in an Armenia-related TV programme where a geopolitical analyst and Caucasus-expert asserts: *"We Serbs disregard all that is Serbian in Serbia nowadays; we accept guilt for things we are not guilty of, and forget about others' guilt for our suffering"* (Igić, 2010).

It is symptomatic that the actors who set the brotherhood discourse and define its ramifications belong to the intellectual elite: they are academicians, journalists, geopolitical analysts etc. A well-known war correspondent praises the Ossetes as a nation who "knows everything about Serbia" and is "familiar with the story of

Kosovo". Moreover, in Ossetia, "the history has stopped". The historical reference is packed together with a geopolitical analysis of the Caucasus' position as a soft underbelly of the USSR (Lazanski, 2014). Other geopolitical analysts point to the need of strengthening contacts between Serbia and Armenia in order to learn how to manage one's position in today's multipolar world (Igić, 2010). The brotherly discourse highlights the need to forge new contacts as vital for overcoming the low international status of Serbia, Russia being one of the countries to seek closer ties with. Intensification of actual contacts would undoubtedly give more substance to its own claims.

The new brotherhoods are defined not only from within, but also, as is usually the case, against a common enemy. Interestingly, there are two main enemies: the West on the whole and Turkey. It seems that elevating Turkey to the role of an important enemy is needed in order to build the posited Serbian-Armenian brotherly relationship. The Armenian genocide, an event that organizes Armenian understanding of history and nation, connects to the motif of the Serbian genocide in the 20th century (extermination policies of the Independent State of Croatia). According to a historian, "*genocide that we experienced during WWII started on the Armenian territory in the end of the 19th century*" (Igić, 2010). The new brotherhood enables a revitalization of this motif that became somewhat "inappropriate" in the aftermath of the Yugoslav wars. It is a reminiscence of what Russell-Omaljev (2016: 103) calls the post-Milošević narrative of nationalist elites which foregrounds the victimhood and suffering of the Serbs oppressed first by the Ottomans and later the international community – elements connecting them with the Armenians. Some studies point to a revitalization of the nationalist rhetoric from the 1980s and 1990s (Veljanovski, 2014: 100), and new brotherhoods may serve as a tool in such discursive operations.

Naturally, an important reference point within the discourse is the recent past. The 1995 refugee crisis is regarded as one of the biggest tragedies in Serbian history and officially commemorated as such. In 2015, Serbian patriarch Irinej classified world genocides in order of severity, placing Serbs on the 3rd position "right after" Jews and Armenians (N1 Vesti, 2015). The usability of Holocaust as a "symbolic prop" for Serbian martyrdom and its usage by Serbian Orthodox Church was discussed elsewhere (David, 2013); the Armenian genocide is used analogically.

The Nagorno-Karabakh issue can similarly function as a trigger for the troubled Serbian province of Kosovo, which declared independence in 2008 with enormous support from the international community, establishing a precedent relevant to all global separatist movements. Popular knowledge has it that Nagorno-Karabakh is an exact analogue to Kosovo, although in reality it is hard to logically defend the parallel. This Azerbaijani province, populated by an Armenian majority, seceded from Azerbaijan in 1991 and sought to be re-united with Armenia, but was never officially recognized by any country, including Armenia itself. The complicated details of the international status of *de facto* states do not make it through to pop-

ular media representations, which seems to be true for Serbia and Armenia alike. In 2014, Serbian media reported about Armenian football fans greeting the Serbian team in Yerevan with a transparent stating “Karabakh is Armenia, Kosovo is Serbia”, with comments underscoring the “shared religion and political situation” of Serbia and Armenia (Telegraf, 2014). Similar messages and images are produced by Serbian Twitter and Facebook users, often with references to the common Christian faith uniting two brotherly countries. Especially interesting visual messages contain Serbian and Armenian coats of arms superimposed against each other, Serbian and Armenian flags merging into one another and stylized “archaized” Cyrillic letters used to convey the messages of political equivalence between the Kosovo and Nagorno Karabakh cases (Facebook, user Orthodox Army).

The following table, adapted from Keller (2011: 59) summarizes the most important elements structuring the discourse, the way it defines the “issue” to be tackled and solutions proposed, as well as the competing knowledge regimes which frame it.

Table 1: structure of the “Caucasus brotherhoods” discourse

Elements	Statements and “issues” to be solved
1. Problem	The existence of one’s own and the brotherly nations threatened by the geopolitical game of great powers
2. Causes	Geopolitical interests of the great powers Disregard for one’s own history, lack of historical knowledge Lack of contacts between the brotherly nations Lack of knowledge exchange between the brotherly nations
3. Proposed solutions	Intensification of contacts Turning away from the West Russia Acknowledging the Serbian genocide in the 20th century Dissemination of geopolitical knowledge
4. Knowledge struggles	Civic vs. ethnic understanding of the nation West (EU, NATO) vs. East (Russia) values Modernity vs. tradition Socialist “brotherhood and unity” vs. new exotic brotherhoods
5. Values	Tradition, Orthodoxy, nation, “blood and soil”

It is important to realize that the Serbian-Armenian brotherhood discourse does not operate only on the symbolic plane. It has a strong material base for Armenians have been present on the Serbian territory since the Middle Ages (Siekierski, 2016: 212). In 2011, there were 222 persons declaring Armenian nationality in Serbia (Popis, 2011). A legend tells a story of an Armenian regiment deserting the Ottoman army during the Kosovo Battle in order not to face the Serbian ene-

my who shared its Christian faith. A small monastery, Jermenčić, in south-eastern Serbia is said to have been built by those Armenian soldiers (Živković, 2015).

Some descendants of Ottoman Armenians residing in Serbia were interviewed for a TV programme aired in 2009 by the Serbian public broadcaster (RTS). The programme places great emphasis on the “inextricable bond between the Serbian and Armenian nations” and features adult children of Armenian refugees talking about their families’ fate in Serbia. In the words of one of the protagonists, Serbs are “a nation most tolerant, for other nationalities and religions” (Manojlović, 2009). Interestingly, although those Ottoman refugees who arrived in the 20th century were effectively fleeing to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and later to Yugoslavia, this country’s name is never mentioned. Neither the Kingdom nor the Republic of Yugoslavia are referred to; the brotherhood discourse allows only for national, and never civic, categories.³

In view of the generalized image of Serbs as bloodthirsty nationalists supporting the 1990s wars in the foreign media, which did not distinguish between various currents in Serbian society (Papanikolatos, 2000), and the trauma connected to such stigmatization,⁴ the new exotic brotherhoods emerge as one way of boosting the lost self-esteem and reasserting one’s agency with historical references to “positive” processes which defy the claims of the foreign media, e.g. the welcoming of Armenian refugees from Turkey. They also allow for replacing the old Yugoslav narrative of brotherhood and unity (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*) of all nations inhabiting Yugoslavia, impossible to be upheld after the war, with new ones.⁵ The new exotic brotherhoods are more easily manageable than the Yugoslav brotherhoods of the past – distant nations are less likely to cause historical resentments typically arising between neighbors. Russian, Greek and Caucasus friendships take up the vacant position on the friendship scale, bringing new possibilities of meaning ordering and production, which are in line with broader discursive shifts in the understanding of history, e.g. the move towards celebrations of WWI rather than WWII.⁶

3 Yugoslavia was, after all, a country comprising of many nations and nationalities.

4 After the Yugoslav wars broke out, foreign media were first accused of pro-Serbian sympathies (Sadkovich, 1998: 10f), which may have added to their anti-Serbian zeal upon the end of the war.

5 Stojanović (2010: 14) even says that “brotherhood and unity” has been replaced with the myth of eternal hatreds between South Slavs.

6 The celebration of WWI foregrounds only Serbian agency, as it was the Kingdom of Serbia which took part in the war, whereas the memory of WWII connotes not only the Communist Yugoslav past, but also a concerted effort of all nations and nationalities which formed the Partisan forces. However, the 2015 rehabilitation of the Chetnik commandant Draža Mihajlović points to a “nationalization” of the WWII memory and crowns the attempts to “include the Chetniks into the anti-fascist movement” which were present already since 1990s (Kuljić, 2002: 414).

Following Foucault and Keller, I understand the material infrastructure of the discourses of Caucasus brotherhoods as its *dispositifs* (Keller, 2011: 56). The *dispositifs* of the Serbian-Armenian brotherhood discourse include only 4 low-profile organizations (The Armenian-Serbian Friendship Club, Union of Armenians in Serbia, Armenian Women's Centre, Armenian Centre for Development of Science, Economy and Culture (Siekierski, 2016: 215), which again shows the relatively niche, unstable character of the mediated knowledge about the Caucasus. This scarcity notwithstanding, the brotherhood discourses establish their knowledge claims by the authority of their elite proponents: well-known journalists, intellectuals and Serbian Orthodox Church.⁷

However, the brotherhood claims seem to operate mostly symbolically and not to reflect on everyday realities. The personal story of one Armenian activist, who experienced longstanding problems with Serbian consular authorities and recently died of cancer (Mladenović, 2013) is a sad example of the discrepancy between the everyday life of people and the ideological claims which order their (mediated) knowledge of the world.

3. Conclusion

There is more to the Serbian "Caucasus-brotherhoods" than the obvious anti-Westernism of their political orientation and contestation of what is perceived as an unjust way of representing Serbia in the foreign media. They have to be regarded as one of the ways of adjusting to the perceived "geopolitical game" being played by the great powers in the peripheries such as the Balkans or the Caucasus. The understanding of geopolitics in those narratives paints a gloomy picture of national victimization on the one hand, and an honorable moral victory of small nations on the other. Such dichotomies have a long history to draw upon, going back to the 1389 Kosovo Battle as both the starting point and climax of this type of historical representation.

Paradoxically, at the same time, the symbolic brotherhoods offer a way to step out of the black-and-white understanding of international geopolitical games by calling to forge new contacts and establishing initiatives for cultural exchange. By highlighting one's agency, they invite a more "positive" interpretation of Serbia's position on the international plane. As such, the brotherhood constructions are both inclusive and exclusive (excluding elements which can "victimize" Serbia, e.g. the

7 It is worth pointing to the role of a distinct category of intellectuals coming from "brotherly" countries who live in or are otherwise connected to the country where the brotherhood discourse emerges. In Serbia, such intellectual is for example Babken Simonian, Armenian translator of Serbian literature who actively participates in promoting Serbian-Armenian connections, e.g. through his book *From Ararat to Kosovo*.

West, Turkey etc). Although they could be viewed as one more emanation of nationalism and historical manipulation, they also contain a potential for overcoming them.

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Biography

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Truce and Consequence. Indexing Theory and COP15 in the Danish Press.

Michael Bruun Andersen

Abstract

The indexing theory is a theory about the relationship between media/journalism and politics with a focus on foreign policy issues, especially war. It states, that under particular circumstances where the national interests are at stake the media 'mirror' political power. It is a critical theory as it analyses the shortcomings of traditional/routine news journalism and its dependence on official sources. The indexing theory, therefore, is a challenge to traditional normative theory of the press, 'the fourth estate'. The paper consists of two parts: a short introduction to indexing theory and a discussion of its main theses on the basis of a Danish case, the coverage of COP15 in Copenhagen 2009 by the Danish media.

Keywords News Institution, Objective Journalism, News Paradigm, Foreign Policy, COP15.

1. The indexing theory: Seminal works

Daniel C. Hallin published his seminal analysis of the coverage of the Vietnam War by the American media “The Uncensored War” in 1968. The media selected for analysis was the New York Times. Later network television news were added to the analysis (Hallin 1994). The analysis follows the war coverage from 1961 to 1973 where the US troops withdraw from South Vietnam. Because it was a limited war formally on behalf of the South Vietnamese government the access by journalists to the battlefield was almost unlimited, “uncensored”.

The longitudinal study showed that the position of the media towards the engagement in Vietnam changed drastically in the period: Mostly supportive before the Tet-offensive in 1968 and critical after. In this last period of the war, the media documented the contradiction between what the US administration said and what reported by the journalists on the ground in Vietnam. Explaining these changes and contradictions is the centerpiece of the book and a central factor in the explanation is the ideology and practice of modern journalism, so-called objective journalism.

In the 1994-article, Hallin summarizes the study in terms of the state-media relation in this way:

“...the case of Vietnam suggests that whether the media tend to be supporting or critical of government policies depends on the degree of consensus those policies enjoy, particularly within the political establishment. In a limited sense, the mirror analogy is correct. News content may not mirror the facts, but the media, as institutions, do reflect the prevailing pattern of political debate”. (Hallin 1994: 68)

The argument is that main stream news media are dependent on official/government sources for ‘validation’ of their news stories, and what information the sources are willing to give the journalists are dependent on the present government policy on the one hand, and on the other hand on the degree of on consensus in the political environment.

Lance Bennett studied how the New York Times covered the US funding for the Nicaraguan contras, and came to a conclusion parallel to that of Hallin’s study:

“Mass media news professionals, from the boardroom to the beat, tend to “index” the range of voices and viewpoints in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about a given topic. (...) Evidence supporting the indexing hypothesis would suggest that the news industry has ceded to government the task of policing itself and striking the democratic balance.” (Bennett 1990: 106)

Piers Robinson summarized the relationship between policy and media in the following model:

Level of consensus	Media State Relationship	Role of the media
Elite consensus	Media operate within a 'sphere of consensus'	Media manufactures consent for official policy ('Megaphone role')
Elite dissensus	Media operate within a 'sphere of dissensus'	Media reflect elite dissensus ('Mirror role')
Elite dissensus plus policy uncertainty within government	Media take sides and become a participant in the debate	Media function to influence direction of government policy ('Partisan role')

In times when the media landscape undergoes rapid change and 'social media' seem to make the so-called legacy media less relevant than before, it is important to stress, that the indexing theory relates to the 'legacy media' or more precisely to main stream news media or the news institution. Furthermore, the indexing theory has most clearly shown its relevance in relation to foreign policy and security issues (Robinson 2010). Such enterprises, especially those of wars cannot succeed without a stable parliamentary consensus behind it. The political establishment must agree.

News in the tradition of objective journalism is dependent on sources, and a story, which cannot be documented by one or several sources is not a story. The value of news is also dependent on the status of the source so that the credibility of the story varies with the credibility of sources quoted. This means, that in the institutional set-up in a democracy the president or the prime minister has higher credibility than a majority member of parliament and a spokesperson for the government and more credibility than a spokesperson for the opposition.

What can a journalist do, when she or he is met with a massive wall of consensus among all official elite sources? The 'objective journalist' can only validate the story with the credible sources available, and if these sources are all in accord with government policy, the news story cannot avoid being pro-government. Within the paradigm of objective (news) journalism critique can only come in the form of opposing views from other credible sources, or outside the news pages that is as comment or editorial or the like. This is why the question of elite consensus is so important for political journalism. The question is, consequently: where does credible oppositional sources come from? Credible oppositional sources presupposes an effective political opposition. If such opposition is non-existent or ineffective "the press becomes a communication arm of government" (Bennett 2010: 108)

2. What is consensus?

Hallin defines elite consensus in the following way:

“This is the region of motherhood and apple pie; in its bounds lie those social objects not regarded by journalists and by most of the society as controversial. Within this region journalists do not feel compelled to present opposing views, and indeed often feel it their responsibility to act as advocates or ceremonial protectors of consensus values.” (Hallin 1994: 78)

Elite dissensus he describes this way: “This is the region where objective journalism reigns supreme: here neutrality and balance are the prime journalistic virtues.” Dissensus is also described as the sphere of legitimate controversy in order to signal, that a sphere of illegitimate controversy exists, but will not be covered by the mainstream media. That sphere is characterised in this way:

“Beyond the sphere of legitimate controversy lie those political actors and views which journalists and the political mainstream of the society rejects as unworthy of being heard. (...) Here neutrality (...) falls away and the media become, to borrow a phrase from Parsons, a ‘boundary-maintaining mechanism,’ they play the role of exposing, condemning, or excluding from the public agenda those who violate or challenge consensus values.” (Hallin 1994: 69)

In Robinson’s model of the policy and media interactions, we find a variant of enhanced dissensus. Here dissensus combines with uncertainty or outright confusion within government about what policy to pursue. In this case, the media take on a new role, they become autonomous actors in their own right within the triangle of political institutions of modern democracy: the political system, the public/electorate and the media.

In his study Hallin showed that the ‘liberal’ position of the media in the last phase of the Vietnam war, not so much was an effect of leftist journalists or liberal media as an effect of a change or breakdown of consensus in the Washington political elite reflecting a growing unease and disagreement with the government in the American public over the costs of the Vietnam engagement. This unease gradually seeped into the inner circles of the American political establishment producing policy uncertainty, which opened up the media for controversies, ‘negative’ or conflict stories. Once more, the media reflected the situation among the credible sources.

3. Theory and empirical evidence

The indexing theory is a critical theory of the function of mainstream news media particularly in relation to foreign policy issues. In passing it can be said that there are other critical theories studying media influence on foreign policy issues. A distinction can be made between theories that state that the media influences foreign policy (the CNN-effect (Robinson 2002)) and theories that state, that media generally mirror elite position (among others Herman and Chomsky 1988, and the indexing theory discussed here). A further discussion of the interrelations between these theories lies outside the scope of this small paper.

The indexing theory helps us understand the limitations of the ideology and praxis of so-called objective journalism, which developed in the beginning of the 20th Century (Høyer and Pöttker (eds) (2000)) and have dominated Western media for the rest of the century, but maybe has come to an end in the new millennium (Hallin 2004; Nerone 2015). This type of journalism works best in a climate of legitimate political controversy and it has problems if there are no sources or the sources are silent or if they all agree upon a particular issue. In this situation, the media's option for criticism is to change journalistic genre, publishing a comment or an editorial instead of a news story, but these genres do not have the same public legitimacy as news stories: after all, they are just opinions! If all sources agree on a political issue, the news media will reflect the consensus and in practice function as an instrument of propaganda for the ruling elite.

The theory has been tested outside the USA and empirical evidence from several countries shows that it is solid (Germany: Maurer et al. 2005; Denmark: Kristensen and Ørsten 2007; Levin (2003) though, could not confirm the theory on the basis of Israeli material). The evidence in all cases mentioned relates to the foreign policy or security issues.

The theory raises questions about not only the function of standard news making procedures but also about the more general question about how media function in modern democracies. In the view of Bennett it is not so much a question about how the media works under reasonable normal democratic conditions, but "what happens when governing institutions fall to corruption, incompetence, political intimidation, deception, or deal making, and the range of official spin becomes a poor or misleading account of the events and issues in the news? What happens in these moments when an official opposition fails to arise to hold government accountable?" (Bennett 2010: 107)

Donald Trump is probably right when arguing, that the (mainstream) media was against him because the elite sources ('Washington') were unanimously critical of the 'twittering' candidate during the presidential election. How the media are going to handle the new anti-elite elite in the Trump administration and the fact

that he during the first two years of his presidency will have a republican majority behind him remains to be seen.

4. COP 15: a Danish case

COP15 was the 15. International summit on climate change organized by the UN. It took place in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark, in the period December 7. - December 18. 2009. It was the biggest international political event ever taking place in Denmark. Head of the negotiations was the Danish Prime minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen. The ambition of the Danish government was to land a new international agreement substituting the so-called Kyoto Protocol, and the government had as host put an enormous amount of time and resources into the preparation, so the expectation for success was high. The media coverage was extensive both nationally and internationally. Parallel to the UN conference an alternative conference for 'climate-sceptics' was organized by among others the right wing populist party in Denmark Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party). Massive demonstrations in the streets of Copenhagen were held in support of the poor countries and against the rich Western countries, that seemed to have the most to gain from a new protocol.

Many studies of the international media coverage of the summit has been conducted (see f.i. Painter 2010), but little has been done on the Danish media (Jørgensen et al. 2010). Barfod and Hansen (2010) undertook an analysis of how the Danish press covered the event. Three national Danish newspapers were selected for analysis, all three of them quality papers. Two of them leaning towards the right in the political spectrum and one center-left.

The empirical material for the content analysis was selected in such a way, that it covered three weeks before, two weeks during and three weeks after the conference. The sample analyzed in the three dailies was 1183 articles. From the Danish newspaper database Informedia all journalistic entities containing the word climate within the defined time period was selected. Further selection was carried out in order to avoid material not connected with the summit, 1183 in all. The sample was analysed quantitatively in order to calculate percentages of total coverage and in relation to the selected dailies. In a qualitative analysis all articles were read in order to identify critique of government and of Prime Minister Rasmussen as chairman of the summit by sources quoted and journalist opinion.

In order to understand the coverage of the summit by the Danish media it is necessary briefly to draw a map of the political system in Denmark at the time. The Danish parliamentary system is a multi-party system and governments are normally minority coalition governments. In 2009 seven political parties were represented

in parliament, and using the traditional left-right dichotomy three parties were to the left and four to the right. The government was a two-party government to the right supported by a third right wing party Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party). Together the three parties formed a majority.

The content analysis looked for voices critical of government articulated in the three newspapers critical news stories, critical sources and critical comments and editorials in relation to the government and to the prime minister as chair. The result of the analysis showed that before and during the conference criticism of the government and of the prime minister as chair were non-existent in all three newspapers in spite of an intensive coverage. After the conference, criticism by the political opposition was massive in all three papers stating that that the conference was a failure and the chair incompetent and responsible for the fiasco.

5. Truce and consequence

How to explain this very clear pattern in the press coverage of COP15? On the background of the results of the analysis of the three Danish newspapers, the spokespersons for environmental issues from all political parties in parliament were interviewed. The answers were revealing: In parliament, there had been a truce, a deal between five of the seven parties securing that the government and the prime minister as chair of the conference could not be criticised in the phase of preparation and during the conference. As one of the spokespersons (for The Socialist People's Party) put it: "We know the media: No conflict, no story!" (Barfod and Hansen 2010: 60 (my translation (MBA))). In order to protect the government from criticism of a project of national importance, a conference expected to figure as dressing window for the progressive environment policy of Denmark, export options for the windmill industry and so on, the national press were cut off and left with government spin. Immediately after the conference hell broke out, all three newspapers irrespective of their political affiliation jumped on the prime minister and blamed him for the very modest results of the conference negotiations. After the conference, the credible oppositional voices were available, and the media were back on track within a sphere of legitimate controversies.

The results of this small study are in line with the general indexing theory although the scope of the study calls for an extension in order to include the tabloids and the public service media. It is therefore not possible to conclude that all Danish media yielded to the truce. More detailed results raise questions worth discussing. First, not all spokespersons recognized that they had been part of the truce. The party on the right organizing the alternative conference for 'climate sceptics' was not part of the truce. Neither were the party on the far left, Enhedslisten (The

United Nomination List). The political parties that entered into the temporary consensus of truce was a majority and consisted of 'the old parties' in the Danish parliament in political language often called 'the responsible majority'. Second, the fact that there were parties outside the truce agreed upon meant, that there were sources which under normal political conditions would be considered credible and legitimate. That goes especially for Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party) as it was for all practical reasons part of the government coalition although not directly part of government. At the same time, this party organized an alternative conference and therefore giving the media a host of opportunities for alternative and oppositional view on the climate issues negotiated at the UN conference. Third, COP15 in Copenhagen was covered by international media and it was an international scandal when the Danish chair leaked the finishing conference document to the British newspaper *The Guardian*. The Danish newspapers analyzed kept silent on the oppositional viewpoints and criticisms in spite of the fact, that there was a host of possibilities for conflict stories that might have been validated by sources normally considered legitimate. The political situation was not normal, though.

