

COMMUNICATION AS THE INTERSECTION OF THE OLD AND THE NEW

THE INTELLECTUAL WORK OF THE 2018 EUROPEAN MEDIA
AND COMMUNICATION DOCTORAL SUMMER SCHOOL

**Edited by Maria Francesca Murru, Fausto Colombo,
Laura Peja, Simone Tosoni, Richard Kilborn, Risto
Kunelius, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Leif Kramp,
Nico Carpentier**

edition lumière

COMMUNICATION AS THE INTERSECTION OF THE OLD AND THE NEW

THE INTELLECTUAL WORK OF THE 2018 EUROPEAN MEDIA
AND COMMUNICATION DOCTORAL SUMMER SCHOOL

**Edited by Maria Francesca Murru, Fausto Colombo, Laura
Peja, Simone Tosoni, Richard Kilborn, Risto Kunelius, Pille
Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Leif Kramp, Nico Carpentier**

Bibliographische Information der Deutschen Bibliothek

Die Deutsche Bibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliographie; detaillierte bibliographische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.ddb.de> abrufbar.

© edition lumière Bremen

ISBN: 978-3-948077-03-7

COMMUNICATION AS THE INTERSECTION OF THE OLD AND THE NEW.
THE INTELLECTUAL WORK OF THE 2018 EUROPEAN MEDIA AND
COMMUNICATION DOCTORAL SUMMER SCHOOL

Edited by: Maria Francesca Murru, Fausto Colombo, Laura Peja, Simone Tosoni, Richard Kilborn, Risto Kunelius, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Leif Kramp, Nico Carpentier.

Series: The Researching and Teaching Communication Series

Series editors: Nico Carpentier and Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt

Electronic version accessible at: <http://www.researchingcommunication.eu>

The publishing of this book was supported by Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Milan, Italy) and the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA). The 2018 European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School was sponsored by the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Milan, Italy) and supported by the Department of Communication and Performing Arts of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Almed - graduate School in Media, Communication and Performing Arts, and Sky Italy.

The photos that open every section and the abstracts are royalty free images downloaded from Unsplash. Authors: Silvio Kundt (Section 1); Samuel Zeller (Section 2 and Section 3), Joel Filipe (Section 4), Alvaro Pinot (Abstracts).

Table of Contents

- 7 Introduction: Communication as the intersection of the old and the new
Maria Francesca Murru, Laura Peja, Simone Tosoni, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Nico Carpentier

Section 1. Theories and Concepts

- 19 What kinds of normative theories do we need? Ideal and non-ideal theories in communication research
Kari Karppinen
- 31 Friends, not foes: Integrating structuralist and agentic perspectives on media consumption
Alyona Khaptsova, Ruben Vandenplas
- 45 The rise of the alternative: Critical usefulness of the “Alternative Media” notion in the Czech context
Ondrej Pekacek
- 59 “The closest thing to teleportation”: The concept of *liveness* in the age of connectivity
Ludmila Lupinacci
- 71 Crisis of liberal democracy, crisis of journalism? Learning from the economic crisis
Timo Harjuniemi

Section 2. Media and the Construction of Social Reality

- 85 The construction of the homeless in the Greek street paper *shedia*
Vaia Doudaki, Nico Carpentier
- 105 Mediation and place: The sharpening and weakening of boundaries
Magnus Andersson

- 115 “Yay! I am officially an #estonian #eResident!” Representations of Estonian e-residency as a novel kind of state-related status and affiliation on Twitter
Piia Tammpuu

Section 3. Mediatizations

- 129 Situational analysis as a research method for the reconstruction of communicative figurations
Karsten D. Wolf, Konstanze Wegmann
- 141 Football and mediatization: A serious academic pursuit or just scholars playing silly games?
Michael Skey

Section 4. Media, Health and Sociability

- 155 Tradition and the digital: A study of dating attitudes among Australia-based Chinese dating app users
Xu Chen
- 173 Visual matters in health communication: A systematic review
Fatma Nazlı Köksal, Fatoş Adiloğlu
- 185 Power to the patient? Studying the balance of power between patient and GP in relation to Web health information
Edgard Eeckman

Abstracts

- 199 Spanish TV fiction and social networks: Tweeting about *Cuéntame como pasó*
- 200 Repressed identity: Negotiating normality in the Balkan cinemas
- 201 Place of communication in territorial construction of “metropolitan public space”
- 202 Losing the critical edge: Why journalism has been unable to challenge the austerity hegemony
- 203 Professional and personal performances: Case studies of how selected photojournalists use conflict-related images on Instagram
- 204 Live, here and now: Experiences of *liveness* in everyday engagements with connective media
- 205 Audience experiences of interactivity in contemporary Lithuanian theatre: Production and evaluation

- 206 The telling of femicide in the voice of the Mexican press 2017
- 207 The evolution of the terms referring to people on the move: A discursive analysis of media discourse in French and Dutch
- 208 The politics of participation in WhatsApp communities in rural Kenya: Discursive-material analysis
- 209 Czech media and the refugee crisis: Media populism and journalistic culture in mainstream and alternative news outlets
- 210 A digital public space: Just a theory? Or how social network sites are perceived by their Norwegian users?
- 211 Mnemonic resistance to instant history: Polish contemporary feminist movement and its practices of historical visibility
- 212 The concept of ‘virtual residency’ and digitally enabled translocality: The case of Estonian e-residency
- 213 Digitizing our sense of touch: The social construction of haptic technologies
- 214 Revisiting media repertoires: The media use of the Flemish population
- 215 Young adults’ learning about sustainable consumption in informal ‘situations’
- 216 The rise and fall of a critical paradigm in media research and communication: analysis elite western periodical publications 1935-2015
- 217 Michael Moore and documentary as persuasion
- 218 Dating apps and cultural contexts: Investigating how Australia-based Chinese users engage with Tinder and Tantan
- 219 Individual values a basis for selective media exposure
- 220 The #Girlbosses of YouTube: Manifestations of feminism in the era of social media and entrepreneurial femininity
- 221 How the blockchain technologies may impact the digital media content creation and consumption
- 222 The role of cultural mind-mapping in intercultural business communication between European and Chinese associates
- 223 The ideology of enjoyment: Images of enjoyment on Instagram

Introduction: Communication as the intersection of the old and the new

Maria Francesca Murru, Laura Peja, Simone Tosoni, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Nico Carpentier

1. About the book

This book, the fourteenth in the Researching and Teaching Communication Book Series launched in 2006, stems from the communal intellectual work of the lecturers, the students and the alumni of the 2018 edition of the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School (SuSo).

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 is run by a consortium of 20 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 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 this book 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.

Seven among the students (Xu Chen, Timo Harjuniemi, Alyona Khaptsova, Ludmila Lupinacci, Ruben Vandenplas, Ondrej Pekacek, Piia Tammpuu) have been selected to develop their research into a full paper: together with four lecturers' chapters, one chapter from one of the founding members of SuSo (Nico Carpentier with Vaia Doudaki) and with two chapters from SuSo's alumni (Edgard Eeckman, Fatma Nazlı Köksal & Fatoş Adiloğlu) selected through an open call, their works compose the first part of the book, divided in four thematic sections.

This diversity of origins, locations, positions and experiences produces a complex and broad mixture of themes and topics, which - we would like to argue - is also characteristic of the field of Communication and Media Studies as a whole. Obviously, this complicates the book editors' task, who have a position the different contributions in a more or less coherent and convincing structure. At the same time, the editing process also offers an opportunity to reflect about the field of study, not moving into a lament about diversity and lack of coherence, but appreciating the complexity, thoroughness and broad span of what Communication and Media studies scholars do. What was especially apparent in this year's cluster of contributions is that our field of study integrates a wide variety of media technologies (ranging from old to new), demonstrating that contemporary societies are not characterized by the replacement of technologies, but by the always unique articulations, integrations and intersections of old and new. The four sections of the book address these intersections in similarly diverse ways.

The first thematic section is dedicated to theories and concepts. The first chapter, by **Kari Karppinen**, discusses different types of normative theories and their uses in media and communication research. Arguing that communication research cannot escape normative and political considerations, the contribution explains why the question is not whether we need normative theory, but what kinds of normative approaches and what kinds of engagements with normative theory are most useful for Media and Communication research and for what purposes. **Alyona Khaptsova and Ruben Vandenplas** review the research findings on media selection processes, connecting them to the structure-agency debate. Rooting their argument within the current processes of media convergence and algorithmic proliferation, the chapter strives to move away from approaching the relation between structure and agency as a linear process, or a dichotomy, opting instead for describing the interrelation of both concepts as a circular process. In the next chapter we find a conceptual discussion, by **Ondrej Pekacek**, triggered by the growing emergence of Czech alternative media, which posits as a substantial challenge to the prevailing research paradigm that has considered the proliferation of alternative media as a positive development for democracy. Besides examining structural factors of this conjuncture, particularly the role of public distrust of mainstream media and the increased levels of media concentration, the chapter discusses two alternative paradigms - the Alternative Media Anti-Systemness Matrix (AMAM) and the Populist Political Communication - and their capacity of gathering additional insights to the distinction between the ideological orientations of the Czech alternative media outlets. The concept of liveness and its current state in media and communications research is examined by **Ludmila Lupinacci** in the third chapter. Starting from the understanding of liveness as a context-contingent and continuously evolving term, her chapter maps the core definitions attributed to the concept

in the academic sphere, and addresses the potential shortcomings of the available conceptualizations in characterizing the communicative practices that unfold in the present-day culture of connectivity. In the last chapter of this section, **Timo Harjuniemi** argues that the way journalism dealt with the financial crisis of 2008-9 and with the euro crisis challenges us to rethink our common-sense notions about journalism's democratic role. By building on the lessons learned from the economic crisis, the chapter argues that the populist upheaval against institutions of liberal democracy – unleashed by the crisis and the politics of austerity – inevitably manifests itself also as a crisis of professional journalism.

The second section of the book deals the social construction of reality. The discursive construction of the homeless subject position in the Greek street paper *shedia* is the focus of the contribution by **Vaia Doudaki and Nico Carpentier**. By deploying discourse theory, a theoretical framework that is rooted in political philosophy, the chapter illuminates the discursive-political struggles that can be found in *shedia* and attempts to dislocate it by offering an alternative, counter-hegemonic discourse, centred around three nodal points: the home, agency and citizenship. **Magnus Andersson** explores the spatial turn and its implication for media studies, with a particular focus on the inter-relationship between media and place. The main argument of the chapter is that media are complex structures that may both strengthen and weaken boundaries of places. Communication geography is not only positioned as a recent supplement to the large family of Media Studies, but it is presented also as an opportunity to construct new interdisciplinary bridges. Finally, the chapter by **Piia Tamppuu** examines the concept of “virtual residency”, as a novel kind of state-related status and affiliation, by focusing on the case of Estonian e-residency, which is a government-supported transnational digital identity scheme. The findings suggest that digitally enabled transnationalism and digital nomadism appear as the two major perspectives from which one's self-identity, as an Estonian e-resident, are constructed.

In the third section of the book, we focus on a significant theoretical field of Communication and Media Studies, namely mediatization. **Karsten D. Wolf and Konstanze Wegmann** open the section, with a contribution to the methodological discourse of Media and Communication Studies. Mediatization serves as a frame for arguing why new methods for analysing relations between media and society are needed; Situational Analysis is then proposed as a method for the reconstruction of communicative figurations. The second chapter of the section, by **Michael Skey**, engages with some of the key arguments used by the main proponents and critics of the mediatization approach. By providing a number of examples culled from the engagements with football fans, watching, discussing and playing football, as well as interviews with football journalists in East Africa, the paper tries to plot a course between the two opposing poles, using insights from the more grounded approach-

es to mediatization, whilst avoiding some of the more extravagant claims about the media's all-encompassing role as both an institution and influence.

In the last section of the book, three chapters move into particular components of social life, with a focus on health and sociability. Drawing on data from 23 interviews from an ongoing project about Australia-based Chinese people's engagement with the dating apps Tinder and Tantan, the contribution by **Xu Chen** examines if and how young Chinese people's current attitudes towards dating and marriage are shaped by the use of these dating applications. While dating apps have the potential to reconfigure young Chinese people's attitudes to dating, the study shows that the role of dating apps in this process mainly functions as reinforcement and acceleration, without fundamentally changing users' dating attitudes. The second chapter, by **Fatma Nazlı Köksal and Fatoş Adiloğlu**, presents an inquiry to trace and track the visual weight in health communication with the aim to contribute to fostering further research in what is sculpted as the "visual health communication" field. Web health information and patient-GP (general practitioner) relationship is the focus of the contribution by **Edgard Eeckman**. By applying a mixed-method research approach, the study presented in this chapter shows that the Web has the potential to narrow but not to bridge the information and knowledge gap between patient and GP, which thus causes the patient-GP power balance to remain asymmetric.

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 III (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 to the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, where it took place also in 2017 and 2018. In 2018, it was organised from 8th to 17th July.

Including the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan (IT), 20 universities participate in the consortium: Ankara Üniversitesi (TR), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (ES), Universitetet i Bergen – UiB (NO), Universität Bremen (DE), Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem – ELTE, Budapest (HU), Helsingin Yliopisto (FI), Univerzita Karlova, Prague (CZ), Univerza v Ljubljani (SI), London School of Economics & Political Science - LSE (UK), Loughborough University (UK),

Lunds Universitet (SE), Roskilde Universitet (DK), Université Stendhal-Grenoble III (FR), University of Stirling (UK), Tampereen Yliopisto (FI), Tartu Ülikool (EE), Vrije Universiteit Brussel - VUB (BE), Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas – VMU, Kaunas (LT), and University of Westminster (UK). In 2018, the affiliated partner of the Summer School was again the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA). ECREA supported participation to the summer school also with the award of two grants for students.

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 researchers and representatives of civilian society, the media industry and government institutions.

The summer school follows a number of principles: student-orientedness 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 intended to support the future academic careers of the participants by allowing them to acquire necessary academic and self-management skills. The atmosphere of the summer school is fundamentally non-competitive, as the talents of all participants are 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. It recognizes the existence of a plurality of schools, approaches, theories, paradigms, methods, and cultures in academia, which makes it 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 at stimulating connectedness. First of all, it looks for building long-term academic networks, enabling future collaborations at an international/European level. The need for intellectual exchanges in academia and the importance of transcending frontiers are widely recognized. The summer school cultivates also a deep respect for the localized context in which it operates, at the urban and national level of the hosting city, avoiding disconnections with civil society, business and the state.

In order to realise these principles, the 2018 SuSo 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 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 given at the summer school.

In addition, the training workshops are a crucial pedagogical tool. 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 related to specific contents, focusing on set theories or concepts. Finally, the customary field excursions give the participants more insights into the hosting country's media structures, politics, cultures and histories.

3. The scholars involved in the summer school

In 2018, 26 doctoral students participated in the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School. All of their abstracts, and a selection of six chapters based on their work, are included in this book.

The blue flow was joined by Hilde Sakariassen, Gloria Ooko, Monika Meilutyte, Boris Mance, Wefwafwa Allan, Ilari Kellokoski, Alba Mendoza, Xu Chen, and Timo Harjuniemi.

The yellow flow consisted of Ruben Vandenplas, Konstanze Wegmann, Metzger Sanchez Meza, Alyona Khaptsova, Valérie Mistiaen, Piia Tamppuu, Marie Lyne Mangilli Doucé, Ida Roivainen, and Karolina Szpyrko.

The green flow grouped Ondrej Pekacek, Ludmila Lupinacci Amaral, Sebastian Cochinescu, Valentina Turrini, Zerina Catovic, Jinxixi Lyu, Kemal Güleç, and Sini (Saila Marian) Kaipainen.

The summer school hosted 15 lecturers from the partner universities from all over Europe: Karsten D. Wolf, Burcu Sümer, Montse Bonet Bagant, Richard Kilborn, Irena Reifová, Ike Picone, Kari Karppinen, Fausto Colombo, Risto Kunelius, Norbert Wildermuth, Magnus Andersson, Ilija Tomanić Trivundža, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Simone Tosoni, and Michael Skey.

In addition to the activities of the summer school lecturers and workshops, the programme included a lecture by Federica Setti, Chief Research Officer of GroupM Italy, the world's largest advertising media company.

This year, Fausto Colombo and Simone Tosoni were the local directors of the Summer School, and Maria Francesca Murru and Laura Peja were the local organisers. The local team was supported by the international director Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt. In addition, François Heinderyckx acted as the ECREA liaison.

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 2018 as well as their approachability was appreciated by the participants.

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 discussion spaces and networking tools. Thanks are here due to the social media editor of this year's edition: Federica Cavaletti.

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 2018 has been possible thanks to the organizational and financial support of many institutions. The organizers want to express their gratitude to: the Department of Communication and Performing Arts of Università Cattolica; Almed – Graduate School in Media, Communication and Performing Arts and his director Mariagrazia Fanchi; Lifelong learning office and Educatt – Student Services of the same university; 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 analyse 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 creativity, and about cooperation and networking, especially among young scholars who contribute fresh inquiries to the research discourse. This is what makes the summer school a unique learning and networking experience, bringing together the less experienced and the more experienced from all over the world to promote a constructive dialogue by which new research horizons emerge.



SECTION 1

**THEORIES
AND CONCEPTS**

What kinds of normative theories do we need? Ideal and non-ideal theories in communication research

Kari Karppinen

Abstract

This chapter discusses different types of normative theories and their uses in media and communication research. In particular, the chapter introduces the distinction between *ideal* and *non-ideal theories* in political theory and discusses its implications for different kinds of research aims in media and communication studies. Arguing that communication research cannot escape normative and political considerations, the question is not whether we need normative theory, but what kinds normative approaches and what kinds of engagements with normative theory are most useful for media and communication research and for what purposes. Ultimately, the chapter argues that the usefulness of theoretical approaches is not an either/or choice, or even a matter of which theories are normatively justified or true. Instead, different types of ideal and non-ideal theories are better understood in terms of a scale where different theories have different uses for different purposes. As Kwame Anthony Appiah (2017) argues, the appropriateness of different theories and normative frameworks for specific research projects can then be evaluated also more pragmatically, from the perspective of what they enable us to do.

Keywords: normative theory, ideal theory, non-ideal theory, normative reconstruction, capabilities approach

1. Introduction

Media and communication research is never far removed from political and normative questions. In some areas of research this is more obvious than others: research on media policies, critical political economy and political communication, for example, routinely refer to normative concepts and values, such as freedom, democracy and social justice. Researchers study the values and goals that underlie debates on the role of media in society, evaluate different policy and organizational alternatives and their consequences, seek to identify problems that require attention, and sometimes make ethical or policy suggestions themselves.

Even in less obviously normative areas of research, like studies on media use, professional practices, media economy, or media cultures, researchers often make implicit or explicit reference to normative conceptions of how things ought to be. So, whenever we deal with values, normative conceptions of what the media landscape should look like, we encounter normative theory – understood here as more or less systematic theorizing or critique concerning what is desirable or undesirable, how communication and media *should* be organized. We refer to normative theories for various purposes: to justify the social relevance of our research topics, to evaluate existing conditions against some ideals, or to produce practical suggestions for promoting the public interest or other ethical goals through media production, regulation or media use.

Although our research is not always explicitly normative or political, it often departs from some underlying normative assumptions. These can be derived from normative theories of the public sphere, democracy or the public interest, or from more indeterminate values, such as effective communication, social responsibility, mutual understanding, or aesthetic appreciation.

This is not to say that research *should* always be normative, only that we should seek to recognize and engage with the normative frameworks and assumptions that underlie our work. One important reason for grounding our research in normative theory is to avoid “crypto-normativity” – positions that make a normative statement without acknowledging them as such or without making clear the basis of their claims (Hesmondhalgh & Toynbee, 2008: 9).

Assuming that communication research cannot escape normative considerations, the question in this paper is not whether we need normative theory, but what kinds of normative theories are the most useful for media and communication research, and for what purpose do we employ normative theory. In this chapter, I discuss different types of normative theories, drawing particularly on the distinction between *ideal* and *non-ideal* theories, and consider their uses in media and communication research.

2. Ideal theory vs non-ideal theory

The perceived usefulness or appropriateness of different types of normative theories and approaches have been a subject of lively debate in political theory and philosophy. One of the main divisions in this debate includes the distinction between *ideal* vs. *non-ideal* theory. Ideal theory refers to theories that seek to describe what political or social arrangements would look like under conditions, or in a hypothetical perfect society. Non-ideal theory, on the other hand, refers to theories that aim to guide practical political action and focus more on how values and ideals translate into actual social mechanisms, institutions and practices. The question is therefore whether normative theories should primarily aim to identify the hypothetical end-state or focus more on gradual improvements or comparisons that can guide practical choices in real-life contexts (e.g. Stemplowska & Swift, 2012; Valentini, 2012).

A separate, but related, distinction has been drawn between moralist and realist political theories. According to Bernard Williams (2009: 2), *political moralism* refers to theories and arguments that “*make the moral prior to the political*”, or think of politics in terms of the application of abstract ethical or moral principles, while *political realism* refers to “*an approach that gives a greater autonomy to distinctively political thought*” (p. 3), including “*a more realistic view of the powers, opportunities, and limitations of political actors*” (p. 12).

Similar concerns also underlie the distinction between *high* and *low* theory in social sciences. High theory refers to “thin”, topic-neutral, principles, which operate at a high level of abstraction and are designed by thinkers “from above”. In contrast, low theory refers to a discussion of particular moral or political problems in specific contexts, involving “thick” theorizing that draws on the practical experiences of participants and the context-specific factors related to particular real-life cases (Kamm, 1995).

Often considered a typical representative of abstract and ideal theory, John Rawls (1971/1999) has argued that ideal theory represents the first step of normative theory. It constitutes a kind of necessary precursor that serves as a normative reference point for the kind of non-ideal theory that can subsequently guide action in the real world, under actually existing and imperfect circumstances. As Rawls (1971/1999: 89–90) argues, “*until the ideal is identified, at least in outline [...] non-ideal theory lacks an objective, an aim, by reference to which its queries can be answered*”.

However, the dominant paradigm of liberal political philosophy that focuses on highly idealized and abstract principles has received much criticism in recent years. Theorizations of ideal notions, such as freedom, justice, or democracy, in particular, have been widely criticized for being too abstract and detached from actually existing empirical conditions to be useful for analyzing real-world circum-

stances. Instead, critics from multiple directions have argued that there is a need for non-ideal, or more realistic, normative theoretical frameworks that can better address actual problems and guide political choices here and now (Mills, 2005; Schwartzman, 2006; Stemplowska & Swift, 2012).

Axel Honneth (2014: 1), for example, has argued that “*one of the major weaknesses of contemporary political philosophy is that it has been decoupled from an analysis of society and has thus become fixated on purely normative principles [...] drawn up in isolation from the norms that prevail in given practices and institutions*”. Amartya Sen (2009) claims that the characterization of spotless justice or knowing what an identifiably perfect alternative would look like in principle, is simply not necessary or even helpful for the purpose of judging what is required here and now. Instead, Sen calls for a comparative approach, which allows the evaluation of the relative merits of different options, rather than a “*transcendental approach*”, which assesses these in the light of certain ideal principles, conceived under idealized assumptions. Bernard Williams (2009: 10) argues that political moralism of Rawls and others “*has a universalistic tendency which encourages it to inform past societies about their failings. It is not that these judgements are, exactly, meaningless—one can imagine oneself as Kant at the court of King Arthur if one wants to—but they are useless and do not help one to understand anything*”.

These critics thus perceive ideal theories and their abstract normative principles as insensitive to empirical realities and analyses of how cultural, economic, and political institutions actually work. Even worse, it has been argued that ideal theories can be ideological and counter-productive. As Charles Mills (2005: 168, 172) argues, ideal theory can be seen as “*a distortional complex of ideas, values, norms and belief*” that reflects non-representative interests and experiences of a small minority” and “*abstracts away relations of structural domination, exploitation, coercion, and oppression*”. By focusing on abstract ideals and omitting, for example, race and gender-based structures of subordination, ideal theories are seen to distract attention away and effectively blinding us from actually existing injustices and forms of oppression (see Appiah, 2017: 118; Stemplowska & Swift, 2012: 377).

What these criticisms often converge on is the argument that non-ideal normative theory cannot be relegated to second-order questions of how to “apply” ideals to practice. Instead, they argue that normative theory should begin from the existing conditions and problems and draw more on the existing empirical research documenting these problems – instead of building abstract normative principles “from above”. In the context of media and communication, for example, this would involve starting from specific circumstances of contemporary media systems and their institutional and cultural contexts, and developing normative arguments based on existing practical problems rather than superimposing some universal and abstract ideals on these contexts.

The distinctions between ideal or non-ideal, or moralist or realist theories, are necessarily stylized, and, in practice, many researchers and approaches combine features of both (e.g., Appiah, 2017; Jubb, 2012; Stemplowska, 2008). Regardless, the distinction and the criticism discussed above provide one way for approaching the uses of normative theories – and their relative merits and problems – in media and communication studies.

3. Idealization in media and communication studies

The Rawlsian distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory has not been something heavily discussed in media and communication studies as such. However, questions about the desired degree of idealism or practical relevance are still very much present in discussions of the different conceptions of the key concepts in the field, such as the public sphere, democracy or freedom of communication.

While Rawls's theory of justice is often cited as a standard example of ideal theory, in the context of media and communications, there are several other theoretical traditions that fulfill the role of setting "*a normative reference point*" for public and scholarly debates. Prominent ideal models include, for example, classical liberal theories of free expression and the discovery of truth, informed citizenship, the metaphor of the "*the marketplace of ideas*", or more contemporary theories of deliberative democracy, discourse ethics, and the public sphere (see, e.g. Karppinen, 2018).

These abstract notions all involve idealization, i.e. contra-factual assumptions that agents or conditions have certain ideal qualities. According to Rawls (1971/1999: 216) these idealizing assumptions can involve that, first, all actors are generally willing to comply with whatever principles are chosen. This can involve, for example, assumptions that individuals are generally truth seeking, rational and well informed. Secondly, they can assume favorable social conditions: for example, that there are no major economic, social, or educational inequalities, which inhibit people from voicing their opinions and taking part in public speech. According to Mills' (2005: 168–169) critical reading, typical assumptions can also include an idealized social ontology of equal and atomic individuals, unrealistic capacities attributed to individuals, and silence on oppression and structural domination.

These are all assumptions that are relevant for contemporary normative discussions of communicative freedom, democracy and the public sphere. Traditional conceptions of the free marketplace of ideas, for example, often assume that the goals of free speech exist when the state does not directly restrict speech, typically ignoring how journalism and media practices are linked to broader relations of power and constraints, inevitably privileging certain voices and excluding others (Karppinen, 2018; Kenyon, 2014). Similarly, the concepts of the public sphere

and deliberative democracy have been extensively criticized for assumptions of rationality and the “bracketing” of existing inequalities (e.g., Fraser, 1992). As a concept premised on assumptions of a functioning democratic process, informed voters, and rational deliberation, critics question if the public sphere ideal still offers an appropriate normative guidance for analysing existing democracies that clearly fall far short of these ideal assumptions (e.g. Fenton, 2018: 28).

Regardless, much of media and communication studies still fall back on these familiar concepts, because, in the absence of better alternatives, they at least provide some normative grounding for discussing the role of media. These concepts thus reflect the Rawlsian function of ideal theory in a sense that they provide not only normative benchmarks for evaluating media systems, institutions, and practices, but also as an overarching framework that structures our thinking on the role of media and communication institutions in society.

4. Toward non-ideal normative frameworks for media and communication studies

The purpose of this chapter is not to review or criticize any particular theoretical frameworks here. Theories of the public sphere, for example, range from historical sociology to moral philosophy, and involve many different ways of constructing and employing ideals. It would be reductive to label Habermas’s (1989) public sphere theory, with its many variations, as “ideal theory” in a simplistic sense. However, in contemporary research, theories are often removed from their original contexts and deployed as ideal blueprints in ways that their original theorists may not have intended, or by taking up only a single aspect of that work (Hesmondhalgh & Toynbee, 2008).

The invocation of familiar normative reference points, such as the public sphere, might provide us some normative reassurance, but do they actually help us critically analyze media practices and institutions? If not, then what do we need instead? In debates on ideal and non-ideal theory in political philosophy, the criticisms of ideal theory as detached from actual empirical circumstances is often translated into a call for more focus on policies and institutions instead of abstract principles (Stemplowska & Swift, 2012, p. 387). However, in media and communication studies, there is no shortage of practice-oriented research on media policy and regulation, media use, journalistic institutions and technological changes, among other areas, which involves little engagement with any kinds of theory in general.

The problem is thus not too much theorizing and too little focus on policies and institutions. Instead, there is arguably a need for normative frameworks, which function somewhere between “abstract idealism” and pure “empirical descriptiv-

ism” and which could function as a more “realistic” normative framework for evaluating contemporary mediated phenomena.

As Nancy Fraser (2007: 8) notes in the context of the debates on the public sphere, there is:

[...] a narrow line between two equally unsatisfactory approaches. On the one hand, one should avoid an empiricist approach that simply adapts the theory to the existing realities, as that approach risks sacrificing its normative force. On the other hand, one should also avoid an externalist approach that invokes ideal theory to condemn social reality, as that approach risks forfeiting critical traction.

Focusing on discussions on freedom of communication, I have previously examined three, arguably under-developed theoretical frameworks, which in different ways could provide a basis for non-ideal theorizing of communicative freedom (see Karppinen 2018).

One interesting normative perspective is what German philosopher Axel Honneth (2014) calls “*normative reconstruction*”. According to Honneth, this means developing normative theory by identifying and reworking the norms and ideals already inherent in modern institutions, and then evaluating them through normative comparison. Instead of “*free-standing constructions*” derived from purely normative principles prior to immanent analysis, Honneth (2014: 4–6) argues that normative theory should derive its ideals from the normative claims that have developed within actual social, economic, and political practices and institutions. Similarly, Fraser (2007: 8) has called for “*a critical-theoretical approach that seeks to locate normative standards and emancipatory political possibilities precisely within the historically unfolding constellation*”.

The approach has a number of potentially attractive implications for thinking about communication and media. Normative reconstruction implies that that the institutional blueprint for media and communication systems cannot be generated from abstract principles that precede social analysis. Instead, debates should start from actually existing values developed within civil society and communicative institutions, and proceed to evaluate their validity, mutual cohesion, and conditions of realization. These values can involve, for example, existing legal norms, but also professional ideals, the expectations of the public, and the demands of civil society. The approach of normative reconstruction thus seems to avoid the problem of superimposing abstract, “*free-standing*” principles on current institutions and practices and evaluating how they measure up against these abstract ideals.