More analysis is needed, but at this point the following preliminary conclusion seem justified: The differences between two-party and multi-party political systems should be taken into consideration when studying the indexing theory. The indexing theory seem to be relevant in relation to a broad spectrum of political issues of national importance. War and other security issues is only some of them. Mainstream news media seem to define source legitimacy according to strong majority rule in parliament when covering issues defined as of vital national importance by this majority. Source legitimacy for the media in this way becomes a kind of thermostat value regulated by the level of temperature of the political issues or in other words parliamentary majority consensus seem to define what is legitimate and what is not and thereby define the frame within which mainstream media operate. Political parties can under particular circumstances and for a limited period of time suspend the mechanisms of mediatization because they know these mechanisms and know how to utilize them.

Here we should recall Hallin's remark on the unworthy discourses outside legitimacy. What he in the American context is referring to is the more or less permanent exclusion of for instance communist discourses from the public sphere. The Danish case studied relates to a temporary consensus and a temporary exclusion of otherwise legitimate voices in the mainstream news media. Parliamentary majorities seem to have the capacity to under certain conditions to de-legitimize particular viewpoints and the press follow and put its fourth-estate-ideology and practice on hold.

The question why the media comply with the political majority in spite of a wealth of sources normally considered credible and legitimate inside and outside parliament is still unanswered. We need to know more about how the media, editors

and journalists see this mechanism and in the light of this how we are to understand the question of media accountability. What the case indicates is apart from the earlier mentioned shortcoming of mainstream news journalism that is not necessarily the availability of sources as such, which determines what the media will cover but the 'editorial tradition of respect' for majority rule and for the procedures in democratic decision making. During events of vital national importance, elite consensus seems to equate a parliamentary majority protecting its government. The mainstream media seem to be thinking: give the government a brake for a moment!

In the new media landscape, the close connection between the news media and political power cannot continue to be the same. The so-called social media do not draw the same borderline between national and international voices and cannot do without all kinds of (normally) illegitimate voices and unworthy discourses. With the twittering president Trump the media-power nexus seems to be turned upside-down with mainstream media representing the unworthy discourse. That is another story.

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Farewell to a Utopia. Technology Discourse in the German NSA Debate¹

Johanna Möller

Abstract

Communication and media researchers have repeatedly highlighted that current technology discourse is characterized by an emphasis on “liberation technology” (Diamond, 2010). They agree that liberation technology is a myth that successfully impacts on the relation of society and technology. Critical disenchantment, in consequence, is a necessary precondition for democratic conceptions of technology. In this article I investigate the debate on Edward Snowden’s famous bulk surveillance disclosures as a moment of de-mystification or disruption of technology myths. Theoretically, Eran Fisher’s concept of technology discourse is used to closely examine the German legacy media NSA debate. In particular, two questions are addressed. First, which conceptions of technology emerge and are pursued in the course of the debate? And, second, how are social and individual legitimations used to justify the role of technology in society?

Keywords technology discourse, liberation technology, NSA debate, relation of technology and society, social and individual legitimization of technology

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1. De-mystification of technology

In January 2014, half a year after Edward Snowden had revealed bulk surveillance by US and British secret services, Sasha Lobo (2014), German author and blogger in the field of technology and society, referred to one of the key outcomes of Edward Snowden's disclosures. In a widely shared article he argued that the most sustainable consequence was the smashing of the utopia of a democratic internet. Now, the internet was "*kaput*" (broken) and showed its ugly uses: surveillance and misuse of data. While Lobo requested new visions of the internet, others experienced the positive side-effects of this internet disillusion. Namely, Germany security technology companies observed that the internet had "*lost its innocence*" (Martin-Jung, 2013). Customers, coming to terms with the opportunity that constant surveillance is a common governmental and economic practice, appeared to have altered their consciousness regarding the risks of digital technologies. They were increasingly ready to pay for more secure devices.

These examples illustrate why investigating the NSA case is insightful from a communication and media perspective. Communication and media researchers have repeatedly outlined that current information and communication technology discourse is dominated by a "liberation technology" paradigm (Diamond, 2010), highlighting that digital technology enables participation, community and equality, while, in fact, exclusionary mechanisms and individualization happen (Diamond, 2010; Fisher, 2010; Gürses, Kundnani and Van Hoboken, 2016; Milan, 2015). The NSA case has the potential to trigger a public debate on the role of information and communication technology (in the following: technology) in a society that questions the myth of liberation technology. As the "mask" falls, technology discourse could provide more, alternative perspectives on the role and potential of technology in society.

Based on an investigation of German legacy media debate, taking into account more than half a year of debate on Snowden's revelations, this article asks whether the farewell to internet utopia provided by the NSA case triggers a more "productive" technology discourse. Theoretically, I refer to the concept of technology discourse, provided by Eran Fisher (2013). Technology discourse is a cognitive map that legitimates the role of technology in society. In particular, I investigate which technology constructions the NSA debate offers and how the role of technology in society is justified.

2. Technology discourse

Current communication and media research is concerned with describing the complex unfolding of technology within diverse dimensions of society (Couldry and

Hepp, 2016; Esser and Strömbäck, 2014; Just and Latzer, 2016). In this context, the idea that the way we debate and conceptualize technology plays a crucial role for the actual role technology plays in society (Christensen, 2013; Diamond, 2010). Numerous researchers highlight the neat connection between discourses that frame and construct technology and the design as well as uses and interpretations of technology. In the words of Stefania Milan: “*Artifacts are inscribed with the visions of their designers and their representations of target users and intended uses*” (Milan, 2015: 3).

By coining the concept of technology discourse, Eran Fisher (2010) introduced a perspective on the role of technology in society that focuses on this important communicative hinge in the role technology plays in society (Christensen, 2013: 35). Fisher’s core argument is that “*the discourse on technology is not simply a reflection of the centrality of technology in the operation of modern societies; instead it plays a constitutive role and enables exactly that centrality*” (Fisher, 2010: 231). Technology discourse can either be regarded as projection, central debate or, finally, ideology. In this sense, technology discourse shapes society.

Fisher’s considerations base on the assumption that current societies pursue a technology discourse that mystifies the role and impact of technology. Other mystifications of technology have been identified by Larry Diamond (2010), pointing to the myth of liberation technology, or by Nick Couldry stating that social media create a “myth of us” (Couldry, 2014) while rather creating individuals-in-group structures (Milan, 2015). Yet, while Diamond and Couldry reveal the contradictions of communicative constructions of technology and social reality, Fisher claims that technology discourse is a “*cognitive map [...], a body of knowledge that is inextricably intertwined with technological reality, social structures and everyday practices*” (Fisher 2010: 235). Thus, technology has consequences for social order and rule.

Fisher’s notion of technology discourse is characterized by two key assumptions. This concerns, first, the question whether there is a coherent idea of technology, offered by technology discourse. Fisher highlights that current debates are characterized by technological centrism. Technology is presented in the light of participation and empowerment. This narrative construction is a key component of digital capitalism, as it creates the myth of individual benefit. For this phenomenon, Larry Diamond (2010) has coined the critical notion of “*liberation technology*“. Liberation technology is “*any form of information and communication technology that can expand political, social, and economic freedom*” (Diamond, 2010: 70). It is important to understand that Diamond uses it as a critical notion.

Translating Fisher’s assumptions on technology into analytical dimensions, it is important to point out that communication and media research distinguishes at least two basic understandings of technology. Following Feenberg (1995: 304,

307), determinist, or techno-centric, approaches regard technology as a collection of devices that follow a unilinear development. This development is independent from societal influences, but society must adapt to its implications. Constructivist approaches, in contrast, regard technologies as social objects, as a design that offers a multiplicity of interpretations, applications and solutions (Bijker, 2001; Feenberg, 1995: 307). When investigating technology discourses it is, thus, useful to ask whether determinist or constructivist understandings (or the combination of both) emerge and whether they are consequently used.

A second aspect, closely connected to the first, concerns the question how the current role of technology in society is legitimated. Fisher (2010: 237) argues that contemporary technology discourse promises to overcome “*the alienating components of capitalism because of its integration with network technology*” and thus refers to “individual emancipation” (Fisher, 2010: 244). Fisher (2010: 424) argues that during Fordism technology was legitimated in order to mitigate worker’s exploitation. Technology was presented as providing better working conditions and more free time. This legitimation was basically a social legitimation of technology. Contemporary discourse, in contrast, provides arguments for individual emancipation, while “*downplaying concerns for social emancipation*” (Fisher, 2010: 243).

Altogether, Fisher argues that contemporary technology is characterized by two narratives. First, determinist technology conceptions are put forward that praise the democratic benefits of technology. And, second, the role of technology is legitimated by individual, in contrast to social, emancipation. Assuming that his analysis was correct, what if the myth of liberation technology is challenged? Do we find opportunities for a broader debate including constructivist narratives, referring to social legitimation? It is thus worth to dive into technology discourse with regard to both dimensions, the role of technology in relation to society as well as social and individual legitimations of technology. Yet, before doing that, I will briefly sketch some specifics of the German NSA debate.

3. Cornerstones of the German NSA debate

The NSA debate is crucial to understand technology discourse as it had and continues to have the potential to do away with the mystification of technology in many regards (Bauman et al., 2014). The case disenchanted beliefs in the political regulation of communication; it revealed that, against all commitments to democracy, surveillance is a common governmental and economic practice and that we lack political answers and ethical standards in dealing with current technologies. These are exactly the key problems that were addressed in the German legacy media NSA debate. The German debate was characterized by moral outrage at spying citizens and

the German Chancellor, it was concerned with debating rules for technology control and debated the potential transformation of democratic states into techno-authoritarian regimes (see for NSA debates in other countries Kunelius et al., 2017).

The German case is interesting for three reasons. First, in the news coverage, based on Snowden's leaks, it was shown that Germany (and, particularly, Angela Merkel as head of state) was watched systematically by the NSA. This triggered debates on the naïve trust of German politicians in their political friends in the US and UK. Yet, US-German relations were regarded as the backbone of German international politics. Second, given the country's history with the notorious secret service of the Stasi in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), the surveillance of ordinary people is an extremely sensitive issue in Germany (Eurobarometer, 2015). This resulted into a long-term debate, which was intense for over half a year. This provides opportunities to compare technology discourses over time. Third, given its predominant status in the world economy and politics, Germany had an opportunity to reclaim an international role in solving the legitimacy crisis resulting from the Snowden case.

The study presented in the following pages used a frame analysis to understand how the issue was discussed in the editorial sections of German journalism: we focus on two leading, quality German newspapers, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ), both considered newspapers of record. We selected SZ because the paper was in a coalition with the German TV channel NDR, which continuously investigated the material leaked by Snowden and aired the first TV-interview with the whistle-blower worldwide (after Glenn Greenwalds and Laura Poitras records). FAZ, on the other hand, is known for addressing current debates beyond the day-to-day revelations by reflecting on larger societal implications. Based on a large sampling of the entire NSA coverage, starting with the Snowden revelations, we selected three weeks with intense, peak periods for analysis. After the first, initial peak of the revelations (June 24 - 30, 2013), the second one focused on the "Merkel mobile affair", when Snowden's documents showed that the German chancellor's cell phone had been eavesdropped (October 28 - November, 3 2013). The third period of intense coverage followed Barack Obama's public speech assessing the reform US intelligence agencies policy (January 20 - 26, 2014). During this time, the debate focused on Germany's domestic affairs. On the whole, 69 editorial articles were selected for our analysis. In the sample of German editorial coverage, we identified four thematic areas: 1) international relations, 2) citizens, 3) economy and 4) future of democracy. In each of these broad frames, questions about digital technology were articulated in different ways. Overall, it is important to note that technology was not in the focus of the debate, but an important sub-issue. Thus, technology discourses could be discovered when practiced.

4. Technology and society

So far, I have highlighted that the German NSA debate is a debate that emphasized ethical and regulatory questions regarding the uses and misuses of technology. Very roughly speaking, it is a debate about the value and menace of democracy, and a debate about the way to maintain them in a digital age. Herein, the idea of liberation technology is a thing of the past. Trust and mistrust, security and freedom, connection and disconnection are dominant paradigms. The relation of society and technology is, thus, directly addressed. But how is this relation defined? Which conceptions of technology emerge and are pursued across the whole debate? Is technology presented in a determinist way, i.e. by pointing to its inescapable impact on society, or is it designed as a set of choices, open to democratic change?

In short, both approaches play a role, yet not always in pure form. Technology is constructed as based on an autonomous functional logic, following a unilinear development and heavily impacting on society on the one hand (Feenberg, 1995: 5). On the other hand it is depicted as a design that results from numerous choices and decisions, in close interaction with economy, politics, and society. Yet, while Fisher characterizes the “*general tone of the digital discourse*” as “*located on the spectrum between optimistic and euphoric*” (Fisher, 2010: 235), technology conceptions in the German NSA debate appear to rather follow a realist-pessimistic perspective. To the beginning of the debate, determinist approaches dominate while towards its end constructivist approaches gain relevance.

Directly following Edward Snowden’s revelations, the debate offers a wide range of options to describe technology as a powerful and complex “black box”. Technology, mostly the internet, is approached as an intransparent, powerful and global phenomenon that offers an incredible range of new opportunities and threats. This narrative also implies that technology impacts on society. Surveillance appears as a natural consequence of the role technology plays in society. As surveillance mechanisms are “*baked in*” the digital infrastructure (Gürses, Kundnani and Van Hoboken, 2016: 588), people will continue to use technology, several authors argue. And thus companies, secret services and governments will continue to surveil. Spying is easy when using technology and thus becomes an inevitable ingredient of technology societies.

While directly following the revelations the coverage mirrored the overall disappointment with bulk surveillance by the Americans. During the debate a more pragmatic viewpoint emerged: technology has been “normalized” and thus is surveillance. Politics must not complain but adapt to this new landscape by finding new regulations and norms. At the same time, technology severely threatens democracy. This is why numerous authors closely investigate current legal frameworks, incapable of regulating technology. The demand for adapting regulation

is everywhere. In conclusion, it is not technology that must adapt to democratic standards, but democracy that must adapt to technology.

In contrast to black box interpretations of technology, constructivist notions highlight that the NSA case shows that liberation technology was a myth. Following Edward Snowden's revelations, they argue, everybody now clearly understands that the internet is indeed not a symbol of democracy and human rights and that the computer is not a "*freedom machine*" (Frank, 2013). Authors mention that we witness a demystification of technology and that the internet has lost its innocence. Authors following this technology concept explicate that these narratives were created by the Silicon Valley elites and were implicitly accepted by citizens: "*we wanted to be fooled*" (Jarosinski, 2014).

An article by Evgeny Morozov (2014 a, 2014 b, published almost identically in both newspapers) illustrates both determinist and constructivist approaches. In this piece, Morozov maps out opposing scenarios in the struggle for a digital political future. One scenario is based on accepting the dominant role of technology by adapting regulatory frameworks. He argues that citizens actually contribute to this solution unwittingly, as they "*hand over political decisions to technocrats that might correct some details here and there, but do not profoundly question the system*". In the second scenario, "*Snowden's revelations point to the increasing and mostly ignored erosion of the democratic system*". This approach affords more radical discussions about the future of democracy. In particular, citizens are called to participate in the decentralization of the internet.

This rough overview provides two insights. First, if contemporary technology discourse is characterized by a liberation technology narrative, the NSA debate can be considered a harassing fire. While the significance and the centrality of technology are not called into question, technological ideologies are demystified. And second, the debate offers more than a determinist narrative. Especially the later debate provides alternative, constructivist approaches to technology. This is not to say that the NSA case has triggered a diverse and multi-dimensional debate on technology. This question can only be discussed after looking into technology legitimations.

5. Social and individual legitimation of technology

A second dimension of analysis refers to the provision of technology legitimations. As shown earlier, Eran Fisher distinguishes two ways of justifying the role of technology in contemporary society: social and individual legitimation (Fisher, 2010: 243). Social legitimation, or emancipation, refers to group effects, such as inclusion, exploitation or inequality. Individual legitimation, or emancipation, means that technology implications affect a single person, such as empowerment, crea-

tivity or, in negative terms, inauthenticity. Fisher argues that while social legitimations were predominant in the industrial era, contemporary technology discourse is characterized by individual legitimations linked to the determinist understanding of liberation technology.

Continuing on the former finding that the NSA debate provides more than determinist media conceptions, one can legitimately ask whether it also offers more than individual legitimations of technology. And, beyond that, we must ask whether these legitimations refer to determinist or constructivist conceptions of technology and thus provide a variation of technology interpretation. In fact, again, we find both, social and individual legitimations of technology. Yet, the analysis shows that determinist technology concepts relate to both social and individual legitimations, while constructivist concepts predominantly emphasize individual legitimation.

Dominant social legitimations in the technology discourse relating to the NSA debate refer to security, often framed as national security, as well as to prosperity and growth. Both aspects link to a determinist understanding of technology. In particular, authors argue that societal security provided by technology outweighs concerns about freedom. Especially arguments on technology enhancing national (or, in the case of Europe, transnational) security are a dominant paradigm. This narrative closely links technology control and political strength, both describing US-American characteristics. Among contributions to this narrative one finds, for instance, supportive admiration for China's strategy to maintain control over national communication flows by installing Chinese technology. Accordingly, a German politician argues Germany lacks behind in investing into innovative national technology (Schirmacher, 2013). Another legitimation refers to technology as a field of economic growth. Authors provide arguments that technologies are necessary to protect societies, in spite of their high cost. Economic growth, thus, is a necessary precondition for increasing Germany's and Europe's technological potential.

Beyond that, determinist concepts of technology are linked to individual legitimations. This concerns, namely, the introduction of crypto technology, such as Blackphones or encryption software. In the light of surveillance threatening privacy, customers are asked to take care for their own individual data security. As long as governments do not provide sound technology regulation they will rely on the citizens' ability "*to take care of themselves*" (Altenbockum, 2013). This implies an improvement of individual technology skills as well as private investment into secure technology. As another author says, politicians also need to question their uses of technology. Angela Merkel, for instance, is obliged to use secure technology.

These examples illustrate how privacy is constructed as a quest for individual responsibility. This narrative corresponds to arguments provided by top tier technology managers. Their positions on the future "internet of everything" received increasing attention at a later point in the debate. In the future, customers will be responsible

for deciding about the shape and the extent of “their” private spheres on their own.

While both legitimations, social ones and individual ones, are used to justify technology in a determinist conceptualization, social legitimations do not relate to a constructivist understanding of technology. Instead, individual legitimations clearly dominate. Individuals are invited to increase their technology abilities and to contribute to the decentralization of the internet. Individual action shall cause “friction” and “contradiction” within the global surveillance system. Another author observes that innovative internet engineers continue their work “*as if surveillance had never happened*” (Freidel, 2013); implicitly expecting them to take over individual responsibility in the creation of technology. In fact, the absence of socio-political technology legitimations, such as technology as an object of social or political demands, is compelling.

In contrast to Fishers claim that contemporary technology discourse is characterized by an absence of social technology legitimations, the NSA debate provides numerous arguments pursuing technology as a tool heading for collective or political ends. Yet, the NSA debate also points to a stable and established presence of narratives referring to techno-centric conceptions of technology, based on both social and individual legitimations. Constructivist conceptions, in contrast, appear to solely refer to individual legitimations. Altogether, while the NSA debate triggers a more complex conceptual offer as characterized in Fisher’s technology discourse analysis, constructivist approaches seem not to offer perspectives relating society and technology, but only individuals and technology.

6. Towards a productive technology discourse

The analysis presented in this chapter demonstrates why public debates related to the Edward Snowden’s revelations are instructive for current communication and media research. First, technology discourse is a narrative about the centrality of technology in society (Christensen, 2013: 43). This centrality can have various faces. Some of them were illustrated in the above analysis. Technology can be characterized as an overwhelmingly influential, yet intransparent impact on society. Technology can be characterized as a failed vision. Finally, technology can be characterized as co-constructed by civil society. All of these approaches share the finding that democracy needs to come to terms with the role technology plays in society and thus empathize its political significance.

Second, investigating technology discourse within the NSA debate, illustrates that the deconstruction of contemporary technology myths (Milan, 2015) can occur, a process that Nick Couldry (2014) has called a “necessary disenchantment”. But does that result into a broader debate, offering society alternatives in con-

ceptualizing the relation of technology and society? In his conceptualization of technology discourse Fisher has pointed out that he uses the notion of “discourse” to highlight its “productive” dimension. That is, technology discourse can alter its message and thus support alternative approaches to technology in society.

Fisher’s perspective on contemporary technology discourse did not apply to the NSA debate. In contrast, different conceptions of technology emerged as the debate evolves and alternative legitimization patterns were offered. Yet, what is compelling is that constructivist conceptions of technology are not socially legitimated. Communication and media research has repeatedly pointed to the need to “feed” democratic rules into technological infrastructures (Feenberg, 1995; Gürses, Kundnani and Van Hoboken, 2016). How would that be possible if there wasn’t even a debate on a joint social construction of technology? And when will the Germans start a debate on techno-political change?

A glimpse back into sales figures of security technology provides reasons for skepticism. While foreign customers, from Brazil, Spain or Switzerland, started to invest into secure technology, German clients debated the need for technology investment, but largely remained inactive. Trust and custom remain strong engines of digital practice.

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Biography

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Perceptions of Acceptance and Inclusion: the Influence of Legislation and Media on LGBT Student Identity and Embeddedness

Scott Ellis

Abstract

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students are at increased risk of suicide ideation and attempt and are disproportionately affected by negative health outcomes associated with social exclusion (Meyer, 2003; Suicide Prevention Resource Center, 2008; CDC, 2014; CDC, 2016). The social environment of LGBT young people, including the nature and presence of media outlets, is a key component of their feelings of exclusion or inclusion and associated suicide risk (Hatzembuehler, 2011). This underlies the advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that LGBT youth require a safe, supportive and inclusive environment in which it is critical they are protected from bullying, victimisation and harassment. As this environment becomes increasingly digitised and LGBT identities are defined by mediatisation, there is great potential for health promoters, educators and legislators to make meaningful progress in harm reduction. New media has begun to address the significant differences in how young white straight men conceptualise the masculinity, and therefore social status, of their gay peers. Until this process is more widely embraced, young LGBT people will continue to face health and social challenges with often life-limiting consequences.

Keywords Lgbt, Suicide, Media Representation, Heteronormativity

1. Introduction and background

Educators, researchers, and policy makers need to acknowledge that we know next to nothing about the quality of young LGBTQ people's lives before we can even begin to contribute to meaningful strategies for supporting them... the data we arm ourselves with, even the universally cited statistics on higher suicide rates among lesbian and gay youth, perpetuate a rudimentary, generic picture. But we have no idea what daily life is like for the average LGBTQ-identifying teen (Blog entry from M. Gray, a senior researcher at Microsoft Research New England, 2012).

In 2016 the CDC published the first nationally representative study of LGBT high school students, which found 42.8% of LGBT students had seriously thought about suicide and 29% had attempted it. Compared with the national US average of 4.6% (Haas et al., 2014) and the average for heterosexual students of 6.4% (CDC, 2016) the findings add clarity to the existing longitudinal data that identifies suicide amongst adolescents as one of the three leading causes of death (CDC, 2016a). Although the influence of historic, religious and politically biased homophobic social rhetoric (Miceli, 2005) in the US significantly contributes to elevated risk for LGBT young people, changes in the legislature (Human Rights Campaign, 2016), education policy (Wald et al., 2002), and the media contribute to LGBT communities becoming increasingly visible and embedded in society. Such changes however do not address the inherent role suicide plays in US mortality or its disproportionately high representation amongst white men, who are 3.5 times more likely to take their own lives than any other group defined by any demographic descriptor (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2016).