Another non-ideal normative framework, which has recently gained some interest in media and communication studies, is provided by the “*capabilities approach*”, developed most prominently by Amartya Sen (2009) and Martha Nuss-

baum (2011). The capabilities approach proposes functional freedoms, or central human capabilities, as a normative starting point. As Sen (2009) argues, debates on human freedom should shift their focus from transcendental, procedural, and abstract ideals to expanding the effective, real freedoms that people enjoy, or what people are actually able to do with the resources available. Instead of advocating any predefined ideals, however, Sen emphasizes the incremental and practical achievements that expand people's opportunities to pursue the objectives that they themselves value. According to Sen (2009: 253) capabilities can thus be understood as the actual opportunities people have to achieve the things that they have good reason to value, and that are constitutive of their wellbeing.

In the context of communication, the approach can help focus on the distribution of social resources that enable or constrain individuals' communicative capabilities. The rise of digital platforms and intermediaries arguably make this perspective even more significant. With digital intermediaries and platforms that increasingly exert structural, algorithmic power that shapes the options and opportunities available to media users, the capabilities perspective provides a normative lens through which various factors, such as technological affordances, economic, social and cultural factors, can both enable or constrain communicative capabilities (Hesmondhalgh, 2017: 213). Sen also emphasizes the need to evaluate different options within the feasible set, rather than a "*transcendental*" approach, which involves assessing those options in the light of an ideal theory. The capabilities approach thus provides a potentially useful framework for comparative work on how different media systems or policies promote people's real communicative opportunities, or for studying communicative inequalities with regard to access or voice between individuals or groups within societies.

Finally, a third, distinct normative-theoretical perspective is found in the radical or post-foundationalist political theories, promoted by theorists such as Chantal Mouffe (2000; 2005). The central claim of this perspective is that not only the liberal model of the marketplace of ideas, but also ideal conceptions of a rational and deliberative public sphere fail to address the inevitable nature of power and existing forms of exclusion. Because of emphasizing the ineradicable nature of hegemonic power relations, the aim from the radical-democratic perspective is not the complete elimination of power relations but their continuing contestation. Instead of imagining ideal models of perfection or harmony, the point is to make seemingly neutral power structures and constraints visible so they can be challenged and reformed. As Mouffe (2005: 51) argues, "*without grasping the structure of the current hegemonic order and the type of power relations through which it is constituted, no real democratization can ever get off the ground*".

Radical-democratic theorists like Mouffe (2000: 33–34) also emphasize how concepts such as democracy and freedom are always indeterminate and open to a

multitude of interpretations, which then provide a basis for real political alternatives. Applied to media and communications, the radical-democratic approach is a call to recognize the aspects of power, exclusion, and control inherent in all communication, rather than an attempt to defend any particular institutional arrangements. Yet, making visible the operation of power relations and the constraints they pose, and imagining political alternatives beyond the existing institutional settings, can itself be a valuable normative contribution to contemporary debates on media.

These three perspectives represent only some of the options available when searching for normative frameworks to think about media and communications. Arguably, such “non-ideal” perspectives can offer, in some ways, a more realistic basis for critical engagement with existing social conditions and distribution of resources. While all three perspectives are normative, they imply different methods and strategies: evaluating the validity of existing institutional promises, comparing the capabilities afforded by different institutional settings, and making existing constraints and structures of power visible.

However, all of these frameworks also involve their own problems, and their full implications for thinking about media and communication needs more development. The point here is therefore not to argue for the superiority of any these perspectives *per se*, but to illustrate the existence of a variety of normative perspectives and theoretical frameworks, each with their strengths and weaknesses, and possible areas of application.

5. Conclusion

The range of normative frameworks available for thinking about media and communications is obviously not limited to theories mentioned here. Neither is the purpose of this chapter to denounce the value of ideal theories as such. As Kwame Anthony Appiah (2017) has illustrated, idealization and abstraction are to some extent a central feature of all human thought including both natural and social sciences’ attempts to understand the world and politics of imagining possible alternatives and visions. The perspectives of ideal and non-ideal approaches can also complement as well as compete.

The distinction between ideal or non-ideal normative theory is therefore not an either/or choice, but better understood in terms of a scale, where different theories have different uses for different purposes. As Appiah (2017: 26) emphasizes, idealization is necessary and sometimes ideals, even when they involve untruth, can be understood as “*useful fictions*” that are helpful “*for managing the world, including, sometimes ourselves*”. Too much idealization can lead to utopianism and loss of practical relevance, but too little idealization can lead to cynicism, or taking

too much as a given and assuming the status quo as the only possibility (Appiah, 2017: 156). For Appiah, the question is therefore about not only which theories are true or untrue, or right or wrong, but also more pragmatically, “*what they enable us to do*” (Appiah, 2017: 41).

In both empirical and theoretical research, media and communication scholars employ normative theories and frameworks in a variety of different ways: as a source of ideas, as a critical vantage point for evaluating practices and institutions, as a yardstick for measuring empirical conditions, for making sense of the world, for draw attention to social problems or research topics, or to generate discussion on new political visions and alternatives. Normative theorization can also be a goal in itself: purely abstract ideal theories can provide philosophical justifications, analyses of the nature and properties of normative concepts, and and thus promote better understanding of the world (e.g. Stemplowska & Swift, 2012). Ultimately, the choice of appropriate normative frameworks and their uses depends on the purpose of the research project and its needs.

References

- Appiah, K. A. (2017) *As if: Idealization and ideals*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Fenton N. (2018) ‘Fake democracy: The limits of public sphere theory’, *Javnost - The Public*, 25(1-2): 28-34.
- Fraser, N. (1992) ‘Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy’, pp. 108-142 in C. Calhoun (Ed.) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Fraser, N. (2007) ‘Transnationalizing the Public Sphere. On the Legitimacy and Efficacy of Public Opinion in a Post-Westphalian World’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24(4): 7–30.
- Habermas, J. (1989) *The structural transformation of the public sphere*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (Original work published in 1962)
- Hesmondhalgh, D. & Toynbee, J. (2008) ‘Why media studies needs better social theory’, pp. 1–24 in D. Hesmondhalgh and J. Toynbee (Eds.) *Media and social theory*. New York: Routledge.
- Jubb, R. (2012) ‘Tragedies of non-ideal theory’, *European Journal of Political Theory*, 11(3): 229-246.
- Kamm, F. (1995) ‘High theory, low theory, and the demands of morality’, *Theory and Practice*, (37): 81-107.
- Karppinen, K. (2018) ‘Freedom without idealization: Non-ideal approaches to freedom of communication’, *Communication Theory*, (29)1: 66-85.
- Kenyon, A. (2014) ‘Assuming free speech’, *The Modern Law Review*, 77(3): 379–408.
- Kioupkiolis, A. (2009) ‘Three paradigms of modern freedom’, *European Journal of Political Theory*, 8(4):473-491.
- Mills, C. W. (2005) ‘“Ideal theory” as ideology’, *Hypatia*, 20(3): 165–184.

- Mouffe, C. (2000) *Democratic paradox*. London: Verso.
- Mouffe, C. (2005) *On the political*. London: Routledge.
- Nussbaum, M. (2011) *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Rawls, J. (1999) *A Theory of justice* (revised edition). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Sen A. (2006) 'What do we want from a theory of justice?', *Journal of Philosophy*, 103(5): 215–38.
- Sen, A. (2009) *The idea of justice*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Schwartzman, L. H. (2006) 'Abstraction, idealization, and oppression', *Metaphilosophy*, 37(5): 565–588.
- Stemplowska, Z. (2008) 'What's ideal about ideal theory?', *Social Theory and Practice*, 34(3): 319–340.
- Stemplowska, Z. & A. Swift (2012) 'Ideal and nonideal theory', pp. 373–389 in D. Estlund (Ed.) *The Oxford handbook of political philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Valentini, L. (2012) 'Ideal vs. non-ideal theory: A conceptual map', *Philosophy Compass*, 7(9): 654–664.
- Williams, B. (2009) *In the beginning was the deed: Realism and moralism in political argument*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Biography

Kari Karppinen is a university lecturer in Media and Communication Studies at the University of Helsinki, Finland, where he is the director of the Master's Program in Global Politics and Communication, and teaches, for example, on media structures and policy and theories of the public sphere and democracy. His research interests include, among others, media freedom and pluralism, media and internet policy, and digital rights. He is the author of *Rethinking Media Pluralism* (2013, Fordham University Press).

Email: kari.karppinen@helsinki.fi

Friends, not foes: Integrating structuralist and agentic perspectives on media consumption

Alyona Khaptsova, Ruben Vandenplas

Abstract

Various disciplines strive to answer the question of how users select the media that they use. Extensive research has been approaching the issue from different, sometimes competing angles, resulting in an estrangement between the fields. This chapter reviews past findings on media selection processes in light of the structure-agency debate and aims to highlight the intersections between audience research on media use and selection, and findings on social cognition, confirmation bias, and selective media exposure as a potential direction for future research.

This chapter bridges the two strands by emphasizing their complementary nature and integrates them into a single theoretical network. It argues that the balance between structure and agency in media selection is contingent upon a 3-layered model of analysis, including: parameters of structures, situations, and individuals. In doing so, the current chapter strives to move away from approaching the relation between structure and agency as a linear process or dichotomy, opting instead to describe the interrelation of both concepts as a circular process, rooting the argument within the current convergence of media and proliferation of algorithms. We conclude by emphasizing the need to further explore these conditioning factors in future research.

Keywords: structure-agency debate, media consumption, personalization era

1. Introduction

Everyday life is overloaded with information; the contemporary media market offers an infinite selection of programming that can satisfy the audience's every whim in terms of content and format. However, attending and processing all available information is beyond human capacities. The idea that people's perception is selective was articulated in as early works as those of William James (1890). Since the beginning of the 20th century, research has started to shed a light on how selectivity functions within media related practices, and which motivations inform it.

Human-media interaction represents behavior of individuals within their information environments, which means that both characteristics of individuals and those of their environments affect the resulting behavior. The question which of the two forces is the primary source of influence has different answers in the disciplines that traditionally prioritize either structure (e.g. sociology, structuralist theory) or agency (e.g. psychology, cognitive science, cultural studies). Taking either of the perspectives as a guiding framework enabled researchers to shed light on how structure affects agents and how agents act within structures. This has laid the foundation for research exploring the possible middle-ground of the structure-agency debate, such as structuration theory, which critiqued the "*lack of a theory of action in the social sciences*", and situated human agency first and foremost in specific social and geographical contexts (Giddens, 1979). Today's personalization era empowers users to freely choose their information diet (Stroud, 2008; Jenkins, 2004; Balbi, 2017; Barra & Scaglioni, 2017) and at the same time creates an informational overload that restricts users' consumption to echo chambers or even results in the refusal of new information (Garrett, 2009; Picone, 2013; Anderson, 2018). The way in which users are empowered to make more conscious and agentic decisions in their media diets, coupled with how current technologies (e.g. customization algorithms) create structures, suggests an interdependence of structure and agency. This has rekindled the salience of investigating the nature of agency and structure today. More specifically, this paper aims to demonstrate that the interaction between structure and agency transcends the linear models described by previous researchers. Building on the discussions in the following sections, we will outline how practices of contemporary media consumption suggest a circular process, where agency engenders structure, and structures informs agency.

2. The structure - agency dualism in social sciences

The dualism between structure and agency is one of the most prominent dichotomies in the social sciences, and the interaction and priority of one over the other is

the subject of chronic debate. While structure is often described as a constellation of rules and resources, which of themselves have attained a level of autonomy that allows them to guide the actions of individuals (Sewell, 1992; Giddens, 1984; Walsh, 1998), agentic theories envision individuals to be the authors of their own fates that consciously navigate and select among these structures to suit their needs (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Walsh, 1998; Hall, 2014). In other words: is it structure that engenders the behavior of individuals, or do individuals have the power to consciously act out of their own volition (Walsh, 1998)?

While some prominent theories in media studies have chosen to apply themselves to a single side of the debate (Loisen, Joye, & Verstraeten 2016; Hall, 2014), others have opted to seek a middle ground (Giddens, 1984; Gutiérrez & Calabrese Barton, 2015). However, even more theories focus on the daily practices of users, thus overcoming the highly theoretical morass of the structure-agency dichotomy altogether (Layder, 2005). In this chapter, we will draw from such theories in order to highlight complementary and interdependent layers of analysis that any exploration of media use would profit from taking into account.

2.1. Structuralist perspectives on media consumption

In order to further elaborate on our argument on the interrelated nature of agency and structure when considering the media selection of users today, we propose the recently introduced concept of media repertoires as a theoretical entry point. This concept can be seen as an answer of audience researchers to the increased convergence of media and the mobility of audiences today. Media repertoires are constellations of all the different media devices, platforms, and content that a given person uses on a regular basis. Within the constellation, all of the various media components are linked together in such a way that they inform the media that a person chooses and uses. In this sense, the media constellation (or repertoire) informs and *structures* the media consumption of users. The media selection of a certain user, in other words, does not occur in isolation, devoid of other media influences, rather, the selection process of users is informed by the relations of the medium in question to all other components within the user's media repertoire (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006; Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012; Kim, 2016; Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017).

The media repertoire approach thus provides a reiteration of the structure-agency duality within current audience research, by highlighting their function as a structure which regulates the agency of the media user. While it draws inspiration from the very agentic perspectives on media selection offered by the Uses

& Gratifications approach, it envelops this agency in a more structuralist package which betrays a theoretical lineage between the media repertoire approach and Giddens' structuration theory which equally positions itself in the middle ground of the structure-agency debate (Giddens, 1984; Palmgreen, 1984; Hasebrink & Popp, 2006; Schröder, 2011). This theoretical lineage becomes even more clear through the more recent elaboration of media repertoires in the form of media ensembles, which operationalize the way in which users draw from the media used by different communicative figurations they belong to (such as their family, friends, colleagues, etc.) when constructing their own personal repertoires (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017).

The triple articulation theory complements the media repertoire research by highlighting that media should not be approached solely as texts and objects (cf. double articulation: Livingstone, 2007). Instead, the theory proposes to equally examine the specific socio-spatial context in which media use takes place as a separate *third articulation* of media that impacts both their meaning and use (Courtois, Verdegem, & De Marez, 2013). In this sense, theories of articulation highlight a tendency of current audience research to reemphasize the effects of structure.

Triple articulation theory thus takes up the call put forward by Giddens, bringing back more attention to the specific ways in which users 'domesticate' media according to their physicality, content, and the specific socio-spatial context of use. Moreover, it balances out recent tendencies in audience research to shift towards prioritizing the structural parameters (i.e. media repertoires and ensembles) and their influence on media use and selection. While placing users at the centre in their explorations of media use and selection processes, media repertoire theory seems to emphasize the context in which media use takes place, and rarely seems to engage with characteristics of users such as their goals, identities and beliefs, or the ways in which they actively renegotiate meaning (cfr. articulation and domestication theory). However, we argue that an account of individual characteristics, combined with structural and situational parameters, is necessary in order to explore the interdependency of structure and agency. Especially so in times of personalized media.

2.2. *Agentic perspective on media consumption*

The proponents of the agentic views on human-media interaction, in contrast, focus on individuals and their characteristics as a driving force of media consumption. Past studies see people, their needs, and goals central to this process, whereas the media are instruments for satisfying those goals or needs. From that

perspective, all information can be classified in relation to the individuals' identities, beliefs or needs as relevant/irrelevant and supporting/threatening. Although all the diversity of information available to people can technically undergo this classification, processing it is beyond human capacities. The two broad theoretical accounts—information-processing and motivational—seek to unveil how selectivity functions.

2.2.1. Agency as a side effect of information processing

Information-processing theories describe the mechanics of interaction with information and sense-making. The construct which helps to navigate through complex social and physical worlds are cognitive schemata (Bartlett, 1932/1995; Fiske & Linville, 1980). They represent organized units of knowledge about different objects, situations, and relationships between them. Schemata reduce cognitive load which individuals would experience if they process all incoming stimuli as if they were unique. Development of schemata starts in the early childhood and continues throughout the life. New information, when it adds to one's knowledge, updates and specifies the most relevant schema in order to keep one's reactions to the environment optimal (Bartlett, 1932/1995; Fiske & Linville, 1980).

The process of updating is not constant: once schemata have shown themselves useful in everyday life, they start resisting revisions. Moreover, they switch to the role of gatekeepers, which devalue any evidence contradicting the schema (Axelrod, 1973). This mechanism helps to reduce cognitive load even more and translates into need for consistency (Festinger, 1957; Gawronski & Brannon, 2016). This transition shows how the construct that was initially informed by the environment internalizes and becomes a rather stable characteristic of an individual which moderates environmental influence on behavior. Hence, with the switch of schemata's functions from specification and revision to evaluation and filtering comes the shift of the forces from structure to agency.

Another sign of agency in information consumption is the hierarchical structure of one's preferences in media contents. The interest priorities and their differences across individuals arise from the variation in individual characteristics: identities, attitudes and beliefs, or goals and needs (Hart, Albarracín, Eagly, Brenchan, Lindberg, & Merrill, 2009; Bolsen & Lepper, 2013). While subjective importance of those characteristics defines the degree of relevance of the information to oneself (Holbrook, Berent, Krosnick, Visser, & Boninger, 2005), knowledge about them (self-schemata) categorizes incoming information in relation to one's own position (Markus, 1977). Although self-schemata can shed a light on what individual preferences may look like, they are not sufficient to predict actual exposure.

2.2.2. *Agency as motivations to interaction with the media*

Motivational theories, which go hand in hand with the Uses and Gratifications theory, in their strive to explain why people use information, distinguish three abstract types of motivations: (1) defence motivation, when people search for information in order to confirm their own position; (2) accuracy motivation which guides search for information in decision making; and (3) motivation for cognitive economy, when people prefer information that is easier to process (Fischer & Greitemeyer, 2010; Fischer, 2011).

Defence motivation activates when incoming information contradicts one's important beliefs or challenges decisions or social identity. Situation of inconsistency causes cognitive dissonance which people experience as negative arousal (Festinger, 1957). To reduce dissonance, people can use one of the three strategies, which equally give the sense of approval. The first strategy is selective approach: people seek only supporting information (Hart et al., 2009). Another strategy is selective avoidance. When avoiding information selectively, people do not show active interest in supporting evidence, instead they deliberately avoid exposure to threatening information (Garrett, Carnahan, & Lynch, 2013). The third strategy, on the contrary, involves active exposure to threatening information in order to refute it (Albarracín & Mitchell, 2004). Yet, this motivation does not get activated if there is nothing to defend.

People also use the media in order to get prepared for making a decision or use it as an instrument in goal pursuit. Because people typically want to make the best possible (not necessarily rational) decision, they are motivated to put some effort in the preparatory steps. That translates into so-called balanced exposure: when all arguments have the same value and receive equal attention (Hart et al., 2009).

Cognitive economy guides the search when people are certain in the correctness of their preliminary position (Fischer, 2011). In this case, people prefer information which is easy for comprehension; for example, something familiar or consonant to their own opinion (D'Alessio, 2015). Interestingly, at the behavioural level both defence and cognitive economy motivations look similar. The interplay between different motivations is conditional upon both individual and situational parameters.

Overall, media studies, psychology, and cognitive science provide, together, a profound theoretical background for further explorations of human-media interaction in a dynamic digital world. While research inspired by a structuralist worldview has described the forces creating and transforming the media environments people live in, studies prioritizing agency have modelled processes and mechanisms underlying media consumption. Yet, the fluid nature of human cognition, society, and the media makes it counterproductive to maintain the traditional separation of these disciplines.

3. Interdependence of structure and agency in media consumption

Previous studies investigated how the patterns of media consumption vary across individuals, situations, and structures:

3.1 Parameters of structures

The way in which structures affect media users may differ according to the specific characteristics or parameters of these structures. For instance, while the composition of media ensembles may differ greatly according to the communicative figurations they belong to, they nevertheless restrict the access of users to media devices and content. In this sense, the constellation of configurations users belong to offers a pool of sources from which users construct their own personal media repertoires. One example of such moderation would be the content of the feed on Facebook, which is unique for each user and depends on the composition of their network of friends. It follows that certain media ensembles may not only engender agency by offering access to a pool of media content and/or devices from which users may construct a personal media repertoire but may equally restrict users by functioning similarly to echo chambers (Dylko, 2015). The latter is especially likely in polarized environments, which question correctness of users' beliefs and activate defence motivation in media consumption (Tsang, 2017; Fischer, Kastenmüller, Greitemeyer, Fischer, Frey, & Crelley, 2011).

The media ensembles do not distribute media equally amongst all members of the communicative figuration. The access of individuals to media within the ensemble equally corresponds to the flow and distribution of power within the communicative figuration. Depending on the position of users within the figuration, they will be able to convert power into access to media (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017). Moreover, the surge of algorithms which curate the media exposure of users today might urge researchers to draw inspiration from Actor-Network theory to equally consider nonhuman actors as a part of current communicative figurations (Murdoch, 1997; Latour, 2005).

Mapping the theory of capital (Bourdieu, 2008) onto media ensembles, we can see how the transaction between communicative figurations (social capital) and media ensembles (cultural capital) betrays the cracks in the binary opposition between structure and agency. While the accumulation and transmission of capitals essentially shows the contours of structure that restricts the agency of users in media practices, it is the user's agency that allows them to essentially convert these capitals.

3.2. *Parameters of situations*

Situations in which media consumption takes place are often fluid and unpredictable. Nevertheless, past studies attempted to model the daily practices or situations of users, such as information consumption while multitasking. In this situation, users engage in different processes and attend to different types of information simultaneously, which may result in cognitive overload that decreases users' ability to evaluate information in relation to their own position and makes them less selective (Jang, 2014) and more suggestible (Gilbert, 1991). The opposite effect on confirmatory selectivity has limited, both real and perceived, access to information. The sense of scarcity pushes users to use "the best" available evidence, which tends to coincide with their preliminary positions (Fischer, Jonas, Frey, & Schilz-Hardt, 2005).

Although past studies examined short-term effects of the two conditions on selectivity, the consequences of multitasking and scarcity, when they become a daily routine, are underinvestigated. The constant distraction may enable structures to introduce new information without the latter being critically inspected by users. In turn, scarcity and the pressure to make decisions pushes users to refer to their own knowledge and experience, including newly received information, which consolidates those experiences even more. As a result, users may become more vulnerable and dependent on their current repertoires, while maintaining an illusion of their own agency.

Routines and habits represent a special interest when exploring the interplay of structure and agency, as they may help to grasp the dynamics of schemata development and their function within users' media repertoires and subsequent transformations. When people repeatedly choose to expose themselves to a certain type of information, their preference for consistency and confidence in that choice grows (Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, Frey, & Thelen, 2001; Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2011). As a result, not only like-minded content, but also habitual practices provide a sense of consistency, as contents become tied to sources and devices.

Disruptions in the refuge of habits leads to distress (Silverstone, 1993), which may trigger defence motivation in order to restore the status quo. This again puts the opposition between structure and agency to the test. Through routine use, media practices become a structure that steers the behavior of users; however, as indicated by Wilk (2009), users will at times choose to enforce consistency in (media) routines in order to avoid discomfort. Hence, structure is not only in part formed through the agency of users, making it habitual and unconscious, but at times users strategically invoke the structure (Wilk, 2009).

3.3. *Parameters of users*

Past research identified two types of individual-level characteristics that affect media consumption. One of them is importance of and confidence in one's own identities, attitudes, beliefs, or goals. The more importance people give to some of them, the more likely incoming information would activate defence motivation, resulting in confirmatory exposure (Hart et al., 2009) and to the potential repertoire's homogenisation.

Other individual-level characteristics, affecting the way people interact with information, are: the need for cognition and the need for closure, which define how well people tolerate uncertainty in their lives. The need for cognition drives curiosity and increases the chances that unfamiliar contents and new sources will be selected by a user (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). In contrast, the need for closure drives a desire to reduce the uncertainty through finding an ultimate answer to a question as soon as possible (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Thus, satisfaction of the need will include avoidance of the unfamiliar. These antagonistic needs affect how likely new information would enrich users. That, in turn, defines how transparent the borders of one's repertoire are and how rapidly the repertoire can change. These findings suggest that individual characteristics not only navigate selectivity within media environments, but also actively transform or expand those environments.

Past research dealing with the conditioning effects caused by variations in parameters of structures, situations, and individuals often investigated them in isolation from one another. We argue, future research should account for the specific compositions of the parameters and their interaction with one another in order to unveil the specific mechanisms of media use and selection.

4. Conclusions

This chapter aimed to highlight the interdependence of the agentic and structuralist perspectives on media use. This interdependence finds two reflections: first, contemporary media environments, while being structures, are often formed by the past activity of the users through mechanisms of personalization and algorithms of customization. Second, the agentic component, like identities or beliefs of users, develops within and under the influence of the environments people reside in, and hence represent the internalized structures which inform user behaviour. Both implicitly emphasize the temporal dimension of media use and the fact that consumption is a process. Ethnographic or phenomenological approach, more strongly rooted in an analysis of daily practice, might prove useful in highlighting the entanglement of structure and agency mentioned above (see: Schatzki, 2001).

This focus on situating media use in daily practices highlights the interactions between the conditioning factors of media use which correspond to the three layers of analysis described in this chapter. We argue that affording more attention to the *parameters of situations*, brings us closer to the main arguments of theories that emphasize the interaction and interdependency of structure and agency, rather than trapping both in a binary opposition. Giddens, in particular, argued that “*time-space relations are inherent in the constitution of all social interaction*” (Giddens, 1979); a call that seems to have been taken up by those that subscribe to theories of double and triple articulation of media (Livingstone, 2007; Courtois et al., 2013). We build upon the argument by reiterating that media should not only be researched as texts, but equally objects in a specific socio-spatial context, the meanings of which are defined in relation to individual beliefs and strategies of users.

We thus, similar to structuration theorists, seek to evade any binary opposition between structure and agency by proposing that the interdependency of both can be seen as a circular process. Particularly salient in times of personalization and customization through algorithms, we argue that agency engenders structure, and structure, in turn by being internalized, informs and regulates the agency of individuals.

References

- Albarracín, D. & Mitchell, A. L. (2004) ‘The role of defensive confidence in preference for proattitudinal information: how believing that one is strong can sometimes be a defensive weakness’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(12): 1565–1584.
- Anderson, M. (2018) *How teens and parents navigate screen time and device distractions* (January, 2016). Retrieved from Pew Research Center website: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/01/07/how-parents-monitor-their-teens-digital-behavior/>
- Axelrod, R. (1973) ‘Schema theory: An information processing model of perception and cognition’ *The American Political Science Review*, 67(4): 1248–1266.
- Balbi, G. (2017) ‘Deconstructing “media convergence”: A cultural history of the buzzword, 1980s–2010s’, pp. 31–51 in S. Sparvierio, C. Peil, & G. Balbi (Eds.) *Media Convergence and Deconvergence*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Barra, L. & Scaglioni, M. (2017) ‘Blurred lines, distinct forces: The evolving practices of Italian TV audiences in a convergent scenario’, pp. 75–91 in S. Sparvierio, C. Peil, & G. Balbi (Eds.) *Media Convergence and Deconvergence*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bartlett, F.C. (1995) *Remembering: A study in experimental and social psychology*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1932)
- Bolsen, T. & Leeper, T. J. (2013) ‘Self-interest and attention to news among issue publics’ *Political Communication*, 30(3): 329–348.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Bourdieu, P. (2008) 'The forms of capital', pp. 280-291 in N.W. Biggart (Ed.) *Readings in economic sociology*. Malden, Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.
- Cacioppo, J. T. & Petty, R. E. (1982) 'The need for cognition', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 42(1): 116-131.
- Courtois, C., Verdegem, P., & De Marez, L. (2013) 'The triple articulation of media technologies in audiovisual media consumption', *Television & New Media*, 14(5): 421-439.
- D'Alessio, D. (2015) 'Selective exposure under conditions of low information utility', *Communication Research Reports*, 32(1): 102-106.
- Dylko, I. B. (2015) 'How technology encourages political selective exposure', *Communication Theory*, 26: 389-409.
- Emirbayer, M. & Mische, A. (1998) 'What is agency?', *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4): 962-1023.
- Festinger, L. (1957) *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Fischer, P. (2011) 'Selective exposure, decision uncertainty, and cognitive economy: A new theoretical perspective on confirmatory information search', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5(10): 751-762.
- Fischer, P. & Greitemeyer, T. (2010) 'A new look at selective-exposure effects: An integrative model', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 19(6): 384-389.
- Fischer, P., Jonas, E., Frey, D., & Schulz-Hardt, S. (2005) 'Selective exposure to information: The impact of information limits', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 35: 469-492.
- Fischer, P., Kastenmüller, A., Greitemeyer, T., Fischer, J., Frey, D., & Crelley, D. (2011) 'Threat and selective exposure: The moderating role of threat and decision context on confirmatory information search after decisions', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 140(1): 51-62.
- Fiske, S.T. & Linville, P.W. (1980) 'What does the schema concept buy us?', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 6(4), 543-557.
- Garrett, K. R. (2009) 'Echo chambers online? Politically motivated selective exposure among Internet news users', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14(2): 265-285.
- Garrett, R. K., Carnahan, D., & Lynch, E. K. (2013) 'A turn toward avoidance? Selective exposure to online political information, 2004-2008', *Political Behavior*, 35(1): 113-134.
- Gawronski, B. & Brannon, S. M. (2016) 'What is cognitive consistency and why does it matter?', In *Cognitive Dissonance: Progress on a Pivotal Theory in Social Psychology*: 1-16. Advance online publication. Retrieved from: http://www.bertramgawronski.com/documents/GB_HJDISS.pdf
- Giddens, A. (1979) *Central problems in social theory: Action, structure and contradiction in social analysis*. London and Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Giddens, A. (1984) *The constitution of society: Outline of the structuration theory*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Gilbert, D. T. (1991) 'How mental systems believe', *American Psychologist*, 46: 107-119.
- Gutiérrez, K. D., & Calabrese Barton, A. (2015). 'The possibilities and limits of the structure-agency dialectic in advancing science for all', *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 52(4), 574-583.