In 2014 I led a small pilot research project with higher education students in the US and UK, exploring experiences of gay-straight alliances¹ (GSAs) and LGBT inclusion at university. We asked questions about how safe gay students felt on campus alongside recognition of high-profile media campaigns that placed heterosexual gatekeepers as their supporters and protectors. Students indicated they were happy with heterosexual spokespeople leading campaigns aimed at inclusion and suicide prevention, although the need for such campaigns was questioned in light of recent broader social equality. This presents an interesting counterpoint: gay students are often bullied and catalysed to suicidal thoughts by ubiquitous straight male prejudice and historically have formed their own support systems. The new trend for suicide prevention campaigns to frontline heterosexuals repositions gay students as a peer group to be defended and protected as they are incorporated into wider student communities.

1 The term, and this paper, uses "gay" and "straight" in lieu of "homosexual" and "heterosexual" in line with the vocabulary most commonly used by US universities and US public health authorities.

2. Sexuality, normalisation and advertising media

For LGBT young people, online media channels have become integral to the “coming out” process and to their wider socialisation with peers (Craig and McInroy, 2014). This has occurred as the representation of LGBTs, particularly gay men, has become increasingly normalised in advertising media, television shows and the news media. Brands such as Budweiser, Absolut, IKEA and Southwest Airlines have long tailored their print advertising to reflect readership demographics, including in the depiction of gay men, albeit most commonly only in the gay press. Despite the awkward and contentious integration of LGBT legitimacy and rights into mainstream American discourse, advertisers recognise they typically have comparatively high levels of disposable income and an above-average level of education (DeLozier and Rodrigue, 1996; Gates and Newport, 2012), a key factor highlighted by Stonewall, an equality lobby group, in their workplace guide to marketing to gay consumers (2012).

Although such representation may contribute to the positive reinforcing spirals model proposed by Slater (2007), such representation is limited in scope if it is confined solely to the gay press. Advertising media marginalisation is becoming less common in the UK, where brands such as Lloyds Bank and John Lewis include elements of overt LGBT representation in their marketing and corporate strategies. Stonewall encourages increased LGBT representation in mainstream media, particularly in advertising as a strategy to increase the visibility of diversity and in recruitment advertising to attract new talent. *Marketing Week*, a marketing and strategy analysis publication, found young people entering professional work actively seek out organisations that explicitly promote inclusion and acceptance of diversity because this represents the social world in which they have grown up (Rogers, 2016; Tesser, 2016). Notably in the UK, where inclusive marketing is more prevalent, there is a significantly lower suicide rate than the US amongst LGBT groups and young people, although young men remain disproportionately at risk (Office for National Statistics, 2016). It is therefore reasonable to assume that although the US have slowly moved to afford basic rights to LGBT citizens, the persistent lack of normalised visibility in mainstream media contributes to the prevailing invisibility of their social spheres.

The representation of gay men in advertising media has been shown to contribute significantly to self-empowerment and self-identity despite the overwhelmingly heteronormative environment in which such media exists (Searle, 1995; Tsai, 2011). Whether such media contributes meaningfully to concepts of inclusivity, or whether it serves to reinforce cultural stereotypes and constructs is of on-going concern (Alldoory and Parry-Giles, 2005; Allen, 2007). There is precedent for understanding the perception of branding and representation of targeted media by specific socio-cul-

tural groups (Martens, 2010), and for judging the level of embeddedness a media campaign has had in identity (Hartley, 2002; Farvid and Braun, 2006). Such research indicates that audience perception is often more easily influenced by imagery than by prevailing social norms (Kates, 1999; Trussler and Marchand, 1997; Oakenfull et al., 2008; Oakenfull, 2013), suggesting persistent and mundane LGBT representation may contribute to improved societal acceptability and better health outcomes.

3. Digital media as a double-edged sword

The exponential increase in young people's reliance on digital media for daily living, communication and research (Flanagin and Metzger, 2008) has occurred in parallel with an increase in "cyber-bullying", a social phenomenon whereby young people are targeted through electronic media that causes marginalisation and reduced self-esteem. This correlates with CDC findings that 28% of LGBT students reported being the victim of bullying through digital media, compared with 14.2% of their straight peers (2016). This poses a perplexing problem. In general, media use and its integration into the lives of young people is considered to be a good thing (McLeod, 2000; Slater, 2007; Flanagin and Metzger, 2008; Ohannessian et al., 2014; Shehata, 2016). More than simple improved representation, young LGBT people report positive influences on their self-realisation and development of identity and associated feelings of pride when the media portrays positive role models (Gomillion and Giuliano, 2011). Cyberspace offers LGBT people often marginalised by gay media, which commonly seeks to homogenise the image of gay men and women, an environment in which they can affirm their beliefs, desires and self-image (Campbell, 2014). Bullying, harassment or victimisation enacted through digital channels therefore holds particular influence and potential to harm.

Recent trends by suicide prevention organisations to capitalise on the success of LGBT commercial marketing (Witeck-Combs, 2012) have led to a series of international prevention efforts typified by inclusion-based digital media campaigns focused on building cohesion in college environments. Concurrently, a portfolio of legislative changes in the US and the UK has given LGBT people new ground in equality and civil rights. The uses of mass media and social marketing in health drives are well established (Zainuddin et al., 2013; Bakan, 2016). Both streams share the aims of persuasive behaviour change and to get attention within a pre-defined public sphere by exploiting brand awareness and the promise of a better life. However promoting the populist, gendered imagery so preferred by advertising and news media (Hanke, 1998; Coltrane and Messineo, 2000; Harrison, 2008) with urgent messages of inclusion, social equity and suicide prevention represent a new emergence of the burgeoning mediatisation of health promotion and education for young LGBTs.

Aside from CDC advice regarding inclusivity programmes (CDC, 2014), the principal response of community-leading organisations to suicide has been to use digital media to engage LGBT youth with the intent of promoting inclusion in their environmental spheres. In response to a series of suicides amongst young gay men in 2010, three high-visibility digital media campaigns, *Straight But Not Narrow* (SBNN), *Give A Damn!* and *It Gets Better*, launched in the US. All three campaigns used online media channels as their mode of access and delivery, established discursive online communities and had elements of celebrity representation. SBNN and *Give A Damn!* intentionally sought overt representation from straight men as their spokespeople, particularly men who were easily recognisable from entertainment media by young people.

3.1 When (digital media) prevention efforts do not prevent

Despite 613,000 pledging to work towards ending LGBT victimisation as part of *It Gets Better* (Northwestern University, 2016), criticism from academic and sociosexual experts and media commentators targeted the campaign's “[...] *passive, impractical, homogenizing and exclusionary*” nature (Goltz, 2013: 135). Goltz (2013) argues the campaign was intended to bridge historic but persistent gaps between LGBT young people and the older generation, which typifies the perception that older gay men are fixated on their younger counterparts to an extent that contributes to suicide risk throughout the lifespan (Corey, 1998, Gross, 2001, Goltz, 2010). Ryan (2010) argues that the (mis)representation and false embeddedness of gay men at the centre of the campaign significantly undermines its ability to help improve quality of life. The campaign was created by a gay man, himself a highly visible media spokesman with an international media presence. Critics of the campaign cite his own relative privilege as being counterproductive to the impact of the media, mainly because he has not acknowledged any close experience of depression or suicide ideation himself; therefore he is unable to connect with those at risk in a meaningful way (Veldman, 2010). The critics fail to acknowledge the realignment of white gay men with the privilege afforded their straight peers and friends, endorsed by modern society, through a gradual increase of gay representation in mainstream television programmes (Shugart, 2003). Shugart argues that as LGBT people have become more embedded in popular media, straight men have accepted the legitimisation of LGBT identities, specifically those with whom they can most closely relate; often other white men.

As the increasing representation of LGBT identities continues to permeate media outlets and legal systems become more protective towards their rights, there has not been a correlation with improved mental health or reduced suicide risk.

Mustanski et al. (2016) found LGBT students experienced escalating victimisation throughout their school years to the point that 24.2% ended formative education with diagnosable depression and 15.3% with posttraumatic stress disorder. Conversely, the increasing visibility and normalisation of LGBT people in the media is correlative with an increasing number of Americans who are willing to identify themselves as such. Gallup, a research organisation, surveyed 120,000 Americans in 2012 and found 3.4% identified as LGBT (Gates and Newport, 2016). Young people between the ages of 18 and 29 were over three times more likely to openly identify as LGBT.

This suggests that while gay youth are becoming more confident in expressing themselves or living openly, the associated increased media and social representation has failed to manifest itself with improved long-term health outcomes. While young gay people demonstrate relatively high levels of resilience to protect themselves from bullying and harassment (Russell et al. 2009), our lack of understanding of translatability of LGBT representation in the media into reality continues to apply insurmountable pressure. This is of particular note amongst white men who inherit the societal privilege demonstrated by most patriarchal Western societies. Writing in a 2016 editorial in *The Guardian*, a UK newspaper, Hackman cites changing concepts of previously unchallenged heterogeneous masculinity as particularly difficult for men to accept. One interviewee states: “[...] because of [a] sense of entitlement [...] you are brought up understanding there is an inherent favourable bias towards men, and that is taken away, it isn't easy”. This confusion and uncertainty, increasingly felt amongst straight men as their gay peers experience a more equal place in social structures, has equated to emerging media-driven visibility of, and research into, how men establish and maintain relationships. News and digital media outlets, aside from those with extremist political slants, will continue to develop the normalisation of LGBT representations in the public sphere. It is important that education establishments and legislators contribute to this trajectory, not least because we know that where young people with diverse and fluid sexual identities exist in a common social environment, they thrive (Vásquez et al., 2014). This significantly undermines the claims of American far-right groups that young gay men are unhealthy and dangerous influences on their straight peers. Indeed, the profound and inherent social scripts that young people use to explore their sexual identity (Silva, 2016) and the wider discourses (Foucault, 1978) they use to explore relationships are defined by cultural constructs of the time in which they exist (Katz, 1995). Media, particularly news media, should capitalise on this to ensure LGBT people are firmly embedded in critical discourse.

4. Case study

In 2010 Tyler Clementi, a student at Rutgers University, killed himself by jumping from a bridge. This followed an incident in which his dormitory roommate secretly filmed him in a sexual encounter with another man and streamed it live using the university's digital media service. The news media response was swift and damning. Schwartz (2010) wrote in the *New York Times*, "*Tyler Clementi may have died from exposure*". Clementi's roommate was an Indian national. The American press, which had made little more than muted concern about previous white gay male suicides, demonstrated racial overtones as it sought to hold the individual to account. Writing in *New American Media*, Roy (2012) identified the trial of Clementi's roommate as an indictment of a broken immigration system more powerful than the failure of the authorities to do anything about bullying. Interestingly, little information had been published about the perpetrators of other cases of bullying, the explication being that as the bearers of white straight male privilege, they had the right to exert power over those with less social currency. As a non-white foreign national, Clementi's roommate, although straight, was considered to be a lower-class citizen on the social strata that defines and structures the mediatisation of LGBT identity constructs (Whitcomb and Walinsky, 2013).

The use of heterosexual spokespeople, particularly straight men, in high-profile campaigns aimed at improving social inclusion for LGBT youth and reducing isolation and suicide risk is reflected in the proliferation of GSAs in US educational settings. Such groups are intended to foster a safe and inclusive environment for students with different sexual identities and to provide a framework from which to reduce social exclusion. Whereas public health campaigns aimed at improving the health of LGBT people typically present an exclusive visualisation of the target group, GSAs and the messages of SBNN and *Give a Damn!* instead shift focus to the acts and responsibilities of heterosexual allies who are presented as community gatekeepers with the ability to reduce homophobia amongst male-dominated heteronormative community groups. The gay-straight paradigm this represents could signify a new model of inclusion, focusing on the importance of heterosexuality in the prevention of gay student suicide. Such a paradigm seeks to reconcile the social and structural divisions present between gay and straight individuals through the increasing acceptance that sexual identity, while an intrinsic element of the life course experience, is a combination of humanistic constructs that are fragmented depending on theoretical framework through which they are viewed (Hammack, 2005).

5. Going forward

New scenarios of media engagement and education inevitably rely on new frameworks to develop them and new strategies to deploy them. The complex relationship between media and vulnerable groups, particularly those in education, becomes increasingly important. Yet there is evidence that new frameworks, strategies and approaches, when delivered with rigour, can generate significant lasting change. This includes in response to specific events such as suicides that fundamentally change the social structure of an institution, such as that of Tyler Clementi's death. In 2012, Rutgers University had provided specialist training to 130 gay-straight allies, provided student housing especially for LGBT students and was awarded the maximum possible rating from a national student equality rights group (Kaminer, 2012). Change, particularly multidisciplinary change embedded in social discourse, constructs and media representation, needs to begin to prove its worth in quantifiably better health for LGBT youth.

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Biography

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SECTION 4

RESEARCHING MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Notes about Common Sense and Academic Knowledge¹

Bertrand Cabedoche

Abstract

These notes discuss the difference between academic knowledge and “common sense” or the belief that “facts” have meanings that can be taken for granted and that are somehow self-evident. The acquisition of a proper epistemological perspective is indeed the linchpin of any training in media and communication studies (and more in general, in social sciences).

Keywords Common Sense, Academic Knowledge, Media And Communication Studies, Pedagogy

1 These notes are part of a much more articulated discussion of the methodological, conceptual, theoretical and epistemological linchpins of communication studies in France (see Cabedoche, 2016).

Whatever the specific disciplinary tradition adopted, any basic training in media and communication (and more in general, in social sciences) must start from the assumption of a peculiar perspective on “reality”. From an epistemological point of view, indeed, “academic knowledge” differs by definition from “common sense”, or the belief that facts have meanings that can be taken for granted and that are somehow self-evident.

Many scholars have addressed this set of “pre-notions”, from which social actors try to impose their own understanding of the world and of the way a society should be organised, in depth. The following table – that draws mainly on Clifford Geertz’s work and his distinction of “common sense” from global knowledge and local knowledge (Geertz, 2002: 94-118) – aims at providing an overview of the notion of common sense, and in particular of the different nature of the pre-notions constituting it, and of the main rhetoric of their justification.

Table 1: The mechanism of “common sense”

Formulation	Process	Justification	Reference	Idealtypes	Posture
Things are going on like that	Naturalization	The evidence	The false disciplinary analogy	The journalist: “I heard it on TV”	Populism: to say aloud what everyone thinks silently
This is useful	Applicability	The immediate utility	The engineering sciences	The medicine man, the technician, the practitioner	Pragmatism: the ideologues seen by Bonaparte
This is unequivocally crystal-clear	Sensory perception	Transparency	Language and senses	The child, the demagogue	Positivism: a fact is a fact
This is right	Moralization	Justice	The proverbial formulation	The elder, the native, the authority	Gerontologism: the sage is right
This is going in the right way	Politicization	The political cause	The sense of history	The victim, the colonized man, the woman, the worker	Activism: the activist has/is an answer
This is simple	Immediate accessibility	Understanding without prerequisites or research protocol	The communication techniques	The educator, the witness	Simplism: the researcher makes the simple complicated

Whatever the way pre-notions are justified, many authors – like Durkheim, Bachelard, Bourdieu and Moles among the others – warn against the illusion of immediate understanding, of the transparency of “facts” and of any other form of spontaneous understanding. On the contrary, they invite us to be wary of pre-notions and of subjective and non-reflexive knowledge; to be careful with intuition in

favour of construction; to reject a naive sociology which believes that it is possible to firmly grasp the intentions of social actors; to be sceptical about testimonial history, where individual social actors are given a dominant place; to use methodological, conceptual and theoretical deconstructive techniques to get rid of any immediate and seductive understanding of “reality”.

This means that media scholars as well should assume the epistemological perspective that Fernand Braudel (Braudel, 1987) and Henri-Pierre Jeudy called a “long term perspective”, in order “*to get out of the world in order to better understand the world*”. Indeed,

[this temporal distancing] allows us to distance ourselves from short-term opportunism (the reign of present) and to fully assume as impossible to understand certain objects [...] if they are not referred to the past, including the distant one [...], to be wary of the ‘normality’ of the present [...] and to examine what, in the past, constitutes a legacy to shape this present (Bautier, 2004).

This is particularly true when dealing with our hyper-mediated societies, since media news mostly represents a form of non-cumulative knowledge, which has always been in competition with cumulative knowledge (like academic knowledge). Hannah Arendt traces back this opposition to Greeks and Romans: while the former used to cultivate appearance and youth, abandoning themselves to the instant, the latter respected age, spirit, permanence, eternity (Arendt, 1954). Indeed, many authors consider the production of academic knowledge as an ongoing battle against non-cumulative information. According to Walter Benjamin (1936), for example, “[media] information has value only as far as it is new. It lives only in the moment”. At the same time cause and effect of the intensification of contemporary immediacy, media news would have profound effects on the transmission of knowledge, contributing precisely to the development of non-cumulative knowledge. This tendency would call into question the possibility of a real education, with severe consequences on the structuration of human beings (Benjamin, 1936: 124).

Actually, critical scholars have always warned against pseudo non-cumulative knowledge: how is it possible to really learn in societies characterized by fluidity, by the intensity of accelerated fluxes of information and of sensory stimuli? (Gitlin, 2002). Liquid modernity produces fragmentation, dispersion and disengagement, preventing continuity and causing psychic insecurity (Bauman, 2000). The triumph of everything that is transient, ephemeral and discontinuous – briefly, the triumph of instability – makes hard or even impossible for people to gain an understanding of reality based on cumulative knowledge (Haroche, 2008 and 2008b).

That’s why researchers have to be particularly careful (and have the social responsibility) to avoid raising “pre-notions” to the rank of evidences. A solid lit-

erature research and review about the phenomena under study; the clarification of the main concepts used to address and describe the object of research (especially when these concepts are commonly used, and therefore carry “common sense” meanings); the adoption of a long-term historical perspective on the phenomena under study and on the schools of thought that have already addressed them; the assumption of a methodological distance from the social actors’ beliefs; the methodological rigour and the soundness of theorization can help PhD students (and, more in general, academic scholars) to take up this key challenge.

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Biography

Bertrand Cabedoche is Professor of information and communication sciences, UNESCO chair-holder on International Communication at the University of Grenoble Alpes (UGA), member of the executive board of ORBICOM (Montréal). *Docteur d'état* in political sciences (1987), graduate of the Higher School of Journalism of Lille (1978), Bertrand Cabedoche is now in charge of the international development of GRESEC, a well-known French academic research team in the field of information and communication, and responsible for the international development of the Doctoral School of UGA. He is also a member of the board of advisors of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA). In December 2012, proposed by Mrs Irina Bokova, General Director of UNESCO, he was appointed as the president of ORBICOM, the international network of UNESCO chairs in Communication.

As a researcher, he has worked (1992-1996) on the representations of the European Union in the main member states' newspapers for FUNDESCO, *Fundación para el desarrollo de la Comunicación* (Madrid). He has particularly been working on media discourses on North-South relations since the 1970s in the field of international information (one of his first scientific works has been quoted in the famous UNESCO *MacBride Report* at the end of the 70s). More recently, he has been working on the ways societies are constructed when they become the subject of public (polemic) debates (for instance in the case of energies; nanotechnologies; Cultural Diversity ; Information and Communication Industries; ICTs and social change), with the advantage of a long professional experience over the past three decades as a journalist in France and Canada (chief editor), and as an international consultant for multinational organisations.

Among several scientific publications (in France, Canada, UK, Germany, Spain, Romania, Brazil, Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, Madagascar, DRC, Russia, United States and China), he is the author of *Les chrétiens et le tiers-monde. Pour une fidélité critique* [*Christians and the Third World. Criticism and loyalty*], Paris: Karthala, 1990 and *Ce nucléaire qu'on nous montre. Construire la socialité dans le débat sur les énergies* [*The nuclear show. Building sociality on public debates about energies*], Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003.

Bertrand Cabedoche has been invited to organise seminars or give lectures in 50 universities, all over the world. He regularly works as an expert for UNESCO, UNICEF and UNITAR.

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Translating an Academic Text into Sound Art. An Experiment with a Communication Studies’ Text on Participation

Yiannis Christidis and Nico Carpentier

Abstract

This chapter reports on the experimental translation of an academic (written) text into a sound art composition. The starting point of this translation experiment is a 2014 book chapter, entitled *The democratic (media) revolution: a parallel genealogy of political and media participation*, authored by Nico Carpentier, Peter Dahlgren and Francesca Pasquali. The outcome of the experiment – the sound composition – is called “*Audionces*” and can be downloaded at <https://soundcloud.com/buskingsounds/audionces>. In the current chapter, the production process of *Audionces* is analysed, firstly by focussing on the roles of the actors. In a second part, the translation strategies of conceptualisation, selecting sources and ordering sounds are analysed, combining a more theoretical approach with a more practice-based description of the translation process. The last part of this chapter consists of an analysis of the tensions that characterised the translation experiment, and of the ways these tensions were successfully negotiated. The main aims of this translation are 1) to experiment with alternative (non-textual) ways of communicating academic knowledge, and 2) to gain a better understanding of the opportunities that a sonification process offers to both genres.

Keywords Translation Experiment, Academic Writing, Sonification, Sound Art, Participation

“Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.” (Kristeva, 1986: 37).

1. Introduction

In the fields of social sciences and humanities, writing is still the dominant mode of communicating academic knowledge. The written text's structure supports its content, but also efficiently organises the words and their meanings, making use of a standardised representational system. Even if writing is the century-old hegemonic modus for communicating knowledge, alternative models have been developed. There is, for instance, a long history of the use of screen documentaries in science communication, evidenced by the collaboration between the Open University and the BBC in the UK.¹ The photo-essay can also be used to disseminate academic knowledge, and in particular visual sociology and anthropology make use of this genre, as, for instance, discussed by Pink (2001: 134). She uses a definition of the photo-essay that “*is not one of solely photographs*”, but instead consists out of “*an essay (book, article or other text) that is composed predominantly of photographs*” (Pink, 2001: 134). This definition can be extended further by referring to the (photo-)exhibition, with the two “Iconoclastic Controversies” exhibitions on Cypriot commemoration practices and nationalism as examples.²

In his article ‘The scope of visual sociology’, Grady (1996: 18) uses the term “*visual essay*” to refer to the academic use of “*documentary films and photojournalism*”, providing a considerable number of examples. In an earlier article, he defined the visual essay as:

A statement about human affairs that purports to represent reality and is consciously and creatively crafted from non-fictional materials that are, at least in part, directly connected to the affairs thus represented. The primary medium of expression for the statement is some variant of photographic imagery (ibid.: 27).

Interestingly, Grady (ibid.: 27) immediately adds that “[...] *it is quite possible that the visual essay is an art form*”, when he is discussing the many critiques that have been levelled against the (academic) visual essay. It is this statement that allows us to introduce another, probably even more challenging mode of communicating academic knowledge, and that is through its artistic translation. Of course,

1 See http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/choose/bbc?ONEML=mx074&MEDIA=mx074ou_aml10.

2 See <http://nicocarpentier.net/iconroversies>.

in many cases academia has been a source of inspiration for the arts, and there are many liminal spaces where academia and the arts meet.