- Hall, S. (2014) 'Encoding and decoding the message', pp. 111-121 in Angermuller, J., Maingueneau, D., & Wodak, R. (Eds.). *The discourse studies reader: Main currents in theory and analysis*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Hart, W., Albarracin, D., Eagly, A. H., Brenchan, I., Lindberg, M. J., & Merrill, L. (2009) 'Feeling validated versus being correct: A meta-analysis of selective exposure to information', *Psychological Bulletin*, 135(4): 555-588.
- Hasebrink, U. & Domeyer, H. (2012) 'Media repertoires as patterns of behaviour and as meaningful practices: A multimethod approach to media use in converging media environments', *Participations*, 9(2): 757-779.
- Hasebrink, U. & Popp, J. (2006) 'Media repertoires as a result of selective media use. A conceptual approach to the analysis of patterns of exposure', *Communications*, 31(3): 369-387.
- Hasebrink, U. & Hepp, A. (2017) 'How to research cross-media practices? Investigating media repertoires and media ensembles', *Convergence*, 23(4): 362-377.
- Holbrook, A. L., Berent, M. K., Krosnick, J. A., Visser, P. S., & Boninger, D. S. (2005) 'Attitude importance and the accumulation of attitude-relevant knowledge in memory', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88 (5): 749-769.
- James, W. (1890) *Principles of psychology*. New York: Holt.
- Jang, S. M. (2014) 'Challenges to selective exposure: Selective seeking and avoidance in a multi-tasking media environment', *Mass Communication and Society*, 17(5): 665-688.
- Jenkins, H. (2004). 'The cultural logic of media convergence', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 7(1): 33-43.
- Jonas, E., Schulz-Hardt, S., Frey, D., & Thelen, N. (2001) 'Confirmation bias in sequential information search after preliminary decisions: An expansion of dissonance theoretical research on selective exposure to information', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80(4): 557-571.
- Kim, S. J. (2016) 'A repertoire approach to cross-platform media use behavior', *New Media & Society*, 18(3): 353-372.
- Knobloch-Westerwick, S. & Meng, J. (2011) 'Reinforcement of the political self through selective exposure to political messages', *Journal of Communication*, 61(2): 349-368.
- Latour, B. (2005) *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Layder, D. (2005) *Modern social theory: Key debates and new directions*. London: Routledge.
- Livingstone, S. (2007) 'On the material and the symbolic: Silverstone's double articulation of research traditions in new media studies', *New Media & Society*, 9(1): 16-24.
- Loisen, J., Joye, S., & Verstraeten, H. (2016) *Communicatie & media: een inleiding tot communicatiewetenschappen: onderzoek en theorie*. Leuven, Den Haag: Acco.
- Markus, H. (1977) 'Self-schemata and processing information about the self', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 35(2): 63-78.
- Murdoch, J. (1997) 'Inhuman/nonhuman/human: actor-network theory and the prospects for a nondualistic and symmetrical perspective on nature and society', *Environment and planning*

D: Society and Space, 15(6): 731-756.

- Palmgreen, P. (1984) 'Uses and gratifications: A theoretical perspective', *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 8(1): 20-55.
- Picone, I. (2013) 'Situating liquid media use: Challenges for media ethnography', *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 9(3): 47-70.
- Schatzki, T. (2001) 'Introduction: practice theory', pp. 1-10 in K. K. Cetina, T. R. Schatzki, & E. Von Savigny (Eds.) *The practice turn in contemporary theory*. Oxon, New York: Routledge.
- Schröder, K. C. (2011). Audiences are inherently cross-media: Audience studies and the cross-media challenge. *CM Communication and Media*, 6(18), 5-27.
- Sewell, W. (1992) 'A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation', *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(1): 1-29. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2781191>
- Silverstone, R. (1993) 'Television, ontological security and the transitional object', *Media, Culture & Society*, 15(4): 573-598.
- Smith, S. M., Fabrigar, L. R., & Norris, M.E. (2008) 'Reflecting on six decades of selective exposure research: Progress, challenges, and opportunities', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2(1): 464-493.
- Stroud, N. J. (2008) 'Media use and political predispositions : Revisiting the concept of selective exposure', *Political Behavior*, 30(3): 341-366.
- Tsang, S. (2017) 'Cognitive discrepancy, dissonance, and selective exposure', *Media Psychology*, 0(0): 1-24.
- Walsh, D. (1998) 'Structure/Agency', pp. 8-33 in C. Jenks (ed.) *Core sociological dichotomies*. London: Sage.
- Webster, D. M. & Kruglanski, A. W. (1994) 'Individual differences in need for cognitive closure', *Journal of Personality*, 67(6): 1049-1062.
- Wilk, R. (2009) 'The edge of agency', pp. 143-156 in Shove, E., Trentman, F., & Wilk R. (Eds.) *Time, consumption and everyday life: Practice, materiality and culture*. Oxford, New York: Berg.
- Woodworth R.S. (1923) *Psychology: A study of mental life*. New York: H. Holt and Company.

Biographies

Alyona Khaptsova is a PhD fellow at BIGSSS, where she investigates how value priorities of people guide their attention to and interpretation of media information in context of the current socio-political situation of Russia. Social psychologist by training, she applies theories and methodology of her native field to research questions traditionally asked by sociologists and communications scholars.

khaptsova@bigsss-bremen.de

Ruben Vandenplas joined the research group imec-SMIT-VUB in 2016 where he got the opportunity to work on a wide variety of subjects including support structures for the Flemish videogame

industry. A year later, he took the opportunity to start a PhD in media studies exploring the media repertoires of Flemish users in an age of convergence and mediatization, and how these are connected to their daily lives.

Ruben.Vandenplas@vub.be

The rise of the alternative: Critical usefulness of the “Alternative Media” notion in the Czech context

Ondrej Pekacek

Abstract

Czech alternative media have experienced a decade of remarkable growth. One of the exemplary cases is the rise of the alternative outlet *Parlamentní Listy* (*The Parliament Letters*), whose readership rivals the mainstream press, despite media watchdogs implicating it in the spread of disinformation. The emergence of staunchly anti-pluralist and disinformation-linked outlets such as *Parlamentní Listy* has proved to be a substantial challenge to the prevailing research paradigm that has considered the proliferation of alternative media as a positive development for democracy. The first part of this chapter examines structural factors of this conjuncture, particularly the role of public distrust of mainstream media, the increased media concentration at the hands of domestic business moguls and foreign actor sponsorship. To address the shortcomings of current research, the chapter also examines the applicability and limitations of two additional frameworks. The Alternative Media Anti-Systemness Matrix (AMAM), which extends the Mainstream/Alternative Continuum (MAC) by focusing specifically on ideological and relational anti-systemness of alternative media. The Populist Political Communication Framework (PPCF), in turn, expands on the character of the communication of the antagonistic relations, thus enabling us to gather additional insights regarding the creation of horizontal (“the people” vs “the elites”) and vertical (“the people” vs “the others”) antagonisms and better distinguish between the ideological orientations of the Czech alternative media outlets.

Keywords: Czech media ecosystem, media transformation, alternative media theory, anti-systemness, populist communication

1. Introduction

Czech society has not escaped the global phenomenon of political polarization as evidenced by the Presidential election of 2018 and the attitudes towards the European refugee crisis (Cervenka, 2018; Pehe, 2018). A change of the “*media regimes*” (Beaufort, 2018) with the increasing dominance of digital news sources, seems to drive this development (Yang et al., 2016). The growth of antagonistic alternative media outlets with questionable regard for journalistic norms is a significant factor in the process of political polarization that works through the “*spiral of mistrust*,” conspiracy theories and the promotion of anti-elite sentiments (Figschou & Ihlebæk, 2018; Haller & Holt, 2018).

In this context, the Czech case study is worthy of closer attention. As a result of growing distrust towards traditional media, intensified ownership concentration and foreign actor sponsorship, the Czech alternative media ecosystem experienced a boom in the past decade. Currently, some 39 percent of the respondents engage with the alternative sources at least a few times per month (Center for Insights in Survey Research, 2017). A case in point is the most widely read alternative outlet *Parlamentni Listy* (*The Parliament Letters*). Despite its evocative name, it has no affiliation to the Czech Parliament. It has been characterized by some commentators as a “*bridge into the world of disinformation*” (Kundra, 2017). Researchers have also questioned its manipulative strategies, such as blaming, labeling and fabulation (Gregor & Vejvodova, 2016).

The story of the emergence of *Parlamentni Listy* is exemplary of other Czech alternative media. Established in 2003 as a print monthly with limited circulation, it has seen its readership rise since 2008 with its new online platform and a novel publishing strategy. The site publishes over 100 articles per day, but its original content accounts only for about 15 percent of the material (Stetka, 2016). This approach has paid off, as it attracts about 700,000 monthly readers. Understanding this success begs the question: What was the opportunity structure that enabled Czech alternative outlets to quickly establish themselves as serious competitors to the mainstream media?

Despite the dramatic changes, critical research of the Czech alternative media has been limited to the work conducted by investigative journalists, such as Ondrej Kundra from *Respekt* magazine, think tanks such as *European Values* and fact-checking initiatives, such as *Demagog* and *Manipulatori* (European Journalism Observatory, 2017). To enhance the lack of academic research on the issue, the second part of this chapter examines three key explanatory threads to the

emergence of the alternative media ecosystem. Finally, the third part discusses the advantages and limitations of three theoretical frameworks for alternative media categorization.

2. The rise of Czech alternative media: Three explanatory threads

In 1993, the newly established independent Czech Republic and its democratic system brought in media commercialization and tabloidization, with priorities shifting from information value to entertainment (Volek, 2010). These trends were closely linked with an increasing domestic ownership concentration which accelerated after the exit of foreign media houses in the early 2010s (Stetka, 2012a). How could we then categorize the current Czech media ecosystem? Within the group of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, the Czech media system belongs to a cluster, which also includes Poland, Croatia and Slovenia. All of these countries share a high prevalence of domestic ownership in the post-2008 period, unlike the “northern cluster” (Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia), where the domestic actors are weaker (Herrero, Humprecht, Engesser, Brüggemann, & Büchel, 2017). Foreign ownership tends to positively impact investigative journalism quality (Salovaara & Juzefovics, 2012) and substantial differences exist in the CEE region in this aspect (Stetka & Örnebring, 2013). Given this intra-regional diversity, we should also expect different configurations of alternative media, highlighting the need for individual country studies to fully grasp this phenomenon. To capture these specific conditions in the Czech case, three threads are crucial: distrust of mainstream media, “oligarchization” and sponsorship of foreign actors.

While the long-term *decline of media trust* is a global phenomenon, the Czech Republic, with 31 percent overall media trust, ranks the 5th lowest in the world (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2018). The relative stability of trust persisted into the late 2000s but sharply declined since then (Hanzlova, 2018). This development predominantly affected the youngest cohort (18 to 29-year-olds), those with low economic background and the left-wing voters (Volek & Urbanikova, 2018). Closer scrutiny shows that only 15 percent of young Czechs trust professional media, while 30 percent trust the alternative media and 20 percent trust both types of sources (Macek et al., 2018). The ideological discrepancy is one of the factors; Czech journalists tend to be more right-wing than the Czech public. The new generation of journalists has not significantly changed this trend (Moravec, Urbanikova, & Volek, 2015). In addition to demographics, media logic is another factor in public trust. As Bartholome, Lecheler, and de Vreese (2015) argue, jour-

nalists contribute to the emergence of conflict frames in the news. This game-framing of political news coverage could negatively affect trust (Hopmann, Shehata, & Strömbäck, 2015) and result in alternative news-seeking behavior, contributing to a feedback loop leading to more distrust and cynicism (Jackob, 2010). Media trust also correlates with a general trust in political institutions, either directly (Lee, 2010) or through journalists as mediators in this process (Hanitzsch & Berganza, 2012). Recent international data support this interpretation, but it remains to be seen to what degree there is an interplay in the Czech case as well (Pew Research Center, 2018).

The process of *oligarchization* has been partially theorized as the effect of perceived political bias on declining media trust (Ardévol-Abreu & Gil De Zúñiga, 2017). In the early 1990s, the journalistic community expected fast development of professional journalism, with independent media serving as the fourth estate of the young liberal democracy. However, this vision left little room for the critical consideration of the role of media ownership and the character of the media market (Jirak & Köpplova, 2013). A loose regulatory framework of media ownership enabled early privatization and foreign investment. Swiss and German publishing houses were particularly active, with *Ringier* establishing the first Czech tabloid *Blesk* in 1991 (Stetka, 2010; Stetka, 2012b). However, domestic ownership escalated after the Great Recession of the late 2000s, when foreign investors divested, enabling the domestic business tycoons such as Zdenek Bakala, Daniel Kretinsky and Jaromir Soukup to step in (MediaGuru, 2016; Stetka, 2015). Concerns over political instrumentalization of media have amplified. In a 2015 interview, Czech billionaire Marek Dospiva admitted that media ownership provides a potential “*shield against irrational attacks*” by political adversaries (Mikulka, 2015). The most high-profile case is the current Prime Minister Andrej Babis. He acquired the largest publishing house, MAFRA, shortly before the 2013 parliamentary elections (Esser, Stepinska, & Hopmann, 2016). This caused an outflow of journalists, some of them founding alternative media outlets such as *Echo24* and *Forum24* (Hajek, Stefanikova, Lab, & Tejkalova, 2015). Decreasing media pluralism has resulted in a falling trend of the Czech Republic in international press freedom indexes.¹

The final thread of *foreign influence* ties to the general scholarly debate on disinformation and hybrid warfare (see Faris et al., 2017; Tucker et al., 2018). The

1 *World Press Freedom Index* from 16th (2008) to 34th (2018) (Reporters Without Borders, 2018). The *Freedom of the Press* shows a smaller drop, 25th (2008) to 26th (2017), but the absolute score describing ownership concentration and political instrumentalization has clearly worsened (Freedom House, 2018).

2017 report of the Czech Security Information Service details robust Russian hybrid warfare strategy aimed to foment internal divisions. A backbone of this effort is the “*information warfare*,” which spreads disinformation and pro-Russian propaganda through covert infiltration of the Czech alternative media scene (Security Information Service, 2018). Researchers identified 39 disinformation-linked alternative media websites (Janda & Vichova, 2016) and follow-up survey found that 25 percent of respondents trust these outlets (Janda, Blazejovska, & Vlasak, 2016). It is not easy to distinguish between some alternative media directly working under foreign sponsorship and some merely having similar political objectives. For instance, the Czech version of *Sputnik News* (formerly *The Voice of Russia*) has a clear pro-Russian affiliation. *Aeronet*, in turn, initially served as a closed forum for hackers and transformed to a news server the day after the Russian annexation of Crimea. It has a complex international ownership structure but lacks the “smoking gun” evidence of Russian involvement (Kundra, 2016). Finally, there are outlets such as *AC24*, founded by a Czech entrepreneur Ondrej Gersl, who claims to challenge the “*lying and manipulative mainstream media*” (Rostecky, 2014). While the style and content of *AC24* are close to other pro-Russian disinformation outlets, similarly to the case of *Aeronet*, current evidence is mostly circumstantial.

To fully understand the interplay between alternative media and disinformation, a two-pronged approach is needed. Firstly, a qualitative examination would analyze the ownership structures and motivations of journalists in these outlets. Secondly, we need a “big data” approach, such as that of Fletcher, Cornia, Graves, & Nielsen (2018), to examine the degree of the disinformation spread and the interplay with social network platforms.

3. Categorizing the alternative media: Three ways forward

A substantial amount of literature, particularly in the critical media studies (CMS), adopts a normative outlook—alternative media are seen to positively affect democracy through the empowerment of marginalized groups (Atton, 2015; Kenix, 2011; Lievrouw, 2011). However, the emergence of anti-pluralist and disinformation-linked outlets has challenged this research paradigm, highlighting the need for an interdisciplinary understanding of this phenomenon (Bennett & Livingston, 2018; Holt & Haller, 2017; Kaati, Shrestha, & Cohen, 2016). In what follows, I will compare three theoretical frameworks from comparative politics, critical media studies and political communication to help alternative media scholarship to make a more elaborated sense of the current research needs.

3.1. Mainstream/Alternative Continuum (MAC)

The first model, Mainstream/Alternative Continuum (MAC), stems from critical media studies where the dichotomy between mainstream and alternative media has given way to the notion of hybridity (Rauch, 2014, 2016), conceiving the difference as a “*spectrum*” (Kenix, 2011) or a “*continuum*” (Harcup, 2005). The resulting overview in Table 1 follows Atton (2001); Carpentier, Lie, & Servaes (2003); Hajek & Carpentier (2015) and incorporates two major approaches to the study of alternative media in CMS scholarship: structural (see “social context” and “content”) and process approach (see “organization” and “funding”).

The MAC model sets qualitative criteria for alternative media structure and behavior and acknowledges its anti-systemness. However, it does not elaborate on the type of this antagonism nor the way it is communicated. This framework is valuable for recognizing alternative media without strong antagonistic/populist characteristics. A Czech example is *Denik Referendum* (Referendum Daily), founded in 2009, a grassroots, left-wing outlet, which is dependent on community donations and has around 10,000 readers a day.

Table 1: MAC framework

Features	Mainstream media	Alternative media
Social Context	Serves the owners’ interests	Self-identifies as “alternative”
	Owners are often the business “elite”	Participatory production of small communities
	Market-oriented	Encouragement of social change
	Supports the current state of social relations	Relatively small reach and influence
	Low degree of users’ control	A higher degree of users’ control Platform for those marginalized by the mainstream media A part of civil society
Content	Culturally, politically and socially conformist	Critical content challenging “elites” and mainstream media discourse
	Broad reach	Culturally, politically and socially radical
	Humor amuses the audience	Innovative graphical layout
	Fewer genres	Divergent cultural choices and genres Humor relays political messages
Organization	Vertical organization	Horizontal organization, grassroots and collective ownership
	High levels of hierarchy	Low levels of hierarchy
	Bureaucracy	Use of low-cost technologies such as open access
Funding	Sponsored by commercial sources such as corporations	Sponsored from non-commercial sources such as grants and small donations
	Dependence on advertising	Less pronounced advertising model

3.2. Alternative Media Anti-Systemness Matrix (AMAM)

The Alternative Media Anti-Systemness Matrix (see Table 2) by Holt (2018) builds on the notion of *ideological* and *relational* anti-systemness, adapting the political party typology of Capoccia (2002). *Ideological* anti-systemness entails a strong antagonism towards the mainstream media system; it considers it *beyond repair*. The media with *relational* anti-systemness do not necessarily have the same intensity of antagonism and a desire to replace the entire media system. However, such outlets still exert a polarizing effect on the whole media discourse, for instance, by opening debates avoided by mainstream media.

Table 2: AMAM matrix

	Relational anti-systemness present	Relational anti-systemness absent
Ideological anti-systemness present	Anti-system alternative media	"Irrelevant" alternative media
Ideological anti-systemness absent	Polarizing alternative media	Provocative alternative media/community media/mainstream media

In the Czech context, *TV Barrandov*, *Parlamentní Listy* and *AC24* all fit the *anti-system alternative media* category, with both types of the anti-systemness present. They display a strong antagonistic stance towards the media system and, simultaneously, attract a substantial amount of critical attention from the mainstream press (Svobodová, 2017). Media such as *Forum24* and *Echo24* also represent relational anti-systemness, with less *ideological* antagonism, resulting in *polarizing alternative media*. They are antagonistic towards the *oligarchized* mainstream and often harshly critical of media moguls such as Andrej Babis. The "*irrelevant*" *alternative media* exhibit ideological anti-systemness but fail to attract a significant readership. This is exemplified by short-lived radical blogs and online news media on the fringes of the media system. A fitting example is *Svet Kolem Nas* (World Around Us), which, while being *ideologically* antagonistic, was virtually ignored by the mainstream media. It had about 20,000 daily readers during its primetime and stopped publishing new articles in mid-2018 (NetMonitor, 2018). Finally, the fourth media type in the AMAM typology has neither ideological nor relational anti-systemness and should, therefore, be assessed by the other two typologies. While AMAM model usefully distinguishes between the types of relational antagonisms, it does not allow for ideological distinction of media outlets and does not consider the character and degree of the antagonistic communication.

3.3. Populist Political Communication Framework (PPCF)

The PPCF model draws from the scholarship on populism and political communication (see Table 3). As illustrated by cases as diverse as Germany, the U.S. and Hong Kong, populism and alternative media often intersect (Arzheimer, 2015; Bachl, 2018; Haller & Holt, 2018; Kenix, 2011; Wang, 2018). Populist communication is, in its *people-centrism*, *anti-elitism* and *exclusion of others*, fundamentally antagonistic (Hameleers, 2018; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). Thus, the *communication-centered* approach to the study of populism by Aalberg et al. (2017) can help us comprehend the character and degree of antagonism in alternative media. This approach also enables one to distinguish between populism *through* the media, populism *by* the media, and populist *citizen journalism*.

Parlamentni Listy fits the *completely antagonistic right-wing alternative media*, exhibiting all three dimensions of populist communication. It communicates antagonism through original content, but it also gives space to populist actors (such as the Czech President Milos Zeman) and provides a platform for readers' blog posts. At first glance *Halo Noviny* (Hello Newspaper), a daily print (increasingly active online) of the Czech Communist party, fits the *antagonistic left-wing alternative media*. A closer examination, however, also points to converging exclusionary political positions of the Communist party and the right-wing populist Freedom and Direct Democracy party towards outgroups such as Roma and refugees (Tiscali, 2018). Finally, examples of *exclusionary right-wing* and *empty populist alternative media* should be relatively rare as *exclusionary* and *people-centric* strategies in populist communication are infrequently present without *anti-elitism* (Blassnig, Ernst, Büchel, & Engesser, 2018; Ernst, Engesser, Büchel, Blassnig, & Esser, 2017; Zulianello, Albertini, & Ceccobelli, 2018).

Table 3: PPCF matrix

	Completely antagonistic right-wing alternative media outlet	Antagonistic left-wing alternative media outlet	Exclusionary right-wing alternative media outlet	Empty populist alternative media outlet
People-centrism present	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Anti-elitism present	Yes	Yes	No	No
Exclusionary populism present	Yes	No	Yes	No

4. Conclusion

Any examination of “alternative media” comes with its limitations and caveats. This means that alternative media theory is in some sense geographically and temporally relative (what is “mainstream” in one country could be “alternative” elsewhere) (Hajek & Carpentier, 2015). However, such relativity does not diminish the epistemic value of the concept if both limitations are reflected in the research design. We need to acknowledge complex local translations of “alternative” but still work with carefully planned cross-country studies. At the same time, it is necessary to recognize the time-dependency of our findings and be aware of the possibility of rapid shifts.

There is a substantive research agenda for alternative media scholars. For instance, how does the hybrid media system moderate the alternative media content (Chadwick, 2017)? How do the journalistic routines and ideological orientation of the alternative and mainstream journalists differ (Lindner, 2017; Reul, Paulussen, Raeijmaekers, van der Steen, & Maesele, 2018)? Is immigration a driving issue of media populism more in the alternative than in the mainstream media (Wettstein, 2018)? How does politicians’ use of alternative and mainstream media for mobilization differ (Atkinson & Leon Berg, 2012)? Do patterns of alternative media configuration across countries conform to the established media system models (Herrero et al., 2017)? In what way do alternative media intersect with some of the democratic challenges of the high-choice media environment (Van Aelst et al., 2017)? These questions lead to diverse theoretical and methodological debates. However, the scientific and societal contribution should be worth it.

References

- Aalberg, T., Esser, F., Reinemann, C., Stromback, J., & Vreese, C. De (Eds.). (2017) *Populist political communication in Europe*. London: Routledge.
- Ardèvol-Abreu, A. & Gil De Zúñiga, H. (2017) ‘Effects of editorial media bias perception and media trust on the use of traditional, citizen, and social media news’, *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 94(3): 703-724.
- Arzheimer, K. (2015) ‘The AfD: Finally a successful right-wing populist Eurosceptic party for Germany?’, *West European Politics*, 38(3): 535-556.
- Atkinson, J. D. & Leon Berg, S. V. (2012) ‘Narrowmobilization and Tea Party activism: A study of right-leaning alternative media’, *Communication Studies*, 63(5): 519-535.
- Atton, C. (2001) *Alternative media*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Atton, C. (Ed.). (2015) *The Routledge companion to alternative and community media*. London: Routledge.

- Bachl, M. (2018) '(Alternative) media sources in AfD-centered Facebook discussions', *Studies in Communication and Media*, 7(2): 256-270.
- Bartholome, G., Lecheler, S., & de Vreese, C. (2015) 'Manufacturing conflict? How journalists intervene in the conflict frame building process', *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 20(4): 438-457.
- Beaufort, M. (2018) 'Digital media, political polarization and challenges to democracy', *Information, Communication & Society*, 21(7): 915-920.
- Bennett, W. L. & Livingston, S. (2018) 'The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions', *European Journal of Communication*, 33(2): 122-139.
- Blassnig, S., Ernst, N., Büchel, F., & Engesser, S. (2018) 'Populist communication in talk shows and social media. A comparative content analysis in four countries', *Studies in Communication | Media*, 7(3): 338-363.
- Capoccia, G. (2002) 'Anti-System Parties', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 14(1): 9-35.
- Carpentier, N., Lie, R., & Servaes, J. (2003) 'Community media: Muting the democratic media discourse?', *Continuum*, 17(1): 51-68.
- Center for Insights in Survey Research (2017) *Public opinion in the Czech Republic*. Downloaded on 4 October 2018 from http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2017-7-19_czech_poll.pdf
- Cervenka, J. (2018) 'Attitude of Czech public to accepting of refugees - April 2018'. Downloaded on 1 October 2018 from <https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/en/press-releases/political/international-relations/4650-attitude-of-czech-public-to-accepting-of-refugees-april-2018>
- Chadwick, A. (2017) *The Hybrid Media System*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ernst, N., Engesser, S., Büchel, F., Blassnig, S., & Esser, F. (2017) 'Extreme parties and populism: An analysis of Facebook and Twitter across six countries', *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(9): 1347-1364.
- Esser, F., Stepinska, A., & Hopmann, D. N. (2016) 'Populism and the media: cross-national findings and perspectives', pp. 365-380 in T. Aalberg, F. Esser, C. Reinemann, J. Stromback, & C. De Vreese (Eds.) *Populist political communication in Europe*. London: Routledge.
- European Journalism Observatory (2017) *Falesne zpravy a dezinformace kolem nas*. Downloaded on 3 October 2018 from <https://cz.ejo-online.eu/5068/etika-a-kvalita-zurnalistiky/dezinformace-a-fake-news-kolem-nas>
- Faris, R., Roberts, H., Etling, B., Bourassa, N., Benkler, E., & Yochai, Z. (2017) *Partisanship, propaganda, and disinformation: Online media and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election*. Downloaded on 2 October 2018 from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3019414
- Figenschou, T. U. & Ihlebæk, K. A. (2018) 'Challenging journalistic authority: Media criticism in far right alternative media', *Journalism Studies*, 20(9): 1221-1237.
- Fletcher, R., Cornia, A., Graves, L., & Nielsen, R. K. (2018) *Measuring the reach of "fake news" and online disinformation in Europe*. Downloaded on 20 September 2018 from <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-02/Measuring%20the%20reach%20>

of%20fake%20news%20and%20online%20distribution%20in%20Europe%20CORRECT%20FLAG.pdf

- Freedom House (2018) *Freedom of the press*. Downloaded on 1 October 2018 from <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-press>
- Gregor, M. & Vejvodova, P. (2016) '*Analyza manipulativních technik na vybraných českých serverech*'. Downloaded on 5 October 2018 from https://www.academia.edu/26046763/Výzkumná_zpráva_Analyza_manipulativních_tech_nik_na_vybraných_českých_serverech
- Hajek, R. & Carpentier, N. (2015) 'Alternative mainstream media in the Czech Republic: Beyond the dichotomy of alternative and mainstream media', *Continuum*, 29(3): 365-382.
- Hajek, R., Stefanikova, S., Lab, F., & Tejkalova, A. N. (2015) 'Czech journalists' refreshed sense of ethics in the midst of media ownership turmoil', *Media and Communication*, 3(4): 52-61.
- Haller, A. & Holt, K. (2018) 'Paradoxical populism: How PEGIDA relates to mainstream and alternative media', *Information Communication and Society*, 1-16.
- Hameleers, M. (2018) 'A typology of populism: Toward a revised theoretical framework on the sender-side and receiver-side of communication', *International Journal of Communication*, 12: 2171-2190.
- Hanitzsch, T. & Berganza, R. (2012) 'Explaining journalists' trust in public institutions across 20 countries: Media freedom, corruption, and ownership matter most', *Journal of Communication*, 62(5): 794-814.
- Hanzlova, R. (2018) *Trust to some public institutions - March 2018*. Downloaded on 20 September 2018 from <https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/en/press-releases/political/other/4585-trust-to-some-public-institutions-march-2018>
- Harcup, T. (2005) "'I'm doing this to change the world": Journalism in alternative and mainstream media', *Journalism Studies*, 6(3): 361-374.
- Herrero, L. C., Humprecht, E., Engesser, S., Brüggemann, M., & Büchel, F. (2017) 'Rethinking Hallin and Mancini beyond the West: An analysis of media systems in Central and Eastern Europe', *International Journal of Communication*, 11(0): 27.
- Holt, K. (2018) 'Alternative media and the notion of anti-systemness towards an analytical framework', *Media and Communication*, 6(4), in press.
- Holt, K. & Haller, A. (2017) 'What does "lügenpresse" mean? Expressions of media distrust on PEGIDA's Facebook pages', *Politik*, 20(4): 42-57.
- Hopmann, D. N., Shehata, A., & Strömbäck, J. (2015) 'Contagious media effects: How media use and exposure to game-framed news influence media trust', *Mass Communication and Society*, 18(6): 776-798.
- Jackob, N. G. E. (2010) 'No alternatives? The relationship between perceived media dependency, use of alternative information sources, and general trust in mass media', *International Journal of Communication*, 4: 589-606.
- Jagers, J. & Walgrave, S. (2007) 'Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium', *European Journal of Political Research*, 46(3): 319-345.