This chapter looks at a specific less common type of relationship, by reporting on an experiment to communicate academic knowledge through a translation into sound art. One source of inspiration for this experiment is the work done on artistic translations, for instance when discussing the translation of the musical imaginary into sounds (Bailes, 2009), or fictocritical literature into multi-media forms (Smith, 2009). A second source of inspiration, even if it is less directly related, comes from the media studies work on adaptation and translation (Krebs, 2014) and transmediality (Jenkins, 2006; Evans, 2011).

The concept of sound art, as we understand it today, was introduced at the beginning of the 20th century, when Russolo's manifesto entitled *The art of noise* discussed the ways in which the human ear became accustomed to everyday sounds, raising questions about the form and the conventions of music (Russolo, 1967). Since then, and after the invention of ground-breaking sound tools with controversial musical attributes,³ there have been a plethora of theories relating to electro-acoustic sound (Schaeffer, 2009). The re-consideration of silence in musical terms,⁴ but also "clicks" and "clacks", "creaks" and "shooshes", and any other kind of micro- or macro-sounds have been welcomed, not only by sound artists, but also by a generation of music composers. This phenomenon evolved into sound-scape compositions – as they have been called since the 1970 – grounded in the inclusion of "other" sounds (Schafer, 1973) and the exploration of the possibilities of sound art. It has evolved into a field that is still very open to new ideas and translations and representations.

Even if sound art is an open field, a translation from academic writing into sound art poses several challenges, as the organisation of meanings in a sound composition involves procedures that are different from the structures of a written text. Sound art requires sound elements to be organised in time and space, taking into account that these parameters are characterised by fluid boundaries and differentiations (Kahn, 1999; Landy, 2007). The sonification of the knowledge presented in an academic text, following the narrative structures of sound, and the need to still convey (part of) its original meanings to a listener, is a difficult, complex and challenging, though rewarding process. At the same time, this translation experiment offers – at least potentially – the opportunity to reflect on the limitations of both academic writing and sound art. Moreover, it provides an opportunity to think

3 One example is the "theremin", Léon Theremin's revolutionary electronic instrument that he invented in the early 1920s.

4 John Cage's composition/performance "4'33'" (1952), which is as much about silence as it is about un-silence, is a seminal example.

about the communicative possibilities of sound art for representing the meanings, ideas and arguments as they unfold in an academic text. This makes the experiment valuable for the fields of academia *and* the arts.

The starting point of the translation experiment is an already existing academic book chapter, entitled *The democratic (media) revolution: a parallel genealogy of political and media participation* (Carpentier, Dahlgren and Pasquali, 2014), which will be summarised in greater detail in the next part of this article. The outcome of the experiment is a sound composition called “*Audionces*”. It can be listened to at <https://soundcloud.com/buskingsounds/audionces>. In the current chapter, the production process of *Audionces* is described and analysed, to show the complexities of the translation experiment and to contribute to the further development of these experiments.

2. A brief summary of original text⁵ – The democratic (media) revolution

The democratic (media) revolution was written by Nico Carpentier, Peter Dahlgren and Francesca Pasquali. It was published in 2014, in an edited volume entitled *Audience transformations: shifting audience positions in late modernity* (Carpentier, Schröder and Hallett, 2014). *Audience transformations* was one of the many academic publications that came out of the COST Action Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies.⁵

Using rough brushstrokes, the chapter produces two genealogies, of political and media participation in the 20th and 21st century Western world, arguing that both interlocking and intersecting social processes are part of what Mouffe (1988: 42) has called the democratic revolution. The genealogy of political participation discusses the development of representative democracy, the changes triggered by the rise of new social movements, the later weakening of these social movements and the current crises of representative democracy, where mature democracies are forced to deal with growing popular dissatisfaction and political projects that attempt to undermine them. At the same time, non-formal ways of participation have continued to function, as evidenced by the alter-globalisation movement and Occupy. The genealogy of media participation describes how the media sphere was institutionally closed off through government monopolies, and the rise of capitalism and private media companies. Also here, the 1960s and 1970s brought an opening-up of the media sphere through civil society initiatives, followed by a second wave of democratisation in the web 2.0 era.

5 See <http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu>.

After discussing the two parallel genealogies separately, *The democratic (media) revolution* looks at their intersections. Through the workings of these media organisations and networks – including journalism, popular media and internet – (minimalist) forms of participation in mainstream politics were enabled. Even if, for instance, the web facilitates civic communication, and political participation does occur through the web, these democratising (inter)actions are contextualised by representative democracy's difficulties and continuing power inequalities. The chapter's conclusion again emphasises the need to avoid a linear-historical narrative, and is embedded in a mood of cautious and qualified optimism, given the intensification of democracy that we have witnessed in the past 200 years, despite the many setbacks and counter-movements. Still, the conclusion ends with a warning, arguing that "*democracy is always unfinished, but it is also always threatened*" (Carpentier, Dahlgren and Pasquali, 2014: 137).

3. Actors and roles in the translation experiment

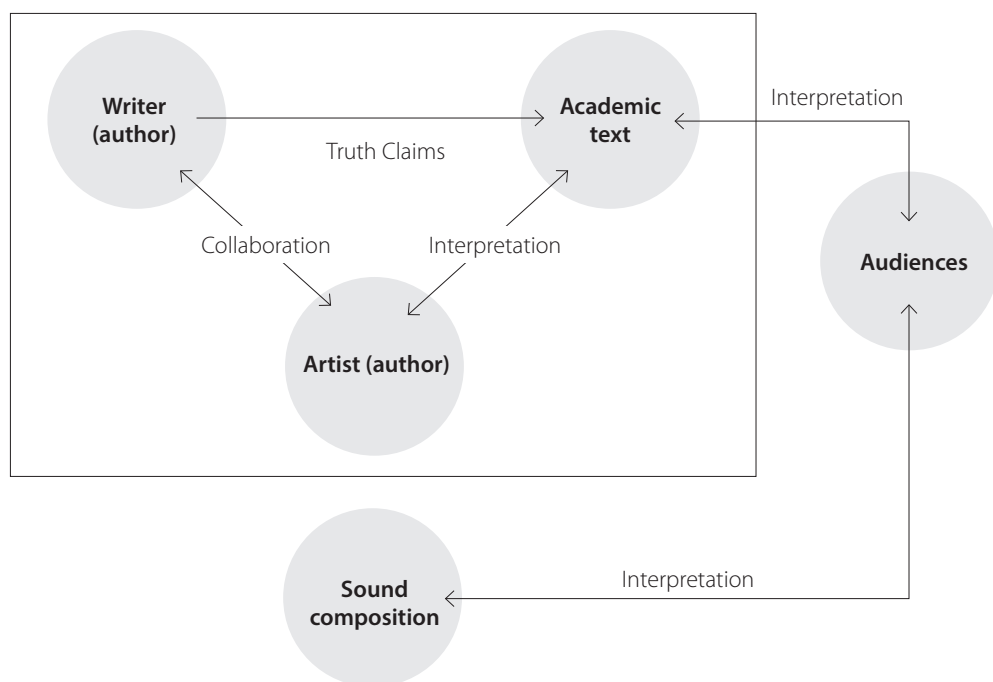
The translation experiment consisted of bringing two worlds – academia and the arts – together, whilst respecting both of their logics. This implies, in the case of sound art, the need to respect the idea that its meanings are "*fragile and full of doubt, as a tentative transfer of sensorial experience between sonic subjects*" (Voegelin, 2010: 87), while academic writing very much entails particular (and strong) truth claims grounded in scientific procedure and paradigms (see Figure 1). Academic research, according to Gooding (2001: 121), actually depends on writing, as the "*results are further constituted as public facts through the process of writing and publishing experimental narratives, so their existence depends on institutionalized publication practices*".

Moreover, the translation process is grounded in different roles, which could potentially coincide with one and the same person, but which, in our experiment, have remained separated. The notion of translation immediately implies that there is an original-to-be-translated, with the above-mentioned truth claims embedded in it. This original text has been produced by an academic author (or writer, as s/he will be called here). Moreover, a translation implies that there is also a person in the role of the translator: the sound artist (or the sound composer), who is (normally) not involved in the writing of the original text. The sound composer freely interprets the academic text, and produces, in collaboration with the writer of the original text, a sonic interpretation of this document (see again Figure 1).

If we turn to our experiment, the *The democratic (media) revolution* book chapter was not written with its potential translation into sound art in mind. Only a year after its publication, it was selected for this experiment, as its structure

(with the parallel genealogies) and its content (with the emphasis on participation) seemed able to offer ample opportunities for such a translation project. The sound composer (Yiannis Christidis), together with one of the authors of *The democratic (media) revolution* (Nico Carpentier) jointly selected the chapter.⁶

Figure 1: actors and sub-processes in the sound art translation process



Audiences also perform a key role in this process, as Figure 1 shows as well. There are several, potentially overlapping, audiences: readers of the original text and listeners of the sound composition. Both types of audiences engage in their own interpretative processes, resulting in different decoding. Hegarty's (2009: 170) argument, that sound art "sets up the listener as self-contained, in order to challenge not sufficiency, but only the way in which that has been constructed", can be used for both sound art and academic writing.

6 The other two chapter authors, Peter Dahlgren and Francesca Pasquali, agreed to the project.

4. Translational strategies

The translation process and the collaboration between the writer and the sound composer were enabled by a set of translation strategies, which were jointly developed by the two actors. The main strategies were conceptualisation, the selection of sounds and their ordering into a composition.

4.1. *Conceptualisation: from text to keywords*

When translating the written text into the sound art composition, it turned out to be crucial to condense the core meanings of the text, in order to make them manageable for sonification. In this process, keywords were used, which were either supplied by the author – included those explicitly present in the text – or by the composer. Keywords capture the meanings to be translated into sound, and function as sources of inspiration for the composer's work. They condense the basic meanings, ideas and arguments of the text, which implies that their signification changes, from referring to particular signifieds (however instable that connection may be anyhow) to referring to analyses, paragraphs, arguments or structures.

The abstract nature of keywords may appear to be problematic, but it is not, as these keywords are used creatively. When thinking about their immediate translation into sound, the signifier “audience”, for instance, obviously provokes different challenges than a word like “dog” does. An open signifier such as “audience” – with all its possibilities and interpretations – needs the academic text to clarify which particular position in academic discourse is taken.⁷ When it gains the status of keyword, it is – at least partially – extracted from the context that the academic text provides, whilst still taking some of that context and specificity with it, as it is transferred into the hands of the sound artist for translation. The composer then may add (an)other layer(s) of (artistic) interpretation to the different keywords, by morphing them into sound.

In our case, full sentences also functioned as keywords. For example, a keyword phrase like “media constantly find ways to affirm their power over people” is a unique combination of words, which can be translated into sound in various ways – the translator's aesthetics, background or attitude decides on the exact way. In this example, “media” can be mimetically translated into a TV white noise signal, a sound of pressing a button of an old TV set or the continuous drone that is reminiscent of the sound of the modem in the late nineties. But less mimetic translations also remain possible. Thanks to its intertextuality, a well-selected citation

7 This is not to argue that the signifier “dog” is autonomous.

from a film, as, for instance, the chant *Be exited, be be exited* from *Requiem for a dream*, can be invoked to critically refer to an entire genre, such as reality TV in this particular case. The same logic can be applied to every word of this key-word-sentence.⁸

However, no matter how abstract such conceptualisations can be, the tool of conceptualisation is very necessary and opens up a pathway for the production process of the sound composition. This process allows the piece of sound art to express the sound artist's subjective and creative interpretation, without abandoning the intentions of the author of the original text, a balance protected by their collaboration. Equally important are the material components of this process, namely the condensation of the ideas of the author in the academic text and the sounds that are selected, created or modified to sonify the academic text. In this sense, the translation process is a double dialogue, between academic text and sounds, and between author-writer and author-composer, with the first dialogue organised through the principle of conceptualisation and the second through collaboration and negotiation.

4.2. *Selecting sources and ordering sounds: from keywords to sounds and their composition*

The second translation strategy is grounded in the translation of concepts into sounds, which, first of all, implies a selection of sound sources. Any material movement, of objects or subjects, is a potentially useful sound source. Moreover, as the sound composition does not mimetically represent the analysis, but instead provides an artistic interpretation that develops according to its own patterns, a composer working on such a representation is quite free to experiment. This freedom also translates into the selection of sources, whether s/he has recorded them, or whether already recorded sound is used. In addition, the sources can be different, as natural sounds, human voice and its many variations, musical instruments and electronic/technological sounds are all possible options.

Natural sounds are easily recognizable and feed the listeners' ears with something that is perceived as being close to nature. Strategically, it recreates an already familiar environment and places it in an artificial time and space. Musical instruments are culturally privileged generators of sound and have a long history of being used not only for music compositions, but also for sound compositions. Electronically generated sounds are also easily and frequently morphed. Their flexibility regarding their (non)recognisability, having also been the reference for electroacoustic compositions, make them helpful instruments for this type of trans-

8 Obviously, we should not forget that sound art is also related to media.

lation. Music, as a combination of acoustic instruments, digitally generated sounds and the human voice, is a highly utile sound in its own right. Moreover, the recorded voice of the writer (or the composer) could function as a sound source for the composition. Other voices, such as crowds or singers, can also feature in the sound art composition. Human voice has a great potential for, and a long history in sound compositions: from pieces that have common elements with radio documentary-style texts to granular synthesis audio work, the human voice as sound wave has proven a highly utile sound source to work and experiment with.

These different sources generate the sounds that are, in turn, the building blocks for the sound composition. Even though one type of sound source can be used exclusively – and be recognized as such – combinations are also possible (and often used). These sounds are then ordered and integrated into the composition, where the discrete sounds become morphed, superimposed and/or juxtaposed, and where these sounds work on and with each other. This ordering process is the third translation strategy. Sound needs time to evolve. In order for a sound composition to be described/created, a duration and then a based-on-time structure are needed. The dimension of time thus becomes integrated in this third strategy, as it forms a fixed, important, restrictive and still defining element for any sound composition.

Even if the academic text and the sound composition are structurally different, they are both characterised by this linearity, which facilitates the translation. In a way, the linear structure of the text reflects the time factor of the sound composition. In the translation process, this also implies a conscious organisation of the distribution of meanings in (time) phases, even in cases where the structure of the original text is not blindly copied, but interpreted as well. These phases are then represented in time, which gives the composer the opportunity to generate an outline of the sound composition, according to the structure of the text, or more precisely, according to the artistic interpretation of the structure of the text.

5. The translation process more in detail

These three translation strategies were used to create *Audionces* in a collaboration between its two authors. In practice, these strategies overlapped, and a more parallel and sometimes cyclical *modus operandi* was used. This way of working still implied that in the first stage a time structure was decided upon, then the keywords were selected and “coded” into sounds. These sounds were then integrated in the time-based structure, making use of the multi-layeredness that characterises a sound composition and that allows combining sounds at the same time intervals. What seems to be a straightforward process turned out to be quite challenging, and merits a more detailed description.

5.1. *Conceptualisation in practice*

The basic meanings, ideas and arguments of the text were translated into sound as respectfully as possible. Words/thematic issues which were representative for each paragraph or (sub)part of the original text formed the basis of the conceptualisation process. The centrality of a keyword for the text (in representing its meanings), but also the sonic associations that a word triggered, were used as criteria in a negotiated selection process. This close connection between concepts and sounds can be illustrated, using four keywords as example:

Mainstream media – This keyword was sonically associated with the music of TV advertisements, radio station IDs and muzak style music structures. Their sonic “destruction”, related with audience resistance and rejection, lead to the addition of sound effects and distortive elements.

Alternative media – Even though alternative media have a long history, the concept was sonically reduced to sources related to the electronic. This representation of alternative media included the use of internet-related sounds and of computer or mobile electronic devices sounds.

Political hegemony – Translating this keyword involved using the music that is often used by political parties during their campaigns, but was also related to the sounds that mainstream media use, as these are often connected to political objectives.

Political contestation – Here, music that has become a symbol for (particular eras of) protest, and the sounds of manifestations or conflictuous events were morphed to sonify this concept.

The conceptualisation strategy also allowed outlining the relations between the pairs of mainstream media / political hegemony, and alternative media / political contestations, throughout the sound art composition.

5.2. *Sound sources*

As the above-rendered example on conceptualisation and sonification already illustrates, a wide variety of sound sources were used in the sonification process, which lead to the creation of *Audionces*. These (combined) sources included soundscapes, music, noise and silence.

Soundscapes

The whole composition forms a constructed soundscape, where smaller bits of it intervene and present themselves as separate soundscapes. For instance, the soundscapes created by combining the sounds of machinery and digital communication, and combinations of the sound of a Molotov cocktail with the sounds of demonstrations, were key elements in the composition.

Music

The composition also uses music, including parts of the CNN station ID, a chanting choir, and Joan Baez's song *We shall overcome*. The latter functions as a symbol of the civil rights movement, with its increased levels of citizen participation. These sounds have been subjected to transformations and/or distortions, in order to integrate them in the sound composition and its soundscapes. These sonic manipulations have been designed to retain the sources' significations but also to simultaneously alter these significations for the sake of their integration into the sound composition.

Intertextuality plays a particularly strong role when music is used, as these musical texts are linked to a wide variety of other texts that, together, have come to symbolise particular processes or eras. The use of *We shall overcome*, and the counter-culture of the 1960s it symbolises, is one illustration. In the sound composition, the last syllables of *We shall overcome* have been altered by being stretched over time, creating a subverted citation arguing that this particular musical citation stands for the past.

Noise

TV noise, radio noise, electronic noise, information noise, but also human noise coming from political manifestations is frequently used. Especially, when the sound composition reflects about the audience (and its participation), the element of "unwanted sound" is used to represent the "conceptual noise" which refers to the complex combination of non-participation, minimalist participation and (some) maximalist participation. White or pink noise works as a noisy element to establish (a limited degree of) annoyance for the listener's ear, similar to audience's unease generated by the mainstream media. Noisy elements are also sparsely used in the composition to interrupt a narrative structure, in order to avoid that the listener settles in too comfortably during the listening experience, and to communicate the many different hurdles that participation still evokes.

Silence

Silence, as the moment where sounds are absent, has been regarded as a "*basic condition of an aesthetics and philosophy of sound art*" (Voegelin, 2010: 82). Silence

contributes to the identity of the sound composition, and, because of the context of the composition, remains a vital part of its communicative dimension. In *Audionces* silence was used as a compositional device, creating its own space (Dyson, 2009) and following a strategy of concept-based silent intervals. But also semi-silence has been used, by including inconspicuous sounds and minimal sound bits which were based on granular synthesis, reminiscent of electronic media. These almost-silent elements also enhance the presence of non-silence, as something that is there, playing, but not really.

Moreover, silences are used in the composition to establish a passage from one thematic area to another or to offer some rest to the ear. Elements of the aforementioned categories were creatively combined to create audio “establishing shots”: the choir, the CNN music theme, or Baez’s song, and, of course, the dominant sounds of television. In every section of the composition, there is an element of one of these that dominates the soundscape, and something that is used to interrupt it and change it, using rough or smooth cuts.

5.3. *The Audionces time structure*

The different sounds were then integrated in the sound composition. The following overview (Figure 2) has been included to help the reader understand the sound composition’s structure, in relation to time.

Figure 2: the sound structure over time

	0-30	30-1.00	1-1.30	1.30-2.00	2.00-2.30	2.30-3.00	3.00-3.30	3.30-4.00
SOUNDS	TV on	Distant voices (audiences)						
	Frequency alterations			Hollywood style choir	Frequency noise		"The revolution will not be televised"	
	White Noise (back and forth) - Wave representation							
		Frequency- A wave			Radio station/shows ID	20th Century Fox Music modified	TV elements (Clean & altered)	TV on-channel browsing
	White noise			White noise	Choir & "clean" Hollywood music		"No such thing as public money"	Televisual silence
			Crowd coming		"Silence, please" Modulation	"The revolution starts now"		Artificial applause and laughter
KEYWORDS (selection)			Actors			Hollywood / cultural industry	Media power	Muteness/people
							Centralised governance	
					Mainstream Media			

>>>>

4.00-4.30	4.30-5.00	5.00-5.30	5.30-6.00	6.00-6.30	6.30-7.00	7.00-7.30	7.30-8.00	8.00-8.30
Molotov cocktail sound	Distant people, explosions & fiesta							
			"Be, be excited"	TV Ad prompts				
Distorted Revolution ("We shall overcome")			Stock exchange market					
Distant CNN ID					Machinery			
Siren-like sound		Telephone dial (altered)	TV zapping		Protest			"We will not be silenced?"
New social movements	Actors	Analogue-digital/ digitized communication	Guided participation/ actors		Public sphere			
	Political Hegemony	Alternative Media			Strong interventions / political participation			
Political Contestation	Mainstream Media				Mainstream Media			

6. Tensions and synergies

When reflecting about the translation process after its completion, a series of tensions can be identified. These tensions originate from the respectful reconciliation of academic writing and sound art, and from the collaboration between two (and potentially more) people in different roles, with different identities. These tensions are not necessarily problematic, and the synergies of these positions are constructive and constitutive for the outcome(s) of the process. Nevertheless, they remain important for understanding the process and its opportunities, and thus need to be discussed.

6.1. Authorship

The creation of this sonic composition, based on an original academic text, was mainly enabled by the teamwork of two individuals and their (re-)interpretations of the written work. Even if their positions are distinct, this collaboration was grounded in a respectful and balanced dialogue, where both participants shared their thoughts about the text and discussed its audio-translatable aspects. This collaboration has produced a shared authorship of the sound composition.

Still, the distinctness of the two roles produces a significant tension. The writer has produced the original text without the sound composer present, and there is the risk of the sacralisation of the original text, which would place the composer in a merely executive role. Even if the latter acquires the role of the phonograph, as Crawford (2012: 83) puts it, "*to select sounds in bounded time*", a certain degree of composer autonomy remains a necessary condition for a successful translation. Inversely, the autonomy of the writer is also important, as a disconnection of the

translation process from the writer would shift the focus away from a (respectful) translation, and would produce a very different outcome, exclusively grounded in artistic inspiration.

6.2. *Communicational structures*

A second tension is related to the differences in the ways that academic writing and sound art are structured, even though the narrative structures of both are linear. An academic text is defined by pages, subparts and paragraphs, in which letters and numbers are all placed in a formalised order so that they can represent the desired meanings. The dominant model of academic writing is still based on a mono-layered structure (although exceptions exist – see the introduction of this text). The dominant format, however, imposes a linear way of rendering thoughts and of letting arguments evolve. Sound is also linear, in terms of time, as it develops through this dimension; however, what constitutes a sound composition is the result of a *tapestry* of sonic elements, which are positioned in various layers in time, and often in space, as is the case for an exhibition or multi-channel oriented compositions.

This different form of linearity produces a challenge for the translation, as it raises questions about to what degree the mono-layered structure of the original text needs to be maintained, and how much multi-layeredness can be used without severing all connections with the original text. In this experiment, for instance, a choice was made to keep the main structuring elements of the original text and to use multi-layered sonic elements within these main elements. Obviously, other possibilities exist, but, arguably, also then, the tension between mono- and multi-layeredness needs to be negotiated.

6.3. *Mimetic representation, interpretation and disconnection*

As the original text has been created before the translation, the risk (or the temptation) exists that the sonic translation becomes a “mere” mimetic representation of the original academic text, which would imply abandoning the idea of the translation and reverting to the copy. In (an extreme version of) this scenario, the sound composer could simply record the writer reading the academic text aloud, turning it into an audio book (chapter). On the other hand, the sound composer could also produce a sound composition, still inspired by the original text, but too disconnected from it, which would again makes us shift outside the realm of the translation.