- Janda, J., Blazejovska, M., & Vlasak, J. (2016) *Dopady dezinformacnich operaci v Ceske republice*. Downloaded on 21 September 2018 from <https://www.evropskehodnoty.cz/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Dopady-dezinforma%C4%8Dn%C3%ADch-operac%C3%AD-v-%C4%8Cesk%C3%A9-republice.pdf>
- Janda, J. & Vichova, V. (2016) *Fungovani ceskych dezinformacnich webu*. Downloaded on 13 October 2018 from <https://www.evropskehodnoty.cz/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Fungovani-%C4%8Cesk%C3%A9-republice-dezinformacnich-webu-4-1.pdf>
- Jirak, J. & Köpplöva, B. (2013) 'Two decades of free media in the Czech Republic: So what? Remarks on the discourse of post-1989 media transformation' pp. 183-194 in P. Gross & K. Jakubowicz (Eds.) *Media transformations in the post-communist world: Eastern Europe's tortured path to change*. Plymouth: Lexington Books.
- Kaati, L., Shrestha, A., & Cohen, K. (2016, September) *Automatic detection of xenophobic narratives: A case study on Swedish alternative media*. Paper presented at the IEEE Conference on Intelligence and Security Informatics, Tuscon, AR.
- Kenix, L. J. (2011) *Alternative and mainstream media: The converging spectrum*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Kundra, O. (2016) *Kdo tu pise pro Putina*. Downloaded on 2 October 2018 from <https://www.respekt.cz/tydenik/2016/18/kdo-tu-pise-pro-putina>
- Kundra, O. (2017) *Most do sveta dezinformaci*. Downloaded on 2 October 2018 from <https://www.respekt.cz/tydenik/2017/4/most-do-sveta-dezinformaci>
- Lee, T. T. (2010) 'Why they don't trust the media: An examination of factors predicting trust', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 54(1): 8-21.
- Lievrouw, L. A. (2011) *Alternative and activist new media*. Malden, MA: Polity.
- Lindner, A. M. (2017) 'Editorial gatekeeping in citizen journalism', *New Media and Society*, 19(8): 1177-1193.
- Macek, J., Mackova, A., Pavlopoulos, V., Kalmus, V., Elavsky, C. M., & Serek, J. (2018) 'Trust in alternative and professional media: The case of the youth news audiences in three European countries', *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 15(3): 340-354.
- MediaGuru (2016) *Infografika: Aktualizovana mapa vlastniku medii*. Downloaded on 6 October 2018 from <https://www.mediaguru.cz/clanky/2016/03/infografika-aktualizovana-mapa-vlastniku-medii/>
- Mikulka, M. (2015) *Spolumajitel Penty Dospiva: Chceme medialni stit proti iracionalnim utokum*. Downloaded on 1 October 2018 from <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-63893810-spolumajitel-penty-dospiva-chceme-medialni-stit-proti-iracionalnim-utokum>
- Moravec, V., Urbanikova, M., & Volek, V. (2015) 'Homogenous, or Heterogenous? A Comparative Analysis of Three Czech Journalists Generations', *Communication Today*, 6(2): 32-49.
- NetMonitor (2018) *Online data (OLA)*. Downloaded on 1 October 2018 from <http://www.netmonitor.cz/online-data-ola>
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Kalogeropoulos, A., Levy, D. A. L., & Nielsen, R. K. (2018) *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018*. Retrieved from the Reuters Institute for the Study of

- Journalism website: <http://media.digitalnewsreport.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/digital-news-report-2018.pdf?x89475>.
- Pehe, J. (2018) 'Czech democracy under pressure', *Journal of Democracy*, 29(3): 65-77.
- Pew Research Center (2018) *Global publics want politically balanced news, but do not think their news media are doing very well in this area*. Downloaded on 20 October 2018 from <http://www.pewglobal.org/2018/01/11/global-publics-want-politically-balanced-news-but-do-not-think-their-news-media-are-doing-very-well-in-this-area>
- Rauch, J. (2014) 'Exploring the alternative-mainstream dialectic: What "alternative media" means to a hybrid audience', *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 8(1): 124-143.
- Rauch, J. (2016) 'Are there still alternatives? Relationships between alternative media and mainstream media in a converged environment', *Sociology Compass*, 10(9): 756-767.
- Reporters Without Borders (2018) *2018 World Press Freedom Index*. Downloaded on 20 October 2018 from <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>
- Reul, R., Paulussen, S., Raaijmaekers, D., van der Steen, L., & Maesele, P. (2018) 'Professional journalistic routines and the protest paradigm: The Big Potato Swap in traditional and alternative media', *Journalism*, 19(7): 899-916.
- Rostecky, J. (2014) *Ondrej Gersl Rozhovor*. Downloaded on 1 October 2018 from <https://mlady-podnikatel.cz/ondrej-gersl-rozhovor-o-ac24-t11020>
- Salovaara, I. & Juzefovics, J. (2012) 'Who pays for good journalism?', *Journalism Studies*, 13(5-6): 763-774.
- Security Information Service (2018) *Výroční zpráva Bezpečnostní informační služby za rok 2017*. Downloaded on 1 December 2018 from <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2017-vz-cz.pdf>
- Stetka, V. (2010) 'Between a rock and a hard place? Market concentration, local ownership and media autonomy in the Czech Republic', *International Journal of Communication*, (4): 865-885.
- Stetka, V. (2012a) 'From multinationals to business tycoons: Media ownership and journalistic autonomy in Central and Eastern Europe', *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 17(4): 433-456.
- Stetka, V. (2012b) *The Czech Republic: A country report for the ERC-funded project on media and democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*. Downloaded on 6 October 2018 from <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/39914>
- Stetka, V. (2015) 'The rise of oligarchs as media owners', pp. 85-98 in J. Zielonka (Ed.), *Media and politics in new democracies: Europe in a comparative perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stetka, V. (2016, March) Between instrumentalization and para-journalism: current challenges to democratic roles of the media in the Czech Republic. Presented at the workshop Embedding Democratic Values: The Role of Civic Education and Media in Democratization, Chisinau, Moldova. Downloaded on 5 October 2018 from <https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/24713>
- Stetka, V. & Örnebring, H. (2013) 'Investigative journalism in Central and Eastern Europe: Autonomy, business models, and democratic roles', *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 18(4): 413-435.

- Svobodova, I. (2017) *Jak Radil Soros na Barandove Drahosovi*. Downloaded on 10 October 2018 from <https://www.respekt.cz/politika/jak-radil-soros-na-barrandove-drahosovi>
- Tiscali (2018) *Opozice zuri: Okamura nekonci, podrzelo jej ANO, SPD a KSCM*. Downloaded on 7 October 2018 from <https://zpravy.tiscali.cz/opozice-zuri-okamura-nekonci-podrzelo-jej-ano-spd-a-kscm-310200>
- Tucker, J. A., Guess, A., Barbera, P., Vaccari, C., Siegel, A., Sanovich, S., Stukal, D., Nyhan, B. (2018) 'Social media, political polarization, and political disinformation: A review of the scientific literature' *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 19 Mar 2018: 1-95.
- Van Aelst, P., Strömbäck, J., Aalberg, T., Esser, F., de Vreese, C., Matthes, J., ... Stanyer, J. (2017) 'Political communication in a high-choice media environment: A challenge for democracy?', *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 41(1): 3-27.
- Volek, J. (2010) 'Czech journalists after the collapse of the old media system: Looking for a new professional self-image', pp. 171-194 in B. Dobek-Ostrowska (Ed.) *Comparative media systems: European and global perspectives*. Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Volek, J. & Urbanikova, M. (2018) 'Predictors of Mistrust: Towards Basic Characteristics of Czech Mistrusting News Media Audiences', *Observatorio*, 12(1): 1-18.
- Wang, Y. (2018) 'Digital amplification of fringe voices: Alternative media and street politics in Hong Kong', *International Journal of Communication*, 12: 3707-3728.
- Wettstein, M., Esser, F., Schulz, A., Wirz, D. S., & Wirth, W. (2018). News media as gatekeepers, critics, and initiators of populist communication: How journalists in ten countries deal with the populist challenge. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 23(4), 476-495.
- Yang, J., Rojas, H., Wojcieszak, M., Aalberg, T., Coen, S., Curran, J., ... Tiffen, R. (2016) 'Why are "others" so polarized? Perceived political polarization and media use in 10 countries', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 21(5): 349-367.
- Zulianello, M., Albertini, A., & Ceccobelli, D. (2018) 'A populist zeitgeist? The communication strategies of Western and Latin American political leaders on Facebook', *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 23(4): 439-457.

Biography

Ondrej Pekacek is a PhD student in Sociology at Charles University, Prague. His research revolves around the transformations of the media landscape and the journalistic profession in Central and Eastern Europe. He has also been involved in the COST action IS1308 on the Populist Political Communication and teaches courses focused on populism and media sociology at the CIEE institute, Prague.

Email: ondrej.pekacek@fsv.cuni.edu

This project was funded by the Charles University Grant Agency, project no. 1380218 and by the SVV grant, project no. 260 462.

“The closest thing to teleportation”: The concept of *liveness* in the age of connectivity

Ludmila Lupinacci

Abstract

This chapter discusses the current state (and the very usefulness) of *liveness* as a conceptual tool in media and communications research in an environment in which connective platforms are ubiquitous and increasingly powerful. Starting from the understanding of liveness as a context-contingent and continuously evolving term (Couldry, 2004; Auslander, 2008; 2012), and considering the widespread use of the live as a promotional resource by these media institutions and technologies, the article maps the core definitions attributed to the word in the academic sphere, and addresses the potential shortcomings of the available conceptualizations in characterizing the communicative practices that unfold in the present-day culture of connectivity.

Keywords: live, liveness, social media, connectivity, platforms

1. Introduction

Historically, the development of mediated communications has been driven by the desire to overcome temporal, geographical, and corporal constraints (Meyrowitz, 1985; Carey, 1989). By surpassing these boundaries, media are said to give us access to events, happenings, people, and places that would not be reachable directly, *immediately*. On the one hand, by doing so, they provide us with a “*sense of physical and social being in a shared world with others*” (Frosh, 2018: 2). On the other hand, however, once we depend on specific technologies and institutions for this access, then our very possibilities for contact with others and with the world become entrenched with their technical affordances, economic logics, and commercial interests.

The concept of *liveness* has been a persisting manifestation of media’s self-proclaimed capacity of fulfilling this aspiration of connection beyond the limits of time and space. In addition to being a popular term employed by media industries for decades to designate specific types of content, the word *live* is also a recurring topic in academic inquiry, particularly within the areas of performance and television studies. In short, the meanings commonly attributed to liveness in this literature are: simultaneous transmission and instantaneous availability of content; real-time interaction; non-recorded, or non-mediated experience; spontaneity or unpredictability; and authenticity or commitment to a “natural reality”. Regarding this evident flexibility, Auslander (2008; 2012) and Couldry (2004) claim that the live should not be taken as a static or technologically determined property but rather as a context-contingent term that is in a continuous state of redefinition.

As a manifestation of such conceptual elasticity, it is remarkable how in the current media landscape we witness once again a proliferation of (so-called “social media”) platforms that foreground liveness as one of their main attractions—Facebook Live, Twitter Live, Instagram Live Stories, and so on. Which means the live, traditionally associated with broadcast technologies, seems to have sustained its visibility and relevance even with the pervasive adoption of digital artifacts of communication and, more specifically, with the popularization of connective media—which function as organizers of perception, operating both in our personal, individual lives and on broader social dynamics that unfold in the collective sphere (Radfahrer, 2018; Frosh, 2018).

Notably, our very possibilities for sociality and for experiencing the world have become deeply entangled with data-sorting processes and the operational strategies that reflect the commercial interests of these platforms (van Dijck, 2013). For instance, take algorithmic mediated timelines—recently adopted by mainstream services such as Twitter and Instagram—, which challenge established expectations of “real-time”, chronological linearity (and consequently become the object of heated debates). Changes like this point to the necessity of a reconsider-

ation of the taken-for-grantedness of the concept of liveness since, however fuzzy and flexible, our earlier and common understandings of it might have become insufficient to characterize many of today's communicative practices.

Bearing this in mind, this chapter discusses the current state of liveness as a conceptual tool in media and communications research in the context of pervasive use and presence of connective platforms. In order to do so, the chapter starts with a brief critical review of available core definitions. Subsequently, it offers an outline on the 'culture of connectivity', and explores how the centrality and ubiquity of connective media platforms might impact on the experiencing and understanding of liveness. Finally, the chapter will address the shortcomings of our current frameworks on the live, proposing pathways to forthcoming empirical examination.

2. Reviewing liveness

It is worth noting that the term "*live*" is not a well-rounded academic concept cautiously developed with analytical purposes (Scannell, 2014). It is an ordinary word that has been used both by common people and by media industries to describe specific (albeit diverse) types of media content—most frequently, so-called "real-time" television shows in which the unfolding of a situation (a talk, a piece of news coverage, a musical performance) and its broadcast are simultaneous (Scannell, 2014). In terms of scholarly efforts, one of the common strategies for trying to characterize the live is through identifying its opposite counterparts: "mediated", "recorded", "scripted", etc. Although this can be helpful in understanding what the word means in specific situations, it does not seem a prolific strategy to sharpening liveness as an analytical instrument for broader theorisations, as it makes it reliant on each of these always-changing opposites. Having this in mind, in this first section I will briefly review the central contributions available as an attempt to refine liveness as a concept.

In performance studies—that is, scholarship focused on theatre, music, dance—liveness is commonly linked with the physical co-presence between a performer and an audience, in which the lack of technical mediation is said to guarantee a degree of "*realness*". Phelan (1993), for instance, understands the impossibility of reproduction as live performance's defining trait. In this sense, live performance would be ontologically based on simultaneity, disappearance, and *ephemerality*, underlining its character as a passing, unique, and irreproducible situation; an authentic, but short-lived, experience.

Auslander (1997; 2008), in contrast, calls into question this alleged primacy of the live performance. According to him, the live and the mediated are not mutually exclusive opposites. In fact, the very existence of the qualifier *live* per se derives

from the emergence of media technologies. Liveness, for him, should be understood as an *affective* experience dependent on cultural and technological context.

In the scope of television studies, an initial conception was the understanding of liveness as this medium's essential trait, due to the fact that, contrary to film (which is composed by materially recorded, enduring frames), the basic unity of the televisual image would be a fleeting, continuously changing, and always incomplete scanning beam. Under this view, television's liveness is based on the always-presentness of the electronic image (Zettl, 1978).

In a different and more critically engaged direction, Feuer (1983) presents an argument for the comprehension of liveness not as the ontology or *raison d'être* of TV, but rather as its *ideology*. According to her, in spite of its self-proclaimed *essence of liveness*, the majority of television's content cannot even be considered live in the strict (*real-time*) sense. She then sees televisions' liveness to be built from "*an ideology of the live, the immediate, the direct, the spontaneous, the real*" (Feuer, 1983:14) —anchored on the basic claim that, through the screen, we are given access to what matters, as it happens.

In a similar vein, Bourdon (2000) also calls into question some of the long-lasting assumptions about television—whose central purpose, according to him, would not necessarily be the *live* broadcasting in itself but actually to provide a *sensation of shared viewership*. He sees liveness as part of a broader history of media, which has in its core the aim to connect people and events of the world—while, in the process, creating and reinforcing mass sentiments that are central to the development of the modern state. Television's liveness is, under this perspective, fundamentally sociological.

Still in the scope of television studies, Scannell (2014) is concerned with the production and management of liveness by mainstream electronic media, which is achieved through strategies of concealment of their modes of production. This focus on the management of liveness by the media industry brings an additional layer to the term: liveness denotes a *perceived authentic*—because it is immediate and apparently spontaneous, even if heavily pre-planned—experience (Scannell, 2014: 96). Liveness is, therefore, filled with intentionality, and while the technical possibility of prompt transmission acts as its departing point, there is plenty of care employed to produce the effect of it (Scannell, 2014).

In the context of digital media, one of the first scholars to spur the reconceptualization of the live was Couldry (2004). He states that the central idea behind the claim of liveness would be that of "*a potential connection to shared social realities as they are happening*" (Couldry, 2004: 3) and, further, "*to the 'realities' that matter for us as a society*" (Couldry, 2004: 4). Considering the implications of digital technologies, he proposes two other competing, and increasingly overlapping, forms of liveness. That is, two new and "*emergent ways of coordinating communications and bodies*

across time and space" (Couldry, 2004: 4) that do not necessarily orbit a mediated, institutional centre. These would be "*online liveness*", based on the idea of a new form of public sociality characterized by decentralized social co-presence, which would be possible thanks to the Internet and its infrastructures, and "*group liveness*", which designates the co-presence of specific social groups whose members are constantly connected, to a great extent thanks to mobile technologies (Couldry, 2004).

Already considering the pervasiveness of connective platforms, Hammelburg (2016) discusses liveness in the scope of digital media events, and suggests that *immediacy* and *affinity* would be its two central properties. Respectively, they comprise the potential of participating in a certain event at the exact moment it happens (or the chance of receiving information about it instantly) and the possibility of connecting with events or with people that matter (Hammelburg, 2016).

Finally, intending to refine the conceptualization of liveness to what she designates as a "*social media era*", van Es (2016, 2017) explains the live as a construction resultant from the combined action of three kinds of players: institutions, technologies, and users. In the wake of Scannell, she sees liveness as a profoundly produced, yet apparently natural media experience (in Es' words, "*the paradox of liveness*"), but she also highlights an inconformity with reductionist interpretations that foreground just one aspect of the live. With these tools, van Es (2016) examines four platforms as cases from which she extracts more general theorisations that aim to describe the present-day state of liveness. In this regard, she pushes the definition of the live beyond a mere technical capacity, conceptualizing it as an "*institutionalized product of the interaction between real-time connectivity and sociality, manifesting itself in a series of different configurations*" (van Es, 2016: 155).