This tension is mostly a matter of degree. We can find comfort in Benjamin’s (1991: 78) words, when he wrote that “[...] *a mimetic presentation within both the*

visual arts and literature, by definition, is always going to be unable to present the 'reality', or 'essential being' of the represented". In other words, no copy will ever be the perfect copy, as the performative force of iterability (Derrida, 1988; Butler, 1997) produces change. On the other side of the spectrum we find contingency, as the notion of being "too disconnected" from the original text is again a matter of degree.

Moreover, there is always a process of interpretation, even when it comes to the writer that is revisiting the academic text, as this text becomes revisited in the dialogue between writer and sound composer. Here, encoding and decoding – as described by Hall (1980) – touch each other in the sub-processes of re-reading, re-interpretation and negotiation, which all form part of the main process of translation. The sound composer also interprets the original text, as part of the translation, and the writer then interprets the (different versions of) the sound composition. In this sense, when the risks of the copy and the disconnection are averted, the chain of interpretations provides opportunities for a creative, constructive and respectful dialogue. This chain also demonstrates the fluidity of meaning in relation to both academic writing and sound art.

6.4. *Truth claim diversity*

A fourth and final tension is the (possibly) different position towards the truth claims embedded in the analysis. Both communicative environments have particular relationships with the notion of truth, even though the relationship between truth and art is more contested. But here, it is important to refer to Groys's (2016: 01/11) words: "[...] *if art cannot be a medium of truth then art is only a matter of taste*". Nevertheless, the strong connection between academia and truth, regulated and solidified by the genre of academic writing but also by the procedures of argumentation and analysis, and the more contested (and open) relationship between arts and truth, with less strict regulatory frameworks,⁹ creates a tension. Here, in particular, the weakening of the truth claims of the academic text through the translation into sound art might raise concerns.

At the same time, the translation process does not necessarily undermine the truth claims of both formats. The translation process, and its explicit labelling as such, prevents the ties with the (truth claims of the) academic text being severed and thus protects both writer and sound artist against the weakening of these truth claims. In this sense, the academic text and the sound composition become non-identical twins, similar, but still very different, which allows embedding the

9 Even though there are still regulatory frameworks produced by the art worlds (Becker, 1982). Moreover, there are also ethical considerations, for instance, in the case of sound art, in relation to inflicting pain on listeners by using high sound levels.

truth claims of the academic text within the sound composition. Moreover, this connection of the sound composition also strengthens the articulation of (sound) art with truth claims and the political, which is a position we would like to defend anyhow. Even more interestingly, the articulation of the academic truth claims with the fluidity of sound art also shows the contingency of the academic truth claims embedded in the academic text that is being translated, and in academic texts in general, subtly reminding the listener and the reader that academic knowledge is contingent and political as well.

7. Conclusion: evaluating an acousmatic-academic experience

When evaluating its process and the outcome, the translation experiment – however challenging it has proven to be – demonstrated several advantages. Firstly, the translation into a sound composition acted as a multiplier, allowing several and very different audiences to be targeted. Sound art and academic writing share a desire for communication, which also implies the presence of an audience, even if this is not necessarily a mass audience. Translating the *The democratic (media) revolution* book chapter into a different genre allowed the circulation of the ideas embedded in the original text, and in the sound composition, in very different societal fields. These increased opportunities for the communication of knowledge diverge from traditional forms of science communication, in the sense that not society at large is targeted, but a societal field that is often deemed to be as inaccessible as academia itself (namely sound art). We would like to argue that this transfer, from one field that tackles societal complexity to another one, is equally important, and actually illustrates the need for a diversification or pluralisation of science communication.

Secondly, the experiment has also produced a fundamental enrichment of the original text, as the writer and the sound composer were both forced to go back to the very basics of academic and artistic knowledge production, in order to produce this hybrid narrative. In particular, the combined processes of conceptualisation and sonification led to new questions about the analysis being asked, identifying the core ideas but also considering their symbolisation through the selection of sound sources and their integration into a sound composition, with the many opportunities and restrictions this brought about. Intertextuality played an important role here, as it generated a bridge between concepts and sounds, providing the multiple layers of meanings to (at least some of) the selected sounds which produced a much better fit with the concepts that were being sonified.

Finally, the experiment also constructively challenged both academic writing and sound art. The experiment demonstrated that it is an incredible luxury to be able to communicate different things at the same time (because of the multi-lay-

ered nature of the sonic), which is very difficult to realise in academic writing. On the other hand, the sonification process consumed a considerable amount of intellectual energy, which contrasted with the ease of deploying written language to communicate academic knowledge. The process of faithfully dealing with an original, without the sound composition becoming a copy, also turned out to be a challenge for both academic writing and sound art, articulating the difficulties of both fields in giving up some of their autonomy. Still, the experiment also demonstrated that a respectful dialogue, resulting in a state of non-autonomous autonomy, is feasible and enriching.

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Statistical Tales: Bringing in Reflexivity to Make Sense of Quantitative Data

Yuliya Lakew

Abstract

Reflexivity has long become part of qualitative researcher's arsenal for validity and credibility claims. However, very few quantitative researchers take the time to look back at their research process and ponder over the cost of deriving knowledge from statistical models – what has been omitted, polished, ignored or not taken into account. In this chapter I will try to bring reflexivity into my own quantitative research of young people's environmental behavior by reflecting over what knowledge I have produced so far and why. Having worked with five waves of longitudinal data for two different age cohorts, I lived through several 'existential' crises failing to comprehend the stories that the data was telling me and failing to 'impose' my theoretical stories on it. It has challenged me to unravel conventions and granted assumptions of media studies as a discipline, reflect upon data's temporal and spatial components, the subjective position of the researcher, the limits and the meaningfulness of generalizations, and the role of interpretations in statistical analysis. My personal research journey serves as a helpful background for a discussion of difficulties working with longitudinal quantitative data.

Keywords Reflexivity, Quantitative Methods, Statistics, Positivism

1. Introduction

Despite general acceptance that every research in its core is political and “*knowledge cannot be separated from the knower*” (Steedman, 1991), quantitative research and its objective stance of the inquirer gives an (erroneous?) impression that it is possible to produce neutral and value-free information about a phenomenon (Kincheloe and Tobin, 2009). What I have experienced working with the data, however, was far from a straightforward questions-and-answers session. Although quantitative studies are rooted in positivist philosophy (assuming that there is an objective reality that can be studied) and methodology (the objective reality is represented by variables that are used to draw probabilistic conclusions), it is rarely truly positivist in practice with its rigorous deductive strategy. As Greiffenhagen, Mair and Sharrock (2011: 103) put it, “*models do not build themselves any more than they interpret themselves [...] choices are still to be made, and these are frequently based on intuitions, hunches and ideas of what is needed that have not yet been fully rationalized*”. Having gone through numerous trials and errors, I have found it necessary to bring in reflexivity to make sense of what I have learned so far and how I have learned it.

Reflexivity has become a trademark of quality in qualitative research. It shifted the center of gravity from mere interpretation of empirical material to the *interpretation of interpretation*, turning attention to the persona of the researcher and all the perceptual, cognitive, theoretical, linguistic, political and cultural circumstances that impregnate the interpretations (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). Much fewer advocates of reflexivity can be found in the quantitative camp. The main debate takes place in sociology and focuses on marrying statistics and interpretivism (Babones, 2016; Gorard, 2006; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Ryan and Golden, 2006) while the debates about the mathematical inadequacies of the way statistics is applied in social research span across the disciplines (Carver, 1978; Gigerenzer and Marewski, 2015; Gorard, 2006; Wright, 2003).

A pragmatist mixed method has been discussed as a solution that bridges the opposites and plays on the strengths of the different methods (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Although it offers quantitative and qualitative researchers an opportunity to bury the hatchet, it does not help to solve some epistemological issues those methods are often criticized for. With no ambition to find the panacea for those issues, the purpose of this chapter is to share my insights of what it means to work with quantitative data as a PhD researcher, highlighting the pitfalls of this road and humbly contribute to the debate on relevance of reflexivity in quantitative research tradition. By writing this text, I am also seeking answers to why it has been so extremely difficult to produce scientific knowledge both rigorous and relevant. Therefore it is necessary to question both what stands behind procedural ritualism of the method and what is considered as knowledge within quantitative

paradigm. These are epistemological reflections on what shaped my research journey as it unfolded. To look upon my research process I will employ Bourdieu's two main *objects* in reflexive social research: the need to test one's own position and perspective as a researcher and the need to question the very foundations of the method (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002).

2. My personal bias and bias of the field

Being a quantitative researcher at heart, I have not been a blank slate but I have brought with me a passion for precision and reliable knowledge (in a way that apple will always fall to the ground) into my PhD project. Although all method books teach to choose a method that fit your research question, as it often happens in research reality, the choice of method preceded the questions. I have joined an interdisciplinary research group that worked with longitudinal quantitative data collected for 5 different age cohorts (from 13 to 26 at the first year of data collection) with samples that varied between 600 and 1000 respondents during 6 years (from 2010 to 2015) in Örebro, Sweden. My own project is about adolescents in Sweden, their environmental engagement and the role of communication (mediated and interpersonal) in their willingness to act in an environmentally conscious way.

Longitudinal survey data and a question about the media's influence have right away put me in an uncomfortable box of media effects – a tradition that has been heavily criticized and sentenced to scientific oblivion, but is nonetheless alive (Bryant and Oliver, 2009). In its earlier years this research tradition focused on political information and included studies on propaganda (Lasswell, 1927) and media's influence on voting behavior (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1944) but later included other aspect of people's worldviews. Therefore, an assumption that media influence environmental behavior/values is taken for granted as it was created by comparison (with voting behavior). Pierre Bourdieu (1991), however, makes a clear distinction between simple *resemblance* and *analogy* in contrasting a scientific object by the comparative approach: the former grasp only the external similarities, the latter apprehend the hidden principles of reality. "Media effects on environmental behavior" as a scientific object draws more on simple resemblance than analogy, as the mechanisms of this influence are very different: there are no mass-scaled political campaigns targeting people's environmental beliefs, as the most obvious example. In this case, the use of traditional media effects theories may obscure the scientific object of my research. And when "retranslating" the data that was not collected in relation to my problematic, I run a risk of comparing incomparable and failing to identify the comparable. Therefore, reflexive awareness of what kind of knowledge – and consequently, what kind of reality (Law, 2004) – I produce is needed every step of the way.

The dominating preferences of the field cannot help but influence one's research too. As young people have been often labeled "constant contact generation" (Clark, 2005) or "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001) among other names, there is invisible pressure to study the potential online media effects if one as a PhD student wants to strategically position him/herself in the field. As it seemed to me that to focus on traditional media would mean to marginalize myself in the field, I was compelled to keep online media experiences present in my models.

3. The ghost of induction

To explore the role of the mediated and interpersonal communications in adolescents' environmental engagement I used the data from two different cohorts (13 and 16 years olds at the time of first data collection stage) collected over a span of five years. It is important to mention that I had no part in designing the questionnaire or meeting young people to distribute them. Neither did I have any prior personal experience with Swedish teenagers and their reality. In theory it should not matter, as the knower and the known are considered independent within the positivist paradigm to ensure the objectivity of knowledge. In reality, I had to rely on my understanding of young people that was informed by predominantly American previous studies, and I found no evidence for my expectations in the data. I decided to "get to know" my data and I adopted a more explorative, and therefore inductive, approach. The descriptive statistic was telling unexpected stories that inspired further inquiries. Eventually I hit dead-ends on many of the chosen paths exploring the relationship between skepticism, environmental attitudes and media consumption. Two things were the most problematic. One, the test results did not hold up for both cohorts or for different point in times. And two, I had no good theoretical model to go with it and explain the discrepancies. These two aspects are, in fact, two sides of the same coin – deduction.

The deductive analytical strategy, which underpins quantitative research, requires a rather high degree of prior theorizing. There can be no observations that do not involve hypotheses logically deduced from an existing theory or previous studies. Thus, the whole inductive endeavor of mine was doomed from the start, as regardless of how the actual research process goes at the final stage of presenting my research, I will have to write up my results in a deductive manner. Such a "repackaging" of inductive findings requires cutting the loose ends that do not fit perfectly. Besides a significant loss of knowledge, this practice is considered unscientific. Called "*fishing expeditions*" (Gigerenzer and Marewski, 2015) or HARK-Ing ("Hypothesizing After the Results are Known" – see Kerr, 1998), it is criticized for testing hypotheses with the same data from which they derived, rendering it to

be not a proper science. It is hard to disagree with such evaluation, yet it leaves researchers with a very limited tool kit. Deductive logic does deliver robust results in certain cases, however it does not discover more than what is already known in its premises. And as my premises were mainly supported by Anglo-American research, they fell apart when applied to a Swedish context. Consequently, my only contribution would be to say that things don't work in the same way in Sweden. This knowledge may be robust but hardly relevant to anyone.

Most philosophers of science distinguish between a context of discovery and a context of justification: the former tells how a particular piece of knowledge came to exist, the latter explains its content and the reason for accepting it (Feyerabend, 1987: 110). The quantitative scholarly community only regards validation as a genuinely scientific practice completely ignoring the epistemological hierarchy of scientific acts "which subordinates validation to construction and construction to the break from self-evident appearances" (Bourdieu et al., 1991: 11).

Such epistemological position has a strong implication on the definition of theory. The positivist understanding of theory limits its function to "representing a set of experimental laws as fully, as simply, and as exactly as possible" (Bourdieu et al., 1991: 29). Thus, the main criterion to decide if to pursue an idea was its potential to be formulated in a general unifying law that can be applied regardless of circumstances. Contrary to qualitative research, the power of generalizations rules in quantitative social research. In my case I was looking for patterns across ages and across time but I could not find them – my findings were inconsistent across cohorts or across several waves of data within the same cohort. It is totally plausible that there are no such patterns. In this case to make a contribution to the field with my findings I would need to theoretically argue why a 13 year old differs from a 16 year old in terms of media influence or environmental values. In other words, absence of common features should represent theoretically supported regularity too. To support theoretically such a claim, one needs to assume that each cohort is a homogenous group with a comparable level of maturity that can be juxtaposed with another homogenous group. And by all means, that makes no sense as the only reason why we talk about homogenous group of 13 year olds is because the school system puts them together by their biological age and not at all by their mental development. Thus, in the absence of regularities across time and ages, it is difficult to argue why this knowledge about specific group of Swedish adolescents at this point in time matters.

This conception of social science strongly relies on methodology of natural sciences: society life complies with certain underlying laws that need to be uncovered. In many cases, though, social research outdoes the demands that are attributed to natural science. Scrutinizing laws of physics (an ideal model for positivism), Nancy Cartwright (1983) argued that physical fundamental laws are hardly ever true (unlike phenomenological laws) as they are "*abstract formulae which describe*

no particular circumstances” (p. 11). Context becomes of outmost importance as regularities in nature can only be observed when the circumstances are similar or right. In a similar vein, Stephen Toulmin (1953) compared theories with descriptions of rules. For every rule, we define its domain – all cases for which the rule is valid – and its area of application – the cases for which the rules hold. Consequently, the right question about scientific theories should not be “is it true or false” but “when does it apply”. Consequently, to dig myself out of the problem of no law-like theoretically supported results, I turned to the literature and previous studies in search of a good model to pose the question “under what circumstances does it apply?”.

4. The tyranny of models

Environmental communication is an established sub-field with a dedicated journal and a group of researchers calling it home. However, theories that are routinely used to produce knowledge within the field are hardly unique or case specific. The studies mainly draw on the established communication models, and political communication models in particular (e.g. Östman, 2014; Zhao, 2009). Thus, if deductive strategy is the only legitimate option for a quantitative researcher, by default the environmental communication will be treated as a case study within communication. Consequently, what can be answered is if it is governed by the same or different logic (a question “by what logic?” cannot be answered deductively). And that is what I tried to find out.

I was interested in mechanisms underlying the media influence on adolescents. Political communication research suggested political information from news did not have a direct influence on people’s partisan or voting preferences. However, it often became a food for thought and discussion with others, which later translated into voting preferences or other types of political engagement. This model was dubbed “communication mediation model” (McLeod et al., 2001). It gained popularity and general acceptance and was later specified in “citizen communication mediation model” (Shah, Cho, Eveland, and Kwak, 2005) and extended to “campaign communication mediation model” (Shah et al., 2007) by the same group of researchers. It was also already tested and seemed to work for young people’s pro-environmental behavior. However, by drawing parallels with political communication research I found it a bit strange that it worked for young people with all kind of beliefs. Employing mediated moderation analysis, I tested if that was true for both climate change skeptics and “believers”. And as I suspected, it did not for skeptics. Their behavior did not change no matter how much news they consumed and discussed with parents. That knowledge totally escaped previous application of the theoretical model. Nor was that knowledge statistically important: when I compared statistical

parameters of how well the two models fit the data, my model did not show much improvement. And why would it show if skeptics are just a small group among vastly environmentally friendly Swedish youth? Thus, although statistically my model has not improved much, I find this difference scientifically meaningful.

“Models are stories and are not real life”, argues Elliott (1999), as the vocabulary used to discuss them – how well they fit the data – points out that they are not the same as the data. Nor are they the same as theories. The argument that models take a mediator’s role between theories and empirical data was formulated both for natural and social sciences (Morgan and Morrison, 1999) under “semantic conception of science”. It means that theories are compared with models, and models are compared with the data. There are also unavoidable two-way adjustments at both stages. As Cartwright (1983) puts it, *“approximation and adjustments are required whenever theory treats reality”* (p. 13). And I can add that a great deal of judgment is required whenever model treats the data.

Any statistical model is full of choices. When translating communication mediation thesis into the language of statistical modeling I was presented with different variable options. The model claims that information from news, when discussed with people, turns into action. Working with teenagers, I had to decide how to define people – parents, peers, teachers, or altogether? Putting too many aspects of adolescents’ social life in one melting pot is rarely a good idea, so I went with my theoretically informed judgment, choosing talks about environmental issues with parents (e.g. Mead et al., 2012). The same can be said about operationalization of news media use (newspaper, TV, radio or altogether? Should I add online news consumption here or treat it as a separate phenomenon?) and the outcome variable of pro-environmental behavior. Thus, a statistical model becomes a mere approximation of theoretical model, as operationalization choices need to be made in every particular case of application. In the next step, when data is forced into predefined theoretical frameworks expressed through always-approximate statistical models, a lot of it does not fit, but sometimes it is still enough for probability p-values – an index of the weight of evidence against a null hypothesis of mere chance – to be acceptable. People may be different, but communication mediation model seemed to work for prevailing majority, thus swallowing the skeptics (and maybe more smaller groups).

Last but not least, the model did not work for both cohorts and for every year. And just when this knowledge was about to be rendered unscientific, I realized that the external context was the key. The mediated moderation model, that I proposed, only worked for an election year, thus proving that no general pattern could or should be found here. And at this point I changed the course once again and turned from variable-based statistics that looks for patterns between different characteristics to a person-based approach that focuses on patterns among people.

5. P-values as decision makers

During my inductive stage of research, I noticed that scientific skepticism was not the only marker for lack of behavioral commitments. Some young people expressed no doubt about the severity of climatic changes but they did not consider this fact as important for them. Or, even more puzzling case, they think it is important to protect environment but they do not believe in man-made climate change. The studies on climate change skeptics mainly focus on factors that contribute to it to understand how we can design communication in a way so that it helps change their minds (e.g. Ojala, 2015). Some even suggested to consider environmental communication a crisis discipline, thus legitimizing this moral stance and predefining which research questions should take priority (e.g. Cox, 2007). The critique of a moral stance may sound positivistic, but its implications on the breadth of research inquiries are of greater concern. When skeptics are seen as an obstacle to mitigating policies, no one asks what good reasons they have to take this position and what it says about the society as a whole.

Thus, drawing on post-political perspective (Swyngedouw, 2013) and employing cluster analysis, I have identified four different types of people that fall on the spectrum from believers to ultimate skeptics. The types came forward for both cohorts on 4 waves of data. They represented a rock of stability – a dream result when working with statistics. While discussing my types with colleagues, I often heard a tentative objection that they could not identify themselves with any of those types. Of course, it made me think and think again if I should reconsider the “ingredients” in my typology. Acknowledging that often what is individual and idiosyncratic is sacrificed for the sake of finding commonalities, I find this critique informed by positivist logic. The underlying assumption in it is that any quantitative research should be widely generalizable even when there are no statistical or common sense reasons to do so. The types of skeptics found among 13-18 year old Swedish teenagers cannot necessarily (and should not) be applicable to youth outside Sweden, not to mention adults. To make a concept applicable or common is to make it more general and therefore empty. The contrast is similar to the differences between moral principles laid out by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: “Among statements about conduct those which are general apply more widely, but those which are particular are more genuine” (Aristotle, 1954:29). Thus, I pursued my inquiry into the role of communication and its potential influence on the behavior for the four types.

To understand the role that communication played in forming skeptical attitudes, I first needed to understand if those attitudes were stable over time. Using Exacon analysis (Bergman and Magnusson, 1997), I found out that the attitudes were quite stable from the age of 13 to 18 years old: skeptics remained skeptics and “believers” kept doing their thing. No, it did not mean that not a single per-

son changed his/her mind but those people simply did not represent a statistically significant trend. Such result seemingly closed any further inquiry into the role of communication in skeptical attitudes. Besides, it tentatively allowed a wider conclusion that if the parents, educators or politicians want to influence young people's beliefs they should direct their effort at much younger cohort. The data showed that at the age of 13 their general attitudes are formed and will remain so. However, this conclusion left behind a handful of those individuals who radically changed their views in the midst of adolescent years. Are the influences behind their decision not worth knowing because they do not form a statistically significant trend? What if their cases represent exactly the right circumstances that explain why it happens so rarely? It is a valid question and plausible assumption but something that statistical analysis tend not to bother with.

The criterion for not pursuing any inquiry into "volatile" cases was p -values that lied way above the accepted threshold. The person who proposed to accept results at 5% probability of explanation by chance, Ronald Fisher, also warned that *"no scientific worker has a fixed level of significance at which from year to year, and in all circumstances, he rejects hypotheses; he rather gives his mind to each particular case in the light of his evidence and his ideas"* (Fisher, 1956: 42). Yet, exactly the opposite has become a standard and the only game in town among quantitative researchers and publishers (Gigerenzer and Marewski, 2015). In pursuit of objectivity, social scientists have created a universal method of inference, which, according to Gigerenzer and Marewski (2015), became used for mechanizing scientists' inferences rather than for modeling how nature works. Probability theory with infamous p -values have delivered a simple promise to replace the subjectivity of experimenters' judgments with an automatic method (Gigerenzer and Marewski, 2015). And if bigger research disciplines such as psychology or sociology, that have been heavily influenced by quantitative methodology, have opened up for alternative voices arguing for measuring effects sizes, providing confidence intervals or adopting Bayesian statistics (Carver, 1978; Gigerenzer and Marewski, 2015; Wright, 2003), to my knowledge, the field of media and communication takes what is the most convenient (and thus automatic) and do not even enter a methodological conversation. Neither are doctoral students taught to think differently or question the practice in which statistical software makes a decision about importance of the differences presented by data.

Gigerenzer and Marewski (2015) brought out the argument that general acceptance of p -values fundamentally changed theorizing both in natural and social sciences, making the inference from a sample to population the most crucial part of research. I see their point but I will also argue that it has not done it alone. The human tendency of privileging theoretical ways of knowing all over the other ones (Arendt, 1958) manifested in deductive thinking and persistent positivist practices

contributed to a smooth adoption of such understanding of objectivity. Using an automatic method without reflection on what it can and cannot say does not bring us closer to understand the social world. In the words of Hannah Arendt (1958: 266), “*mathematics succeeded in reducing and translating all that man is not into patterns which are identical with human mental structures*” and helped to handle the multitude of the concrete by create order out of mere disorder.

6. Where to from here?

I must admit that even after writing this text I am still a quantitative researcher at heart. However, these reflections have brought to light some moments where I myself used statistics as an automatic method or I have not taken into account what the chosen theories did to the scientific objects or objects they made. Numerous observations that have not become part of this text will change and inform my future use of the method.

As it happens when learning or teaching statistical techniques, one can forget for a moment that the method does not free the researcher from a constant epistemological vigilance and should not be used as a “*scientific alibi for blind submission to technical instruments*” (Bourdieu et al., 1991: 10). There is nothing irreparably wrong with the method, but its applications and accepted standards can be often questioned. And here I stand with those who call for interpretative or judgment-based quantitative research (Babones, 2016; Gorard, 2006) that brings the researcher back in the decision-making process. I also argue that one method cannot do it all and does not have to. As use of different measuring tool will always tell us something different about the reality (Barad, 2007; Law, 2004), it is more important to define what a method can do for you.

Being objective and aspiring for objectivity in research might just be mutually exclusive things. If being objective means being distanced and disengaged from the material relying on significance number to establish worthiness of the findings, then it leads to a very superficial understanding of the reality. Lacking personal experience with Swedish adolescents, I was haunted by a feeling of being an alien trying to make sense of the life of Earthlings and always missing something important. Parker (1999: 85) suggested what at first glance seems counterintuitive: “*to put subjectivity as the heart of research may actually, paradoxically, bring us closer to objectivity than most traditional research which prizes itself on being objective*” as it moves us towards a more complete and inclusive account of the reality. Therefore, quantitative research cannot do without reflexivity, as it is not immune to errors in judgment. The concrete reality “*always remains equally individual, equally undeducible from laws*” (Weber, 1949 in Bourdieu et al., 1991: 11).

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Biography

Yuliya Lakew is a PhD Candidate in Media and Communication Studies at Örebro University, Sweden. In her dissertation she explores the role of the media in the development of environmental concern and pro-environmental behavior among Swedish adolescents. The research aims to analyze the interplay of different communication flows - from parents, peers, school, and media - and the conditions under which communication facilitates youth's engagement with environmental issues. She does mostly quantitative research and teaches quantitative methods to undergraduate students.

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Time in Neoliberal Academia – How to Make the Most of It

Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt

Abstract

This article looks at changes in academic culture and related challenges to time management both to junior and senior academics. Through personal examples and references to popular research, six time management strategies are discussed: working shorter hours; focusing on tasks; sleeping; planning; multitasking; forgiving yourselves if something is not as it should be. These examples come from personal experience of being a young aspiring academic with small kids and challenging expectations from academia, but they hopefully challenge open discussions about time and related expectations in different contexts.

Keywords Academic Pressures, Time Management, Neoliberalism in Academia, PhD Studies

1. Why this story needs to be told

I am starting this article on a Sunday morning, when I should be cheering on my 7-year-olds during their football training. Or at least a social norm exists that says moms are better if they watch football training rather than work extra hours. At the same time, the story of an academic parent, or any kind of academic worker for that matter, spending her/his weekends working is very common and could be considered a norm on its own.

With this article, I would like to contribute to the on-going discussion about academic speed and time management. The most recent examples in this discussion include *Slow professor: challenging the culture of speed in the academy* (Berg and Seeber, 2016), and *Accelerating academia: the changing structure of academic time* (Vostal, 2016). The speed of academia can be an idea or an issue of strategy and choice, at least to a certain extent, and hence the aim of this article is to provide examples from the strategic choices I have managed to make. I am very much in favour of the ethos in the *Slow professor* book because I like the fact that the authors open the topic up for discussion. The book is about issues and challenges that academics face in today's stressful work environment. Through chapters on time management, pedagogy, research, collegiality and collaboration, Maggie Berg and Barbara Seeber discuss their challenges and solutions as professors in humanities in today's academia drawing inspiration from Slow Food movement (2016). While there are studies investigating academic job satisfaction and issues of stress (for example, Shin and Jung, 2014; Sabherwal et al., 2015) open discussions on many of these issues are brushed aside or only slowly infiltrate our departmental cultures. At the same time, we can shape academic culture, and while I do not remember the good old academic times of 1980s, where professors supposedly had time to focus and were not pressured so much by accountability to outside forces, I firmly believe that open discussions of mutual expectations are needed to shape academic culture in a favourable direction.

This text has grown out of the workshop Research Kitchens, which I conducted at the European Media and Communication Summer School in Milan 2016. The aim of the workshop was to address the questions and issues that are considered an implicit norm in academia, but that are rarely discussed. Academics, as everyone else, are governed by normative understanding as to how we should do our jobs, and I want to argue that very often these norms are wrong and should be avoided if we are to have healthy and productive (even in the neoliberal understanding of the word) work lives.

In this text, I want to focus on the issues of time management, as a lot of myth, issues and problems can be associated with this. The topics of time management and issue prioritization are the ones most typically problematized and these are the

ones that make us feel most inadequate. The text is also inspired by countless discussions with fellow young academics struggling under pressures to work more and to produce more, and dealing with that constant more-ness creating a sense of inadequacy. This is also, to a certain extent, a self-help text, a self-justification that I am not inadequate and, by spreading what according to literature could be considered healthy working culture, I justify my choices of working and managing my time.

2. The pressures of neoliberal academia

More and more of us work under the auspice that we, as spenders of public money, need to be accountable for what we do, for every working hour at least. With these ideals of transparency and output oriented-ness of our work comes extra pressure on accountability, making our work results visible and countable. Zaloznik and Gaspard (2011) in another Summer School book discuss the tensions that neoliberalism brings to the understanding of the public role of the universities. They connect the trend of marketization to the following processes in the academia:

[A] strong focus on research evaluation and accountability, an upsurge in university-industry cooperation, the heavy use of ICTs, the internationalisation agenda, the extreme massification of student enrolments, the imperative of publishing in top level scientific journals, the professionalization of the researcher, the fixation on “quality” or “excellence”, the implementation of management techniques, etc. (Zaloznik and Gaspard, 2011: 205)

These kinds of new roles and pressures have put academics in a situation where you first have to do all that was done before, but now, in addition to that, there are new roles and expectations, which need to be serviced as well. Altbach (2015) points out that academic freedom allows us to choose what and how we teach, but it does not necessarily dictate how universities are managed. The increasing external interference with governing what it means to be academic is interfering with people’s ability to make choices in the basic categories of academic freedom. These external pressures of quality and measurability of the academic work have brought in the notion of “publish or perish” (Harzing, 2007), but also the increasing pressures to communicate to external stakeholders. However, very often the student and the scholar will have to choose a direction, since satisfying both the academic and the non-academic audience is not possible. At the same time, not serving both is not good for your CV or for your career. Neoliberal common sense (as discussed by Torres, 2011) has brought conflicting agendas. On the one hand academia needs to “service the customer”, the student as well as the public. On the other hand academia also needs to perform the task of produc-

ing new knowledge, which might mean not giving the easy answers, but difficult questions (Torres, 2011: 193).

Smeyers and Burbules (2011) are criticizing the quantification of the academic performance. They point to the ways these kinds of metrics influence the academics to behave in strategic ways, and the ways in which the system can be fiddled in order to achieve “better” results. They remind the reader that the increase of an impact factor can be achievable when set out as the only aim, but that can mean making too many compromises to quality and academic integrity. So, in the spirit of the recommendations from Smeyers and Burbules (2011: 14-15), let’s allow us to be critical and strategic about the academic performance measures and consider the activities we like and feel to be relevant as more worthy of pursuit.

In the following sections, I would like to discuss six ideas, or principles, which have helped me to reclaim my life and my work in a meaningful way. I will discuss personal ideas and practices that have worked for me, but may not necessarily work for others. They have helped me to be a mother of three, a partner and a young professor and to cope with burnout and stress. Some of these remarks will go against academic cultures and norms, but then, maybe, these norms actually need to be questioned.

3. Six to eight hours are productive hours

The academic liberty of working when it suits us, or the principle of flexible working hours, does not mean – and by no means should mean – that we can work all the time. This liberty does not justify working late in the evening, or over the weekends or putting in extra hours when you do not manage to get work done outside “normal” working hours. This liberty does not justify pressuring others to work outside the “normal” hours and bragging about the loss of summer holidays in favour of writing.

There are two issues that need to be considered here. One is about the time spent working. Wergeland et al. (2003) show that a 6-hour working day is better for avoiding some diseases. Some anecdotal evidence from experiments done in Sweden (Crouch, 2015) indicates that people work better if they limit their work to six hours. The eight-hour working day, originally introduced in factories (Wikipedia), was established because it indicated better productivity and ability to get work done. Heffernan (2016) summarises the dangers of working overtime too long: they include anything from loss of productivity via depression to suicide. No career is worth that. If people whose work is measured according to the attention to detail at manual labour work better with less hours, who are we, academics, to think that these rules do not apply to us? So, whenever possible,

opt to work no more than eight hours per day as the quality of your work during the ninth and tenth hours is usually not worth the effort and you might simply need to redo it later.

The second issue is related to choosing when to work. Academia gives you the liberty of working whenever, from nine to five, or ten to six, or eight to four. You could opt to work from four in the afternoon until midnight, but considering how much the structures of the society govern our actions this is not a very realistic work-goal. At least some of our working time needs to overlap with time of our peers and external actors, like spouses, partners and kids, and family puts additional pressure to conform to socially acceptable working times. In order to keep the time spent working in check, try not to work after hours. This, of course, does not apply when you have writing binge or you have no family to consider, but once kids come along, working outside the socially acceptable working time becomes difficult and unnecessarily draining.

4. Focusing and concentrating your working activities

It is extremely hard to minimize interruptions in the contemporary digital world, but we do know it can be done. We have silent modes on our mobiles, we don't stop to read e-mail in the middle of lecturing. Why should we not dedicate the same focus to the tasks of reading, writing, marking etc.? Another new trend in discussing productivity and getting things done is to reduce the interruptions for designated periods. Slotting away time in our calendars for focused activities is worth the effort, and most of the time allows us to get things done quicker. There are plenty of tips and tricks, recommendations to try to reduce your interruptions to minimum on a whole day, for 90 min cycles, for one hour slots – do whatever tickles your fancy. But from experience – this is well worth the effort.

5. Sleep is worth the effort

Fryer (2006) summarises the importance and the relevance of sleep and outlines some devastating consequences of the lack of sleep. My oldest kid was born during the third year of my four-year PhD. That allowed me to take a parental leave from the office work as well as from daily teaching and meetings, but I did not want to take time off for my PhD-thesis. My oldest was a great sleeper, so I could wheel out the baby in the buggy and he would sleep 2-4 hours during daytime. These were my once-per-day moments of working with my PhD-thesis. I went to bed early: I often joined my kid at 9 or 10 for going to sleep and we slept until 8 or 9

in the morning. That meant eight to ten hours of sleep (not uninterrupted, but still), and after a while I felt that I could focus better and get more things done during those 2-4 hours of focused writing. So, when years later I heard a podcast about the sleep-deprivation of our society, it made perfect sense to me and it validated my choice of sleeping over trying to work extra time when kids are asleep.

6. Having dates with yourself and your assignments

Our calendars tend to get filled with meetings, conferences, classes etc., but when we neglect to mark in calendars the class-prep times, the marking times, the hour or two we need to send in the reports or to write funding applications, these jobs slip between our fingers. This means we do it at twelfth hour, trying desperately not to miss the deadlines and ending up working during evenings or weekends. A professor, a while ago, confessed that every year, when he gets a new calendar, he marks two weeks with a conference in a faraway place and avoids putting anything on those two weeks. Then he goes to an off-season resort and gets his academic publishing done during those two weeks. This extreme way of working may not suit all, but remembering to put in the calendar not only the deadlines, but also actual time to work on the assignments is a trick that I have had to learn.

7. Multi-tasking does not work

Have you tried answering a work-email while doing something else? A quick two-liner should not be that much of an effort, should it? The inability to focus on one thing leaves us not only tired and frustrated, but also less capable of doing our tasks. Multitasking is discussed in work context and, as the research shows, the cost of switching the tasks is taxing on our brain (APA, 2006). At the same time, multi-tasking on the account of family is often considered more acceptable. For example, Semenza (2010) promotes saving work for weekends that can be done together with socialising and other family obligations. This might work one-off, or for brief bouts of unexpected workload, but it is not a sustainable tactic over longer periods of time. We end up being angry at ourselves, at our family and at our own efforts. My own experience is that the extra stress of trying to get work done while being with the kids leads to frustrate your families and yourself. Kids are snapped at; I hate my work and myself. Another colleague shared a frustrating bedtime experience – while cuddling and bedtime stories should be lovely time, you keep an eye on the clock to nervously count the minutes you are losing of your after-hours work time. This leaves you frustrated and tired and angry at the world. Instead, make a deal

with yourself: you will not attempt to work before the morning comes and hopefully you can enjoy your family time more and you can enjoy your work time more.

8. Some choices must be made

As a young and frustrated professor, I found myself in a situation where more and more tasks were being piled on me with, indeed, more salary, but without consideration of my working hours or realistic expectations. I had the good girl syndrome (Fezler and Field, 1987), which came with very high expectations on myself: I kept on working and trying to fulfil the mounting obligations and expectations. And, of course, I failed at that. I entered into the vicious circle of trying to do more, and being less and less effective at doing this, and needing to put in more and more hours, without any idea as to how should I break this cycle. A study of perfectionism among psychology professors (Sherry et al., 2010) shows that self-oriented perfectionism (expecting yourself to be perfect) was negatively related to total number of publications, first authored publications and number of citations. This supports the idea that if something must be given up, then “done is better than perfect”. We strive for the quality of our work, and often taking the extra week or two to polish our articles is worth it, but staying up another hour to find that perfect image to illustrate our lecture is not.

The hard thing is deciding what matters most. It would be simple to go with productivity gurus’ advice and prioritize what gives most relevant results. But often that is not so easy. Especially in the neoliberal academia, where there are conflicting demands on our time. And unfortunately, there is no good advice to give, except, sometimes, we must just decide not to attempt doing everything.

9. In a way of conclusion

I have written this text as a self-help “do and don’t” guidance. I realise that my advice does not necessarily work with everyone and that the circumstances are different. But what I would encourage you to look at is some of the popular or the research articles that promote healthy work-life balance. And in addition to looking things up for yourself, discuss those with your colleagues. Discuss it, because working over the weekends, having unrealistic short deadlines for quality work and not sleeping is not only bad for you as an individual, but also bad for the academia. If in academia our work is our life, I think that for surviving it, we need to actively work towards containing it. Otherwise, we become frustrated victims of a neoliberal “monster” for whom more of everything is always needed.

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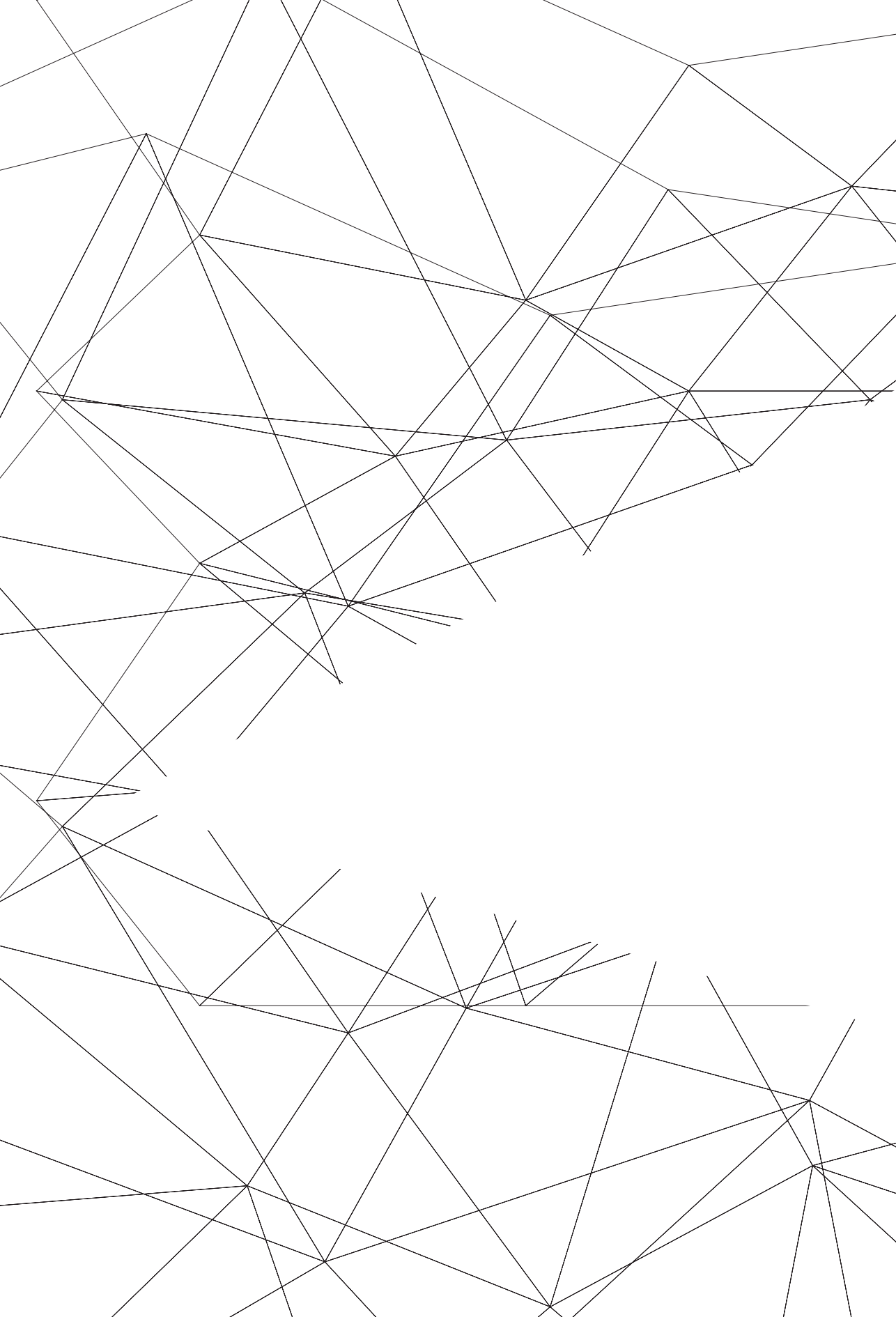
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Biography

Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt is a professor of media and communication in Malmö University since 2016. Previously she has been professor of media studies in University of Tartu. Her research interests include audiences, internet users, relationship between institutions and individuals as well as cultural participation. She has published internationally and edited several collections, for example: Runnel, P., Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P. (2014) *Democratising the museum: reflections on participatory technologies*. Peter Lang. She is also mother of three children and has organised ECREA Media and Communication Summer School between 2005-2009.

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PART II

Abstracts

The Transformation of the Spanish Television Industry: Technologic Transition, Digital Regulation and New Audiovisual Markets (2010-2016)

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The implementation of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) has allowed consumers to freely access to a higher number of TV channels. Besides, technological development and the digitalisation of the transmissions have brought about new means for accessing audiovisual content, and the arrival of new players in the television industry.

This PhD project focuses on the transformation that the Spanish television industry has undergone, from the analogic switch-off in April 2010, to the spectrum frequencies reallocation, due to the Digital Divide, in 2016.

The main aim is to analyse the television industry transformation in the context of digitalisation, postulating technological change as a crucial dynamic shaping TV market current and future state, and assuming that State and European policies have also determined its evolution.

The theoretical framework grounding this research project is based on three approaches: Political Economy of Communication, Media Economics, and Communication Policy. It is important to highlight that the combination of those three different approaches, which are often brought up separately, makes the project unique regarding its theoretical guidelines.

The research methodology we are carrying out includes a two phase's path. On the one hand, a deep documental review through which we are defining the main features of every stage of the abovementioned transformation. On the other hand, once the trends are defined and analysed, we will perform various semi-structured interviews through which expert respondents will narrow the results.

Vernacular Immigration Debate: How Citizens in the Scandinavian Countries Discussed the 2015 Refugee Crisis Online

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There is a general impression that the Scandinavian countries – despite all their similarities and close ties – have had strikingly different public discourses on the issue of immigration. Studies of how rhetorically engaged actors discuss the refugee crisis may provide illuminating insights on the public opinion about the issue. Especially the vernacular exchanges are relevant sources for understanding public meaning (Hauser, 1999).

This project studies how ordinary Scandinavian citizens discussed the 2015 refugee crisis. It examines the comments section debates on two much debated photos: the photo of Alan Kurdi and the photo showing a Danish man spitting on refugees. Through rhetorical analysis of the online debates in the three countries, I examine how these photos were discussed and identify what norms that are active in these debates.

In order to understand what really happens in the encounter between text and audience, it is however not sufficient to study only the texts. It is necessary to give attention also to empirical studies of the audience. Only by doing so, it becomes possible to discover how the texts were interpreted. This project therefore combines text analysis with interviews with the debates' participating audience. The interviews will provide information about the participants' own understanding of the photos, what norms they act upon and what potential they consider these online debates to have.

Thus, this study aims to study and compare the vernacular exchanges in the Scandinavian debates on the refugee crisis in order to gain insights in the public opinion on the issue.

The Quest for Identity: The Online Presence of Autism in Brazilian Social Media

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Autism is a neurological condition that can be understood through the medical and the social perspectives. The first puts autism as a pathology; while the second presents the neurodiversity movement, which embraces neurological difference and understanding autism as formed by challenges as well as strengths. One of the places in which representations of these perspectives can be found is on social media. The use of digital platforms is seen as empowering for autistic people and also their supporters, since it provides not only forms of exchanging information without the influence of medical systems, but also reduces the communication challenges faced by autistic people.

Based on these ideas and theories related to cyberculture, identity, and the social construction of disability; I conduct a digital ethnography in three Facebook groups to explore how Brazilian autistic people and their supporters, mostly parents, are using social media to discuss autism, and how it affects their lives, including aspects such as representation, forms, practices, politics and, identities.

By the end, I expect to comprehend how autistics and their supporters are creating an online culture of autism in Brazil and what are the consequences of the social media usage for those people, observing whether social media can be seen as a form of prosthesis for Brazilian autistic people. The outcomes may contribute to scholarships about social media usage by autistics and also perspectives of disability in the Global South.

The Dark Side of Media. Persistent Negative Experiences with Mass Media and Possible Explanations from Research on Identity.

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Why would you continue to use a medium if its use is accompanied by negative consequences? In my dissertation project I am looking into this question, combining theories from communication studies and psychology. The Uses-and-Gratifications-Approach cannot explain repeated use despite negative consequences, so-called ‘persistent negative media experiences’, but I argue that our unique and multifaceted identities might. I emphasize identity as being coherent but flexible, as something that is continuously formed during a lifetime and also through contact with other people. That is why our identity is not consistent and correspondingly individual interests and needs are not always fixed. Instead, and apart from individual differences, our interests and needs are formed through social contexts and different social roles in these surroundings – thus, whether behavior is perceived as positive or negative also depends on differing social contexts. Our multifaceted self might be a reason for initial gratifications of using media yet ultimately negative consequences experienced. 26 explorative interviews were conducted and people asked about their negative experiences with media, the social context of the experiences and their motivations for this persistent use. A model will be built and empirically tested in the second step of this project. Once we know more about the underlying reasons for these rather unhealthy media-related behaviors, it might be possible to discover a way for society to engage with media in a way that leads to more wholesome interactions among its members – and even, perhaps, help it make a conscious choice to *disconnect* from time to time.

Gaming Politics: Gender and Sexuality on Earth and Beyond

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In this thesis, the characters, plots and images of the Bioware videogame trilogy *Mass Effect* will help enlighten core questions regarding the relationship between videogames and everyday political conversation. Focusing on the gender and sexuality issues, without leaving aside an intersectional perspective that takes into account matters of ethnicity, age and class, among others, the hypothesis of this research is that videogames are tokens for everyday political conversation within society. This hypothesis builds on William Gamson's work in "Talking Politics" (1992) where he argues that media, personal experience and popular wisdom are the three key sources of argument to political conversation.

This research inserts itself within the broader scope of game studies, focusing on the contributions by key authors from ludology and narratology thought, as well as the remarks of symbolic interactionism regarding play and game as interactional and communicative practices. In addition, the research dialogues with a field of studies scarcely used by game scholars in general, that of political science. I argue that videogames can influence discussions on the public sphere and shape public opinion regarding matters of identity politics.

The methodological approach relies on data collection via interviews, online material, extensive gameplay and reading of *Mass Effect* transmedia material, comprised of books, comics and user-generated content. The mixed methods analytical framework relies on the narrative method as outlined by Somers (1994) in order to assess videogame influence on political conversation, and the understanding of videogames as a configurative medium (Moulthrop 2004; Eskelinen & Tronstad 2003; Harvey 2015). This approach allows the research to account for several instances of subject's interaction with gaming and the overall network of relations that encompasses and influences the gameplay moment and videogames' culture.

Multimodal Representations of the Roma in Romanian Media

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The Roma are the largest and the poorest minority group in the European Union who have always been the victims of prejudice and social exclusion. Throughout the history, Romanian Roma have been perceived as distinct ‘others’ or in terms of a ‘problem’ that needs a solution. Their representation in the media has only received sporadic attention in the academic research. While some scholars addressed the textual representation of these minorities, there has been little research on the multimodal constructions. This particular project focuses on the multimodal representations of the Roma in Romanian media, following Romania’s accession to the European Union (EU). Drawing on Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), this study examines how various media, such as national newspapers, news clips, youtube videos, and TV political debates build the discourse surrounding the Roma minorities, especially in the post European Union accession context. I intend to examine the textual and visual representation of these groups in the selected discursive sites, along with the main discursive strategies employed by various social actors (journalists/editors, broadcasters, politicians etc.) to legitimize or delegitimize these constructions. Apart from describing the relevant discourse structures, this project will take a step further in explaining how these discourses reinforce, reshape or challenge the existing ideologies and power relations in the society. In addition, I am interested in comparing the findings in order to explore the similarities and differences in media representations of the Roma across various media platforms.

The Renewal of Portraits in Magazines: A Widely Used Practice in a Context of Standardization

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Over the past centuries, the portrait has become a strong practice in the society, from painting and literature to media, it has gained a certain kind of recognition. Instead of decreasing or disappearing, this practice of portraiture has continued and has been generalized, in so far as more and more people have been able to have their pictures taken, to take their own or to consult one's another, in terms of material, financial access and even time. The portrait has adapted itself to specific environments, to different configurations (social, technologic...) in a context of industrialization. A global and historical study of the portrait let us see that the "original" practice (in art and literature) has left its marks in the media portrait which both plays on the aesthetic and textual aspects of the portrait (Adeline Wrona, 2012).

The first goal of my thesis is to analyse the presence of the portrait in the magazines, how it is renewed and in the meantime how it is – in a certain way – a heritage of strongly anchored practices (in art and literature). In a second time, I expect to show some mechanisms hidden behind the portrait, what kind of typology can be built. Related to the context of industrialization (of the contents) the question of the standardization of the contents could be raised. And, in fact, there could not be only one standardization, but many standards of portrait, regarding to their different shapes, the different names used to refer to it, for example the fact that various magazine contents could be related to the portrait. An important quantitative analyse of portraits in magazines, coupled with a "semio-pragmatic" method (a qualitative approach based on the media portrait itself but also on its context), should allow to achieve this objectives.

This project can be connected to several researches. Among all, it is mainly related to the Political economy of communication (Vincent Mosco, 1996), the Cultural Industries, the media economy and also around the question of representation in its social dimension (Stuart Hall, 1997).

The Chinese Museum in a Digital Era: Cultural Policy and Communication Research

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“Museums have much to show for their four decades of computing” (Ross, 2010). In 1960s, museums began to be recognized and appreciated as repositories of humankind heritage (Divid, 2010). The ways we use real spaces---including the museums are changing because of communication technology” (Andrea, 2010). So how the digital museum communicates cultural heritage to the public has been a matter of concern. This PhD project analyzes government’s strategy on the digital museum, then explores how the digital museum spreads cultural heritage to the public. The theoretical basis takes its starting point in the interdisciplinary field of cultural industries (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1946; Hesmondhalgh, 2013) with an emphasis on the background of the research. The theories of cultural policy (Throsby, 2010; Bell & Oakley, 2015), digital cultural heritage (Cameron & Kenderdine, 2007) and communication (Fiske, 1983; Greenhill 1999) will be applied in each part to research and deal with the questions.

Qualitative research is the main methodology. Empirical data for the project will be gathered in the three selected museums: Palace Museum in Perking; Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum in Xian; Henan Museum in Zhengzhou. Content analysis will be applied to analyze the policy about the digital museum and the websites of the three museums. Twenty scholars and experts will be interviewed based on the topic.

According to the above, my research hopes to provide “new blood” to enrich the theoretical insights and empirical research on communicating cultural heritage towards the public in its widest definition, from theoretical and practical aspects.

Reputation Constitution of the Catholic Church in Austria

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Empirical research shows that long-term commitment of the members of an organization depends on the reputation that an organization has in the public sphere. This social regularity also applies to non-profit organizations like the Catholic Church in Austria, which is facing a decline in membership over the last decade. It's surprising that so far there are only few studies focussing on the logics of the reputation constitution of religious organizations. The following research question should fill this gap: To what extent are non-profit organizations like the Catholic Church in Austria exposed to reputational risks as a consequence of increasing moralization in the public sphere?

The theoretical approach is based on a three-dimensional reputation concept and the sociological Neo-Institutionalism highlights this macrosocial dependency of reputation. Relating to the Catholic Church in Austria, the following propositions can be assumed: a) Religious organizations are exposed to augmented reputational risks as a result of growing moralization in the media arena; b) Negative reputation development goes along with contradictions between self-image and public image; and c) Reputation dynamics correlate with the decline in ecclesiastical membership. This project provides new insights into the logics of the reputation constitution of non-profit organizations in general and religious organizations in particular. Furthermore it shows to what extent the Catholic Church is exposed to an increasing moralization in public communication and to what extent reputation dynamics correlate with membership numbers.

Female Blogging and the Fight Against Gender Inequality in Nigeria – A Netnographic Approach

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This research studies how Nigerian women assert their presence online by producing counter-discourses on gender inequality/discrimination in a democratic setting. It examines to what extent the discussions held on Nigerian female blogs provide an avenue for ‘active discourse’, where discussions held about gender-based inequalities and discrimination involve proposing solutions, or organising action to address such issues. However, while it upholds the relevance of ‘active discourse’ in online communication, it equally challenges the conception held by numerous scholars that the efficacy of internet communication hinges mainly on its ability to ‘practically’ affect offline politics. It projects the articulation, production, and negotiation of the online discourses produced by Nigerian women as bearing political implication, going against the expectations of the patriarchal system in the country. Hence, it argues that the visibility of African women online is as important as the messages they try to communicate having come from a society that restricts them socio-politically. Six Nigerian female blogs that post stories on the recent Rejection of the Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill by the Nigerian Senate in March 2016 are studied through the use of Netnographic mapping and discourse analysis. Netnography in this context also involves online video interviews conducted with blog authors and readers. By so doing, this study provides insights into blog readers, a population which is largely neglected by researchers focusing on the activities of blog authors.

Social Media and New Collectivism in Recreational Sports Cultures

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In this dissertation, I study new collectivism in sports from the viewpoint of communication. The main focus of the research is on the ways sports practitioners use social media in relation to one another.

The theoretical framework is built on theories on late modern communities (Maffesoli, 1995; Bauman, 2000), social networks (Wellman, 2002) and the network society (Castells, 2013). The research prolongs the theoretical discussion about liquid communities and personal networks. Furthermore, the research defines new collectivism in context of recreational sports, by applying the dialog between the historical context, theory and data. Finally, the research deepens the understanding of communication practices that strengthen or weaken new collectivism. The results of the research can be applied for diverse leisure time activities and cultures. The research is limited to individual recreational sports practice. Moreover, the research is focused on physical activities that can be labeled as lifestyle sports. Two sports disciplines, climbing and trail running, have been selected for the research. Methods include online questionnaires, interviews and observations. Data is analyzed using statistical and network analysis, and qualitative content analysis.

TV Fandom is Coming: Transnational Fans and Transmedia Experience of *Game of Thrones*

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Starting as a series of fantasy novels by George R. R. Martin in 1996 and adapted as a television show by HBO in 2011, the renown and popularity of *Game of Thrones* has gone increasing over the years. Fandom spreads across a variety of media and fans engage on a diversity of products and platforms. Besides merchandizing and online fandom, fans engage in other types of behaviors, such as participation to industry-organised events like Comic-Cons, fan-organised gatherings and set-jetting. Taking into account all the possibilities of expressing, appropriating and getting involved in fandom offered to fans today, the aim of this research is to define what the television series' fans' experience is, with a particular focus on the relationship between HBO-*Game of Thrones* fans and crossmedia content. A second, related aspect is the adaptation and appropriation of this global cultural product across languages and cultures. How and why do fans engage with official crossmedia content and appropriate it? What are they looking for when they create their own crossmedia content? How does *Game of Thrones*' marketing play out, and how does localisation impact on fans' enjoyment of the franchise?

At the core of this work is the will to show what a 21st century TV fan's experience is: what it is made of, how it is narrated and how it is lived.

Communication Power and Socio-economic Frameworks: An Analysis of Western Economics Reportage in the Post-Bretton Woods Era

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In the wake of the 2008 economic crisis, significant media attention focused on the dominant economic philosophy of liberalisation, and the key role it was perceived to have played in enabling the crisis. Such coverage represented a break from recent trends. While the 1970s had seen virulent contestation between various strains of economics (such as neoclassicism, post-Keynesianism and monetarism), by the early 2000s there was an emergent view within the discipline that ‘consensus’ had been achieved, both in the approach used to analyse fluctuations, and in methodological terms. Over time, this shift was reflected in mainstream economics reporting.

The project aims to construct a socio-historic analysis of this evolution in reportage. Specifically, it aims to interrogate the role played by the media in the overall policy shift towards a neoliberal political framework, substantially underpinned by neoclassical economic theory. Studying developments in the US and UK, it takes as its starting point the notion that the coverage of economics underwent a substantive change between the mid-1970s and the mid-1990s, from portrayals of a highly contested field, to depictions that presented it as a discipline largely in consensus. To this end, the project will incorporate a detailed qualitative analysis of major broadsheet newspapers and magazines, to assess potential factors (both internal and external to journalism) that contributed to the shift. Hallin’s spheres are envisaged as an analytical starting point. In the process, the project will also track the parallel evolution of the economics profession. It will examine whether the media’s framing of developments in economic research represented an accurate depiction of the state of the field’s consensus and knowledge, and consider the extent to which the media reflected and/or reinforced shifts in the consensus amongst economists.

Danish Media Policy in the Digital Age – Institutionalization and Regulation in a Changing Media System

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The Internet is rapidly transforming media systems around the world. This new communication infrastructure is not only transforming our every day lives and the business models of legacy media but is also forcing policy-makers to rethink the ways media are regulated and the fundamental principles behind this.

This is very much the case in Denmark – a small media system characterized by an active media policy with strong traditions for public service broadcasting, public subsidies for private media and a general welfare state perspective on communication services (Syvertsen et al. 2014).

My PhD-project analyses the processes connected to the transformation of the media system in Denmark focusing on how the Internet challenges existing frameworks and how these are transformed through political negotiations and lobbying. It also raises more theoretical questions about the definition and scope of media policy. In a converging media environment where the borders between private telecommunication and public mass communication are no longer as clear as they used to be, both researchers and policy-makers are forced to redefine the main concepts and frameworks.

The project therefore has three main goals: 1) To develop the theoretical perspective on media policy emphasising the need for a broader and more general definition applicable to past, current and future contexts, 2) to design an analytical framework making it possible to study media policy processes from a systemic perspective, 3) to conduct an analysis of the on-going processes of media policy-making and the transformation of the media system in Denmark.

My point of departure and main research interest is to study the interrelationship between institutional structures and technological development. Thus my project aims at developing the field of media policy research through an increased attention to the impact of technology and through exploring how stakeholders and political actors seek to influence the institutionalisation of new communication technologies.

Identity Management Through Social Networking Sites: The Case of Environmental Activists in China

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In response to the dramatic environmental degradation, the Chinese government has made efforts in developing policies, and setting an institutional apparatus. However, the Chinese leadership has turned out to be inadequate to address these challenges and has started opening limited political space for public participation in the environmental protection. This led to the development of Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOS) in the mid-1990s, responsible for promoting environmental education and awareness, monitoring local government efforts, and organizing local conservation projects. In the meantime, student environmental associations have rapidly proliferated in Chinese universities. However, ENGOS have to deal with legal and financial restraints, that limit the exploitation of strategies, resources and organizational schemes. The proliferation of communication technologies, especially social media, has benefited environmental activism in China, as these platforms give activists the opportunity to express in a relatively uninhibited space with low financial and social costs, exchange ideas and mobilize activities. Social media platforms play a significant role in identity formation processes, insofar as they appear to be loci where collective names, icons, and slogans are introduced, iconographies and lexicons are shaped, contributing to the emergence of collective actors. The purpose of the project is to explore the social media practices involved in the identity formation processes of ten Chinese student environmental associations, through an ethnographic research including in-depth interviews, participant observations of environmental activities and the content analysis of materials retrieved from the social media accounts of the organizations.

Augmented Reality in the Fields of Advertising, Marketing and Commerce in the Postmodern Era: Comparative Research and Classification of Projects, Developments and Key Players in Spain and United Kingdom

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In postmodern era, publicists and advertisers must find new ways to connect with the users, and augmented reality (Milgram & Kishino (1994), Azuma (1997), Billinghamurst (2002) and Bimber & Raskar (2005)), is a useful option for that purpose. Taking augmented reality and its implementation in advertising, marketing and commerce in the context of our post-modern era as an object of study, my PhD attempts to offer a plural approach to this new technological trend. For that purpose, we will take into account the characteristics of our social environment and we will use an analysis at a level of user, brand and content of projects with a development plan based on a mixed methodology approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Likewise, in order to bring a substantial added value to the study and compare its development and implementation in two different countries, the thesis will analyse the markets of Spain and United Kingdom, both with a strong activity at European level in the use and application of this technology.

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Getting Creative with BBC Arts: Public Service Broadcasting in the New Media Landscape

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Arts broadcasting has traditionally been an important part of fulfilling the founding principles of public service broadcasting to ‘inform, educate and entertain’. In 2014 Director-General Tony Hall unveiled his new vision for BBC arts, stating: ‘This is the strongest commitment to the arts we’ve made in a generation. We’re the biggest arts broadcaster anywhere in the world – but our ambition is to be even better’ (BBC Media Centre). Based on qualitative interviews with those directly involved in programme making, commissioning and strategy, the present study examines how the BBC’s proposed commitment to the arts is realised within an increasingly competitive and fragmented digital media landscape.

The study also builds on wider debates around accessibility and participation in the arts, with the highly publicised Warwick Report raising concerns that ‘publicly funded arts, culture and heritage, supported by tax and lottery revenues, are predominantly accessed by an unnecessarily narrow social, economic, ethnic and educated demographic that is not fully representative of the UK’s population’ (2015: 32). With television remaining ‘a key feature of most people’s everyday cultural life’ and the BBC’s services across all mediums reaching ‘96.5% of the British population’ (2015: 33), the role of broadcasting in regard to wider cultural strategies for increasing public engagement with the arts has both social and political value as the BBC undergoes review of its Royal Charter in 2016.

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Bridging Cultural Differences in Strategic Alliance Negotiations between Chinese and Belgian Potential Business Partners: An Intercultural Communication Perspective

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Differences in culture and socio-economic environment increase the complexity of strategic alliance negotiations between Chinese and Belgian potential business partners. When cultural distance is high, negotiators will encounter difficulties with assessing the intentions and goals of their counterpart. The negotiator's behaviour is not exclusively strategic anymore, but could also have cultural explanations, or both.

The main purpose of this research is to investigate how Chinese and Belgian potential business partners overcome cultural differences and reach mutual understanding in and through interpersonal communication in the strategic alliance negotiation process.

An intercultural and dynamic approach is adapted in which a multi-levelled construct of culture is viewed as something that is negotiated and co-created in and through interpersonal communication (e.g. Brannen & Salk, 2000; Gelfand & Brett, 2004; Soderberg & Holden, 2002). Most research on culture and negotiation is predominantly comparative in nature and focuses on exploring the impact of culture on negotiation strategies and outcomes. However, much less research has been done on how negotiators deal with cultural ambiguity and adapt to specific negotiation contexts (e.g. Adair & Brett, 2002). This is exactly where this project aims to contribute. An interpretative ethnographic approach, combining direct observations and interviews both in China and Belgium, is adopted to uncover how people adapt to an environment that is enhanced by cultural ambiguity and seek to build, through dialogue, a mutually beneficial interactive environment, based on new foundations and practices (e.g. Casmir, 1999; Zhang & Huxham, 2009).

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Reporting Violent Extremism in the Digital Age

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The threat of terrorism from violent extremist groups is a more or less constantly present topic in current media discourses in Europa and elsewhere, invoking core democratic questions related to security, liberty and free speech. This thesis explores the role of journalism in relation to issues pertaining to violent extremism in a digital age, with emphasis on representation, news access and voice. It asks: *how do journalists and news organizations report and deal with violent extremism – and society's response to violent extremism – in the current media environment?* The research question is answered through a combination of methods, including in-depth interviews with Norwegian journalists and analysis of news content and online debate concerning violent extremism.

Theoretically, the thesis highlights how news discourses are shaped in the interaction between journalists situated within specific cultural, political and professional contexts, and actors outside of the news media. Through drawing on theoretical perspectives concerning logics of the news media, news access and the limits of mediated debate, the thesis aims to contribute to illuminate how these various contexts and relations shape public debate on questions concerning actors deemed deviant and constituting a perceived threat to core democratic values and societal security.

The Construction of Religious Authority in the German Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement

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Concerning interrelations of media change and religious authority it is often said that media change does not only change religious performance, but especially challenges established authorities. Others state that through new communication practices traditional, established authorities are even stabilized.

The German Catholic Charismatic Renewal (GCCR) discourse is located in between the Roman Catholic Church and other Charismatic Movements. For the GCCR authority plays an important role in the processes of exchange, of positioning and drawing borders towards other discourses. In my thesis I will explore how authority is communicatively constructed in the GCCR. That means that I will not only explore who (or what) is for which reason seen as a religious authority, but also how this authority is communicated: Are there communication practices that challenge or confirm certain authorities? Which media are used in the field? Does media use influence authority constructions?

I will collect and triangulate data that I gathered using different qualitative methods, such as participant observations in two catholic charismatic bible study groups, qualitative interviews, and a content analysis of the media that are used in the field. Following the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (Keller, 2005) I will look for narratives, argumentations, and discursive structures that are characteristic for the construction of religious authority in the German Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

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Domestic Violence in the Hungarian Media 2002-2013: The Mediation of Suffering and the Role of the Media as a Moral Agent for Social Change

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I am exploring the portrayal of domestic violence in the Hungarian media between 2002 and 2013, where the starting and closing dates are marked by two fundamental cases in the history of the Hungarian media portrayal of domestic violence. I focus on the ways in which these portrayals are discursively constructed and engage their audience emotionally and morally, and also the implications of these portrayals for the power inequalities and the practices for social intervention with regard to domestic violence. With this, I aim to generate corrections and completions to two research fields, so far generally treated as separated, that is the mainly Anglo-Saxon dominated field of the media portrayal of domestic violence, where longitudinal studies are usually not conducted, and the previous literature on Central-Eastern European (CEE) feminist anti-violence activism that currently tends to overlook the role of the media in the development of CEE anti-violence state policies and legislation. I take domestic violence as discursively constructed, and employ a theoretical framework that combines theories on mediated suffering with a Foucauldian notion of discourse. My method is Faircloughian critical discourse analysis which I employ to four relevant and data-rich cases from the given period that all achieved outstandingly high media visibility.

Moving to the West: Media, Cultural Transnationalism and Identity – Cultural Dynamics of Korean Women in Diaspora

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Existing studies on South Korea frame “women on the move” in two ways: either as an undesired effect of Western cultural influence or as a consequence of “liberating” from social gender inequalities. My research project questions these simplistic explanations. I would like to show that the meaning and practices of “leaving the country” represent a process of negotiation among interpretations of media productions, multiple discourses concerning “being international” as “cultural grace” (Cheah 1998; Kim 2011) to mark social status and performing identities. All these considerations frequently intersect with and occasionally contradict each other. I argue that foregrounding the Korean transnationalism as only a culture imperialist practice is a key weakness of the existing literature and produces only partial accounts of media and cultural practices.

Several studies have already examined different pathways through which media can generally lead to the creation of “imagined world” amongst the audience (Apudurai 1989, 1990, 1996; Sun 2002; Fujita 2004, 2006); and, more importantly, how it can contribute to the creation or constant redefinition of identities, especially within a context of transnational mobility (Gillespie 1995; Madianou 2005). The proposed research project, hence, aims to study the extent to which the transnational imagination constructed by media influences young Korean female international mobility, thus, leading to the performative identity within the real experience of their transnational lives. The research design is based on an ethnographic approach to 20 young Korean women residing in the global city of London, in doing so, the study fills several research gaps vis-à-vis the intersectionality between the literature on diasporic audience, media and migration studies. Therefore, regarding the internalised racial discrimination, the ‘white-fetish’ in Korean society and Korean media’s ‘over-embellishment’ on the West, the project also aims to provide a critical reflection on it.

Journalism Practice in Small Communities – A Study of National Greenlandic News Media

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As there is little research on Greenlandic media, this dissertation is the first attempt in mapping the media system of the remote island society of 57.000 dealing with such issues as the small (and relatively isolated) media market, rising commercialization, bilingualism, narrow ownership and falling state subsidies. Due to the small population and very few media outlets - one public service radio- and TV-station and two national weeklies - the media system is restricted and vulnerable, and the small number of media outlets and journalists clearly displays this inadequacy. The main object of the research is to scrutinize journalism practice and the logics and norms of journalism as a cultural product as it plays out in a small community, as the Greenlandic, under heavy influence of the former Danish colonial power. The main theoretical basis for the project is Bourdieu's field theory revolving around the structural power relations and logics of practice in a semi-autonomous field. Specifically looking at the logics within the journalism field, and the practices and struggles in the news room, the research identifies a 'local' habitus and differentiated capital forms where power and struggles between Danish news habitus and a Greenlandic/local news habitus is found through in-depth interviews and observations.

Transnationalisation of Television: Structures, Management and Practices within TV Production Networks

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This PhD project concerns the transnationalisation of television production. The concept of transnationalisation is increasingly used to describe developments in the television industry; it often replaces globalisation in an attempt to overcome the global-local and cultural imperialism-local appropriation dichotomies (Chalaby, 2005; Dowd & Janssen, 2011; Esser, 2007; Kuipers, 2011). However, the concept has little empirical foundation and research often focuses on either macrostructures or microanalyses (Esser, 2014). What happens between transnational industry structures and finished television texts? Middle-range research regarding transnationalisation, focusing on media organisations and production processes, is lacking (Bielby & Harrington, 2008; Havens, Lotz, & Tinic, 2009; Mayer, Banks, & Caldwell, 2009; Moran, 2008).

This research examines the transnational TV production groups Endemol Shine Group, FremantleMedia and Warner Bros, and their divisions in the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands in more detail. The overall research objective is to explore the characteristics and shaping power of the transnational context in which these companies operate, drawing on the notions of *networks*, *global media ecologies* and *cultural translation*. Two questions are formulated: 1) How does transnationalisation shape TV production management, organisation and practices? 2) How is transnationalisation mediated through production companies and negotiated by producers? Based on (corporate) documents and interviews with personnel, this research maps the organisational structures of transnational production networks, and examines management and creative practices of TV production within such a network. Next, using ethnographic methods, it will be explored how producers negotiate this transnational context and how it shapes the production process of specific programmes.

An Investigation of Emerging Mediascapes and Materialities

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This study will explore mediascapes through aesthetics, form and its function to better understand the role of the aesthetic mediated fashion environment. In a media-driven society interpreting the fashion industry has expanded into a multi faceted discipline through the use of electronic and other emerging technologies. Fashion has evolved and grown in significance through different forms of media, which have in turn influenced and shaped our perception and understanding of fashion. According to John Potvin, 'the encounters with fashion happen within a space at a given place and do not simply function as backdrops but are pivotal to the meaning and vitality that the experiences of fashion trace'. Space is a vital component developing individual and daily experiences of fashion, from blogs to Facebook, and the presentation of fashion. Consequentially, this determines space to be an integral role of the communication dialogue, because it influences the visibility and visual outcome of the object, and establishing its identity.

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The Clustering of Media in Localities: Strengthening Media Clusters in Brussels and Beyond

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Within recent years, the media industry has been broadly acknowledged as a key driver of economic growth and a push of governments to foster the development of media industries at local levels takes place. One of the main approaches used is the concept of media clusters. Successful examples are Hollywood, New York, London, Berlin, Bollywood and Tokyo (Picard, 2009). Media clusters can be broadly defined as socio-economic agglomerations of media-related activities within a certain location that are supposed to bring advantages for the actors. The rush to employ ‘cluster ideas’ has been on the forefront even though many fundamental questions are not answered yet (Martin & Sunley, 2003). The PhD project “The clustering of media in localities” (working title) (see www.mediaclusters.brussels for more information) aims to investigate the media cluster concept and create the necessary knowledge to fully grasp the phenomenon. The focus is on creating insights, that allow researchers and policy makers to fully map media clusters, distinguish different clusters, to locate them and understand the dynamics that occur within them. In order to achieve these objectives, the PhD research combines, theoretical knowledge, with a quantitative and a qualitative approach. The research uses a single-case study approach, taking Brussels and its hinterland as study object.

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The Role of Media and Interpersonal Communication in Youth's Environmental Behavior

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The purpose of my thesis is to gain nuanced understanding of how individual differences condition media effects on youth's environmental engagement over time. Two aspects of individual differences are of interest: existing attitudes towards climate change and individual's social network. First, as existing beliefs influence the way people create meanings, climate change skepticism seems to predispose one's environmental behavior. Drawing on the idea of the post-political condition of climate change, I argue that traditional definition of environmental skepticism overlooks an important group of people who believe in science but do not behave environmentally friendly – identified here as latent skeptics. Second, embeddedness in certain social networks can both facilitate and limit one's behavioral choices. Therefore, incorporating the context into analysis of media effects allows for the holistic understanding of the phenomenon. As adolescents' worldviews are in a state of flux, it makes young people the most suitable object for a longitudinal study. The following questions will be addressed: 1) under what conditions and through what processes news consumption influences pro-environmental behavior? 2) How do these conditions differ for different types of young people? 3) What role does broader communicative context play in adolescent's climate change attitudes? To answer these questions I will employ a person-oriented approach within quantitative methodology. Empirical material consists of five waves (2010-2015) of recent longitudinal survey data from Swedish adolescents. I also hope to contribute to bringing closer media effects and audience studies traditions.

Media and Tibetan Nationalism in China

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This study explores media practice and identity negotiation of individual Tibetans in Chinese Tibetosphere. With the changing mediascape, Tibetan media users have developed a profound sense of exclusion from Chinese mainstream media and turn toward alternative media, which include small media, social media and traditional Tibetan communicative platforms such as Buddhist texts and thangkas. Along with skills that enable them actively to generate the recognition of being 'Tibetan' and negotiate their national identities, Tibetan audience have developed critical attitudes toward both mainstream media and alternative media. The highly qualitative nature of the study inquired intensive amount of time for conducting participant observation and organising in-depth interviews, of which a travelling group of dranyen performers, eight Tibetan families and 30 Tibetan interviewees from Tibet Autonomy Region are able to participate. Results, however, are limited to the extent to which the researcher is able to probe the subjectivities and the total experience of the participants.

TV in Convergent Media Environments

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Mobilization and digitalization are changing our media usage, particularly within the area of TV. New devices such as smartphones and tablets as well as new services that offer a huge range of video on demand impact how recipients watch linear and non-linear audiovisual content, either professionally produced or user generated. Not only the time spend watching is increasing but also usage situations are changing: Watching TV or other video content anywhere, anyhow and anytime is possible today and embraced specially by the younger audience.

Academia and the TV industry face challenges as established media usage and effect theories and concepts cannot be easily transferred to convergent media environments: The role of (traditional) TV has definitely changed and therefore also media specific usage motives. The still limited knowledge about new usage behaviors hinders the TV industry to place and market video content across devices and platforms according to recipients' needs and desires and thus limits successful digital strategies to maximize the TV value chain.

This research aims at supporting theory building related to device specific usage situations of professionally produced TV and video content. It is theoretically based on Hasebrink's concept of communication modes (2004) and Früh's triadic-dynamic entertainment theory (2003) and designed as a twostep approach combining explorative semi-structured interviews and validating quantitative interviews with recipients aged 18-29 in Germany.

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL): The Effects of Technology (Technostress) on Intercultural Communication Apprehension and Ethnocentrism in a Computer Supported Collaborative Learning Environment

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Increasingly, international online interactions are becoming part of the job market and its demands. To obtain these skills, students can opt to study abroad, or take part in “internationalisation at home” projects at their home university. With only 1 in 10 U.S. undergraduate students participating in a study abroad experience (Institute for International Education, 2015), it’s imperative that current curricula be updated to include some aspect of interacting in a collaborative fashion with students from another culture. Such projects can, for example, be facilitated by means of computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL). COIL, or Collaborative Online International Learning, is a computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) “methodology which provides innovative cost-effective internationalisation strategies. Such programs foster faculty and student interaction with peers abroad through co-taught multicultural online and blended learning environments emphasizing experiential student collaboration,” (Center for Collaborative Online International Learning, n.d.).

In this research project, we focus on a CSCL project where teachers and students from different countries directly interact with each other. Of course, cultural differences in the use of technology may arise, and it has been shown that cultural differences in the use of technology may impact relations and impressions of each other in an online learning context (Vatrapu, 2008).

Research also shows that the extended and ongoing use of technology in everyday life may lead to so called “techno-stress” (Brod, 1984). This may influence any expected outcomes with regard to acquiring intercultural competences in the context of international online learning environments. We are conducting a number of studies on students enrolled in courses which are computer supported collaborative learning (CSCL) courses. We are researching how perceived technostress influences potential changes in intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism in the context of an interactive online learning environment.

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Transnational Nordic Film Culture and Minority Politics

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This project provides a focused analysis on two significant topics in the field of film studies, namely the subject of minorities and the under-researched area of Nordic cinema. By combining these two topics, I frame each film text in an ideological context, drawing on the identity politics of multiculturalism in the Nordic welfare states. Over the last few decades, the Nordic countries have witnessed an unprecedented rise in extreme right-wing activity and xenophobic nationalism. Much of the rhetoric driving these movements takes aim at multiculturalism and the politics of immigration. These developments clash with the seemingly prosperous images of the contemporary Nordic welfare states. Throughout the history of Nordic welfare politics, these five nations have prided themselves on a shared vision of equality and cooperation between the state and its citizens. This collective vision has been tested, especially in the wake of the 2015 refugee crisis, which has provoked hostility towards those seeking asylum across the region. As these ideologies have clashed, the work of accomplished first and second generation immigrant directors such as Josef Fares, Reza Parsa, Tarik Saleh and Reza Bagher remains largely unexplored, especially in the context of these pressing political issues. In addressing the political scope of these films, I explore and challenge the concepts of 'Nordic egalitarianism' and 'exceptionalism' relating to the treatment of minorities in contemporary Nordic societies, using cinema to bring wider political, economic and ideological matters into focus.

Public Responsible or Click Generating? A Phenomenological Sociological Study of Experienced Tensions Among Contemporary Local Journalists

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In recent years, the “digital turn” has hit local journalism thoroughly, both in a Norwegian and an international context. Still, traditional norms and ways of doing local journalism stand strong. Through a sociological analysis drawing on phenomenological sociology, interaction theory and professional theory, the research outlines four dimensions of tension within this context. These concern local journalists’ roles, public responsibility, approaches to local society and dimensions of significance and quality in their everyday work. The data is generated through in-depth interviews with 16 local journalists and editors from local press and broadcasting. The interviewees belong to four different newsrooms on two sites – both typical for the Norwegian local journalism. Theoretically, Schutz, Berger & Luckmann and Goffman provide important building blocks in the analysis. In total, the dissertation points towards increased ambivalence, complexity and uncertainty connected to roles and activities in contemporary local journalism. The analysis constructs two ideal types: The *tradition-anchored* and the *digitally oriented* local journalist. Discrepancies and complexities in local journalism are scrutinized through these, and reveal tensions concerning time spent outside the newsroom, embracement of digital affordances, approaches to future journalism, and emphasis of public power. A central point is that different structures of relevance are at play under different circumstances. Additionally, the research shows how the feelings of the professional actors are crucial when understanding role conceptions and working styles of local journalists.

Professionalism and Power: The Struggle Over Journalism Inside the Newsroom. Ethnography in Two Finnish Regional Newspapers

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Professional journalism is experiencing hard times. One of the main reasons is the growing power of profit-seeking media organizations over journalism. Inside newsrooms, the professional culture meets the organizational one, and journalism is being defined in the struggle between these two perspectives. This study uses an ethnographic method to scrutinize journalistic practices in two Finnish regional newspapers in the beginning of the 21st century. With the idea of professionalism as a “constant redefinition of occupational boundaries” (Waisbord 2013, p. 232) together with the theory of performativity (Butler 1990), this study looks at powers embedded in journalistic practices. It draws a picture of the hegemonic news factory, but it also examines how journalists use their professional power, showing that it is not only imitative but also subversive repetition inside the newsroom. Journalists repeat subversively on three levels: they *point* out problems, they *push* to make changes and they even *proact* – bending or breaking the rules. For professionalism, this subversive repetition is extremely important. It both strengthens the existing professional values and also challenges them. The latter is crucial for the vitality of professionalism in a changing society. After all, the study finds journalists to be very obedient to the organizations and discusses the reasons and consequences behind this situation.

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Understanding the Caucasus: Geopolitical Knowledge(s) in Central and Eastern European Media

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This project investigates the ways in which the Caucasus as a geopolitical region features in Polish and Serbian media, political and popular discourses. It analyzes the ways in which popular knowledge about the Caucasus is produced and disseminated, and how it fits into existing knowledge regimes using perspectives from the sociology of knowledge. The discourses used to make sense of the Caucasus are scrutinized and their role in the construction of new national, historical and metahistorical identities deconstructed. The study contributes to the existent body of research on mediated memory in Central and Eastern Europe, and how the CEE region positions itself discursively in relation to the Caucasus and its ever-present connection to Russia. The study investigates the geopolitical positioning of Poland and Serbia in the popular discourse facilitated by the use of various media. It wants to contribute to our understanding of popular interpretations of the contested notion of “geopolitics” and the ways it guides people’s views on history, the nation and mediated national history narratives. By looking at nation and history, it sheds light on the current rise of nationalist narratives and practices in Central and Eastern Europe and globally.

Practice-based Approach to Structural Change. The Case of a State Organisation.

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New organizational working structure means different kinds of changes for an organization and its employees. It may mean new job descriptions, laying off people, getting new co-workers or managers or even new office space. Every organization has its own ways of accomplishing the goals set for a change of that kind. To understand how these goals are reached and the change implemented it is necessary to study what and how has been done and what is the reasoning behind these ways of doing. In current thesis the object of study is a structural change that took place in a state organization in Estonia. What, how and why questions are answered using theory of social practices (see Schatzki 1996, 2005). The goal of the thesis is to understand the process of a structural change, the key mechanisms impeding it and the role of communication in change practices. Practice approach gives a new perspective to studying organizational change and can contribute to developing an instrument for practitioners that can help analyse changes implemented in the context of state organizations to find the ways that support the successful change as well as uncover the weaknesses that may obstruct it.

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The Significance of Magnum Photos Agency for Central European Photography

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This PhD project is a cross-sectional study integrating media studies and art history. It focuses on the legacy of Magnum Photos agency, which represents a break with the previously established position of photojournalists as visual recorders of events, or “illustrators” of written stories, rather establishing them as authors whose contributions opened up a new communication channel, a new visual code. Magnum Photos Agency has been spreading its activities and presentations globally, yet in Central Europe its production was presented and received exceptionally well from early on – particularly in media where illustrated magazines were seeking to be restored to their high level after World War II, and in museums and galleries, as its founders were well aware of the importance of exhibitions. From those fact the hypothesis of the project arises: great presence of Magnum photographers in this area influenced further Central-European photography production, not only within photojournalism, but also auteur photography. The study will try to answer, what are the factors in oeuvre of Magnum photographers that have influenced the Central European photography and how, or what aspects could be used to prove this influence in works of Central European photographers. I will be searching examples to confirm the hypothesis on the existence of formal, stylistic and thematic influences, and seeking to objectify parallels that can be drawn while comparing Magnum and other Central European photographers. I will seek to explain a wider ethical and social contribution of Magnum Photos, such as establishing the photojournalist as an author, and the photography mission as a messenger of humanistic values.

Digital Revolution and the Information Society: ICT Regulatory Policy in Vietnam Under the Influence of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

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Since 1990s, the Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) have rapidly changed under different socio-economic circumstances and have greatly affected how governments of ASEAN countries come up with ICT regulatory policies. Reviewing policies of these countries, it can be seen that they have been drafted with a regional mindset: to promote the harmony among members and to form regional associations in hope of stimulating cross-border cooperation and market development. This thesis project focuses on the historical and legal aspects of ICT regulatory policies, the emergence of the development and cooperation programs as well as the visions of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It will explore the discourses and different implementations of regional regulations that are essential to the understanding of regional governance. It will additionally consider how the State of Vietnam is responsible for bringing ICT programs in play on a large scale, in the context of modernization and technological innovation to promote its information society. In other words, the key research question is: How do the influences of ASEAN translate into political practices and regulation of ICT in Vietnam?

The purposes of the research are to explore how regulation policies of ICT are made and issued in connection with the visions and procedures of ASEAN, and how does Vietnamese government intervenes to promote ICT innovation. Ultimately, the objective is to understand how and through which process the regional communalities and states intervened in social and economic structures to carryout and promote the changes through ICT deployment.

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Emotions on the Front page. Effectiveness of Visual Communication in the Digital Era.

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Effectively used visual communication in media production is a very powerful tool for influencing society and can have a strong impact upon it. As we are still dealing with the consequences of the pictorial turn, characterized by shifting attention from the linguistic to the visible, the importance of visual news material is significantly growing.

An increasing reliance on visuality in the digital era is turning news into entertainment; as the media landscape becomes overwhelmed with images, it pursues spectacle and emotional involvement, rather than rational information, which can easily inhibit critical reflection. Moreover, visuality, which is essentially attractive, does not place such demands on literacy; even children have access to it and are capable of understanding it.

However, the emotional reactions that are caused when confronting visual information are hardly ever examined by academia. Many theoreticians take the role of emotions for granted and thus they only focus on the interpretation of images. Still, the very first “entrance” to the brain when perceiving images is the emotions and their importance cannot be overlooked or underestimated.

The aim of my research is therefore to explore in detail the effectiveness of visual communication, to examine the role of emotions while acquiring visual information and to critically evaluate the role of photojournalism in mediating reality. The theoretical framework includes concepts of visual culture, visual framing, visual literacy, cultivation theory and social psychology. The research will be anchored in qualitative methodologies. Specifically, focus groups and semi-structured interviews were chosen as the core methods.

Online Television: Netflix and Global Original Production. A Compared Analysis of Strategies Adopted by Netflix in Television Production across UK and Italy

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Over the last few years, thanks to technological advancement, television industry has deeply change. The rise of streaming services and online television has brought to a much wider range of choices, which let the consumer be the only actor in programming control. This technological and cultural shift has brought us to the era of convergence (Jenkins, 2007) and it is changing the way of production, circulation and reception of every medium (Pearson, Smith, 2015).

Aware of these changes, this research aims at understanding how Netflix, is re-mediating the economics models of TV industry in transnational television in two countries: UK and Italy.

Netflix is a global provider of streaming movies and TV series, has over 75 million subscribers and in the last years has gained more and more attention. From its streaming media to its all-you-can-watch model, Netflix pioneered online digital delivery of content, enabling users to watch movies anytime, anywhere and on any device they could connect to the Internet (Walker, 2015).

Analysing the production background of each country (UK and Italy), their programming strategies and between which broadcasters there is the real competition, this research will intend to explain how Netflix and its process of building a global television, is adapting to domestic markets.

Carrying out a qualitative analysis, with individual interviews with television executives, industrial reports and analysis, media press publication, and academic literature, the research discusses the type of disruptive revolution at hand, the dimensions of industry convergence and the expected implications of these changes on the industry structure.

An Analytical Study of Social Media Usage Pattern by International Political Leaders

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In the age of the Internet, popular social network sites like are assumed to have the potential for increasing political participation. Internet helps to spread information with minimum costs and this information reaches a very high number of individuals. Most importantly, the Internet provides possibilities for the two-way communication between the politicians and members of the society when politicians can have a direct reversible connection and citizens can freely create. Politicians use Social media for the purpose of entering into direct dialogue with citizens and encouraging more political discussions.

This study will argue about the Politicians Using Social Media. This is an analytical study between the most active politicians on the social networking websites which are most used by politicians in the world; according to the most credible Research Centers on cyberspace. The main objective of this study will examine of Political Communication Usage Patterns on Social Networking Sites. The study will be a systematic analysis and method of the study is Qualitative. For this purpose, content analysis will take to consideration and data collection will be based on Observation.

Community Media as Sites of Agonistic Constructions of Victimhood, and their Contribution to Conflict Transformation

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Despite the growing attention that community media have recently been receiving, little has been said about their role in conflict transformation. The aim of this project is precisely to address this gap. Focusing on the divided island of Cyprus, the main research question of this study is what representations of victimhood Cypriot community media generate and how these media organizations contribute to a shift from antagonism to agonism, facilitating thus a non-violent transformation of the conflict. The theoretical backbone will be provided by the agonistic democratic model, developed by Chantal Mouffe (2005) according to whom, the transformation of conflict and the shift from antagonism to agonism requires the overcoming of the friend-enemy dichotomy, the acknowledgement of the humanity of the other and the development of democratic channels through which contest and difference between adversaries –rather than enemies- can be expressed.

Methodologically, the research expands into three stages. The first involves a mapping of these below-the-radar organizations in Cyprus. Then, six of the identified organizations are selected as case studies and their victimhood-related material is analyzed. Finally, twelve focus groups are organized with members of the general public and stakeholders, in order to have an audience reception analysis of the selected victimhood-related content.

References

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Role Negotiation in the Everyday Life of Journalists in Post-socialist China. An Ethnographic Study in XX Press Group.

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The aim of this research is to study contestations and negotiations between Chinese journalists' perceived professional values and dominant ideologies. Alienation from Marxist tradition will be used as a critical lens in terms to understand journalists' lived conditions and practices. It recognizes that journalists in China operate within a particular set of cultural, social, economic and above all political circumstances that privilege stability and the continuation of the leadership by the Chinese Communist Party over concerns about professional obligations, responsibilities and even rights. It would be difficult for journalists, who hold dissenting views from above political ideologies, to confirm their prescribed self-values through working. They are often alienated while disguising their agencies by creating an illusion of conformity. This study will offer a timely updated map of media environment in Xi era. In the past three years since the start of Xi Jinping's presidency, as well as with deepening internet penetration and media digitalization, the media environment has gone through drastic changes from model of Party-market corporatism toward a more complex situation. The existing literature on Chinese journalists has paid overwhelming focus on the political structure dynamics given the nature of the state-media relation of the country. Few endeavor has been made on the understanding details of journalists' everyday life. The existing literature on the field journalism studies has been generally overlooking the issue of time and space (material and mental). This study will contribute how Chinese press journalists negotiate with political circumstances in everyday through time and space.

Chinese Television between Propaganda and Entertainment, 1992-2017

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This project aims to examine the role of Chinese television in facilitating Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) propaganda work in an era of profound changes in the Chinese media industry. Since the economic reform in 1978, the introduction of market economy into the Chinese media system has posed a challenge to the Party's monolithic ideological control over the media sector. Chinese television has ceased to be merely a propaganda tool, and also became a cultural industry that has to find a balance between obeying state power and listening to producers' creative needs and audience preferences. Consequently, Chinese television has become increasingly driven by ratings, and has stepped up its production of popular entertainment, whilst seemingly limiting the range of explicitly propagandist programming. In this context, this project sets out to explore how the party-state continues to use television, especially popular formats, to disseminate the Party-desired messages. Empirically, it analyses prime-time serial dramas broadcast on the central and provincial television channels from 1992 to 2017, with a special focus on those receiving Feitian Awards, the Chinese government awards for serial drama.

A quantitative content analysis of all prime-time serial dramas broadcast between 1992 and 2016 is being conducted, with the aim to delineate how the narrative plots and values promoted in dramas have changed over time. In the second step, qualitative case studies of selected dramas will be conducted to establish an in-depth understanding of the relationship between particular narrative plots and the Party agenda within different political, economic and social contexts.

The topic “Present Scenarios of Media Production and Engagement ” is dedicated to the fundamental question: How do production, communication and usage practices change in the present media environment? This volume consists of the intellectual work of the 2016 European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School, organized in cooperation with the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, Italy. The chapters cover relevant research topics, structured into four sections: “Scenarios of Convergence and Transmedia Communication”, “Strategies and Transformations of Media and Cultural Industries”, “Politics of Representation in Contemporary Media Discourses”, and “Researching Media and Communication”.

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 post-graduate 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.