It is necessary to acknowledge, therefore, the continuous effort of scholars in reconceptualising liveness considering socio-technical transformations. The work of van Es (2016, 2017), in particular, seems spot-on on several of its considerations, especially when it discusses the matter of symbolic power and the ways in which social media platforms have appropriated liveness as a strategy for the maintenance of hegemonic control. Agreeing with her, I see liveness as an experience that results from the combined action of different instances: the technical element of the mediation, the social or affective dimensions of the communicative process, and the institutional forces that intentionally shape it.

Nevertheless, one of the limitations of the available studies on the topic is that, mostly due to methodological decisions, they are not able to theorise with empirical grounds if and how liveness is experienced by those who use the media content and platforms under examination, and what are the consequences for these peoples' social lives and access to others and to the world. As a result, most of the academic reflections we currently have on the topic are, notably, grounded on assumptions about ordinary people's engagements with—and experiences of—media.

3. Connective platforms and the culture of connectivity

In the present-day “*culture of connectivity*” (van Dijck, 2013) our perceptions of time and space, and our very possibilities for sociality are deeply entangled with data processing and the commercial interests and operations of specific platforms. Before moving forward in situating liveness within this context, it is important to acknowledge that the word *platform* itself is object of intense debates. This is mostly because the term tends to be publicly employed by many big players of the digital market as, thanks to its appearance of neutrality, it conveniently works across multiple venues and audiences (Gillespie, 2010). Nevertheless, these platforms should not be seen as mere facilitators or intermediaries but rather as mediators with agency to shape the social activities that emerge from their use (van Dijck, 2013).

Therefore, by *connective platform* I am generally referring to contemporary mainstream (so-called *social*) media companies and technologies, which have deep reach and embeddedness into people’s everyday lives. In their dual nature, or “*double articulation*” (Langlois & Elmer, 2013), these institutions and technologies assume apparent contradictory roles as both propellants of creativity, expression, and agency, and as reproducers of power relations that support commercial interests (Plantin, Lagoze, Edwards, & Sandvig, 2016).

Social media platforms have become some of the main infrastructures through which most of us organize our lives, connect with others, and exert sociality (van Dijck, 2013; Couldry & Hepp 2016). However, as explained by van Dijck (2013), behind the rhetoric of participation, interactivity, and connection that is so commonly found in their promotional discourse, there is a strong interest in the quantifiable by-product of this *engagement*: users’ data. It is through the capture, storage, processing and reorganization – or manipulation – of this ever-increasing amount of information that these companies make profit (Couldry & Kallinikos, 2017).

Furthermore, through their automated logic, social media platforms are able to organize and shape if, how, and when people have access to others and to the world—and they tend to present such processes as transparent and natural, although they actually depend deeply on calculative infrastructure and data-sorting (Couldry & Kallinikos, 2017). This is the case with algorithms, for instance—a term that has acquired an unprecedented popularity over the last few years, and is usually employed to designate the (often obscured) formulas that guide the operations of these platforms, claiming to offer us what is relevant to us individually while veiling their very operation behind a discourse of impartiality and objectivity (Gillespie, 2014).

An additional significant dimension of this “*culture of connectivity*” is what Couldry (2015) has labelled the “*myth of us*”—the idea that social media platforms give rise to the formation of natural collectivities, and therefore were developed simply to respond to and facilitate a popular desire to be continuously connected

to those who matter. Such strategy can be clearly identified, for instance, in Mark Zuckerberg’s recent manifesto on Facebook’s changes, in which ideas such as “*a journey to connect the world*” and “*to build a global community that works for us all*” are foregrounded as the company’s central aims¹. As Couldry (2015) further explains, there is no natural “*us*”, since the mere existence of this collectivity depends heavily on the actions of the platform itself.

Of course, it is imperative to recognize that media claiming to offer shared experiences and “natural” collectivities while obfuscating their very role as mediators is not a recent or unprecedented strategy. As previously addressed by Feuer (1983), Bourdon (2000), and Scannell (2014), television has been employing a similar scheme for decades. In fact, it is worth noting that connective platforms borrowed from television’s broadcast the promise of connecting people to what matters at the same time these events unfold, with the additional feature of providing potential multiple options and sources from which the audiences can choose. However, instead of relying on the mobilization of national or mass sentiments, or on the access to events that matter in a more general or societal level, connective platforms tend to emphasize the importance of the live as a solution for giving people access to what is significant for them intimately and individually.

4. Liveness and connective media

*Facebook Live makes it easy to share the moment with the people you care about; Live lets you connect with the people who care most.*²

*When you’re done, your live story disappears from the app so you can feel more comfortable sharing anything, anytime.*³

*We’re making it easier for you to share what’s happening in your world. Live video is the most immersive way to experience what’s happening around the world.*⁴

*Explore the world through the eyes of somebody else. It may sound crazy, but we wanted to build the closest thing to teleportation. While there are many ways to discover events and places, we realized there is no better way to experience a place right now than through live video.*⁵

1 <https://www.facebook.com/notes/mark-zuckerberg/building-global-community/10154544292806634/>

2 Facebook Live

3 Instagram Live Stories

4 Twitter

5 Periscope

All of these sentences, filled with claims about what the live is and what it is good for, were extracted from the platforms' respective institutional websites. Even though they were clearly produced for promotional purposes they can give us a hint on the ideas behind the offer of liveness. *Live*, according to these taglines, is a solution for connecting people to, and letting people take part, first hand, in what matters to them, personally, right now, regardless of geographical distances. This promise links liveness to the idea of obliteration of temporal, spatial, and social distances through media.

Interestingly, the claims of direct experience made by different connective media platforms repeat to a great extent those made by the mass media in preceding decades: a commitment to an ephemeral, irreproducible, and therefore authentic experience (as manifested by Instagram), that of an immediate access to the world and its happenings, as they unfold, and "as if you are there" (as can be seen in the discourse of Twitter and Periscope), and that evoking a sense of collectivity, community, and meaningful shared viewership (as with Facebook Live).

Although real-time video streaming is the most evident and explicit manifestation of it in the current mediascape, it is important to see that the assumption of liveness underlies, with varied degrees of subtlety, connective media's claims and functionalities more generally. In this regard, it becomes imperative to explore the potentially varied experiences of liveness that emerge through different articulations of our current media manifold (Couldry & Hepp, 2016). We live in an environment where connective applications constantly encourage senses of instantaneity, co-presence, ephemerality, authenticity, and interactivity through the continuous use of temporal, spatial, and social prompts, in order to obtain the digital footprints (Couldry & Kallinikos, 2017) necessary for their market operation.

This means that while the experiences of the audiences are a key part of liveness, one must not to deny the role of media institutions and technologies in these complex processes. As Scannell (2014) and van Es (2016), have pointed out then, liveness is to a certain extent intentionally managed, encouraged, framed and shaped by those that control the media industry to attend to certain purposes. This happened with radio and television, and the same goes for the key actors in the contemporary media landscape. As argued by van Es (2016), our current "*social media era*" still reproduces such dynamics, although the strategies for exercising symbolic power and sustaining control are not necessarily the same. The live has sustained its importance despite its multifaceted and unclear definitions precisely because it has been used as a resource by different media industries and technologies across decades to evoke certain key beliefs or assumptions about the world we live in, what is out there to be seen, and how one can access it.

This does not mean, in turn, that institutional forces should be taken as if they were able to monolithically determine how media technologies are used, appropriat-

ed, and experienced. In this regard, we need much more scholarly discussion on how people negotiate liveness, how effective is its ideological address, how people experience it in the context of everyday life, and what does it mean for them, for their social relations, and for their opportunities of grasping the world and its happenings.

5. Conclusions

Overall, in media and communications research liveness tends to be associated with a myriad of processes claimed by and/or allegedly perceived through media: apparent non-mediation, synchronization of experienced temporalities, the collapsing of distances, sociality, and authenticity. As pointed out by van Es (2016), the diverse definitions of liveness in the available literature orbit around three central views, referring to either a specific feature of a medium, an institutional ideological discourse, or a particular affective state of the media users.

This conceptual elasticity has been inherent to the live since its first popularization, and constitutes one of its strengths both as a buzzword and as an academic term that maintains its relevance regardless of technological innovation. Nonetheless, it seems necessary to establish some boundaries so that the word can be useful for analytical purposes. Therefore, I have attempted to delineate an initial (re)conceptualization. Liveness, I argue, can be provisionally defined as the *experience of immediate connection through media*. To talk about the live is to talk about media technologies and institutions providing (or claiming to provide) the obliteration of temporal, spatial, and/or social distances while often veiling their own role as mediators in these processes.

These themes have been central to mass media’s claims of liveness, and they persist in the current social media era. It is well documented and theorised how media institutions and technologies have been using liveness as a resource to reach their own commercial interests and ideological purposes. However, we still know very little about how these claims are actually received and perceived (if at all) by the audiences. Moreover, it becomes imperative to interrogate: if and how the varied academic understandings of liveness still make sense and suffice in describing today’s media experiences in the context of the culture of connectivity. The aim of my forthcoming work is to elaborate a more accurate and critical definition for liveness (or a grounded argument for the abandonment of the term) that helps us understand our current possibilities for accessing others and the world.

If, for instance, we take liveness to denote our capacity of connecting to people and events that matter to us (as defined by Hammelburg, 2016, and claimed repeatedly by the platforms themselves, as aforementioned), fundamental critical questions emerge. What happens when it is not up to individuals—nor to “so-

ciety”—to decide what matters, as this power increasingly belongs to platforms with their own set of criteria shaped by economic interests (Couldry & Kallinikos, 2017)? What is “the live” when the very structures that promise to bring us together (Couldry & Kallinikos, 2017) change and we cannot understand them? Social media now represent some the most important reference-points for our shared experiences, our senses of time and space, and the way the world appears to us (Couldry & Hepp 2016, Frosh 2018). These central dimensions of the *social*, therefore, have now become deeply articulated with the logic arrangements of *connectivity*.

With media technologies, the whole world potentially becomes accessible, *liveable*. Through the promise of the live we are repeatedly told we have an enhanced opportunity of experiencing the social world “as it is”, “directly”, and “in real-time”. In the task of reconsidering the notion of liveness, what is at stake is how the reality of these dimensions is constructed, perceived, experienced, and negotiated in the interaction between the contemporary infrastructures of *connectivity* and our everyday lives.

References

- Auslander, P. (1997) ‘Against ontology: Making distinctions between the live and the mediatized’, *Performance Research*, 2(3): 50-55.
- Auslander, P. (2008) *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture*. Second Edition. Abingdon/ New York: Routledge.
- Auslander, P. (2012) ‘Digital liveness: A historico-philosophical perspective’, *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Arts*, 34(3): 3-11.
- Bourdon, J. (2000) ‘Live television is still alive. On television as an unfulfilled promise’, *Media, Culture & Society*, 22:531-556.
- Carey, J. (1989) *Communication as culture: Essays on media and society*. London: Routledge.
- Couldry, N. (2004) ‘Liveness, “reality”, and the mediated habitus from television to the mobile phone’, *Communication Review*, 7(4): 353-361.
- Couldry, N. (2015) ‘Illusions of Immediacy: rediscovering Hall’s early work on media’, *Media, Culture and Society*, 37(4): 637-644.
- Couldry, N. & Hepp, A. (2016) *The mediated construction of reality*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Couldry, N. & Kallinikos, J. (2017) ‘Ontology’, pp. 146-159 in J. Burgess, A. Marwick & T. Poell (Eds.) *The SAGE handbook of social media*. London: SAGE.
- Feuer, J. (1983) ‘The concept of live television: Ontology as ideology’, pp. 12-22 in E. Kaplan (Ed.) *Regarding television: Critical approaches – an anthology*. Los Angeles: American Film Institute.
- Frosh, P. (2018) *The poetics of digital media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gillespie, T. (2010) ‘The politics of “platforms”’, *New Media & Society*, 12(3): 347-364.
- Gillespie, T. (2014) ‘The relevance of algorithms’, pp. 167-194 in T. Gillespie, P. Boczkowski, and

- K. Foot (Eds.) *Media technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Hammelburg, E. (2016) ‘#Stemfie: reconceptualising liveness in the era of social media’, *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis*, 18(1): 85-100.
- Langlois, G. & Elmer, G. (2013) ‘The research politics of social media platforms’, *Culture Machine*, 14.
- Meyrowitz, J. (1985) *No sense of place: The impact of electronic media on social behaviour*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Phelan, P. (1993) *Unmarked: The politics of performance*. London: Routledge.
- Plantin, J.C., Lagoze, C., Edwards, P.N., & Sandvig, C. (2016) ‘Infrastructure studies meet platform studies in the age of Google and Facebook’, *New Media & Society*, 20(1): 293-310.
- Radfahrer, L. (2018) ‘The medium is the mediation: Postphenomenological views on datacratic contexts’, *MATRIZes*, 12(1): 131-153.
- Scannell, P. (2014) *Television and the meaning of live*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Van Dijck, J. (2013) *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Van Es, K. (2016) *The future of live*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Van Es, K. (2017) ‘Liveness redux: On media and their claim to be live’, *Media, Culture & Society*, 39(8): 1245-1256.
- Zettl, H. (1978) ‘The rare case of television aesthetics’, *Journal of the University Film Association*, 30(2): 3-8.

Biography

Ludmila Lupinacci is a PhD candidate in the Department of Media and Communications of the London School of Economics and Political Science, in the United Kingdom. Prior to joining the programme, she completed her MSc in Communication and Information at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. Some of her academic interests are: technology and society, Internet studies, digital platforms, social media studies, and computer-mediated communication. Her doctoral research, which is supervised by Professor Nick Couldry and Dr. Ellen Helsper, intersects with all of these topics, and aims to understand how liveness—immediate connection through media—is experienced in everyday engagements with digital technologies of communication and connective media platforms.

Email: L.Lupinacci-Amaral@lse.ac.uk

Crisis of liberal democracy, crisis of journalism? Learning from the economic crisis

Timo Harjuniemi

Abstract

This paper argues that the way journalism dealt with the global financial crisis, and with the European debt crisis, challenges us to rethink our common-sense notions about journalism's democratic role. As political decision-makers all over the Western world resorted to austerity to combat the crisis, journalism was quick to echo the austerity narrative. Due to its logics and practices, professional journalism discussed economic policy in a way that left little room for alternative ideas and worked to reinforce a post-democratic public sphere. By building on the lessons learned from the economic crisis, the paper argues that the popular disillusionment with journalism is hardly to be wondered at. The populist upheaval against institutions of liberal democracy—unleashed by the crisis and the politics of austerity—inevitably manifests itself also as a crisis of professional journalism; a crisis amplified by dramatic structural shifts in public communication. Thus, amid concerns about fake news and post-truth, we are faced with significant concerns about the future political and democratic role of journalism.

Keywords: austerity, journalism, democracy, liberalism, post-truth

1. Economic crisis and journalism

When the financial crisis took the global economy to the brink of total meltdown, world leaders resorted to unorthodox policy ideas to combat the crisis: stimulus packages were used all over the world to bail-out major financial institutions and stimulate economic activity (Tooze, 2018). For a while, it looked as if the crisis would deliver a blow to the legitimacy of neoliberalism. Dominant economic policies—emphasising deregulation and fiscal austerity—were supposedly making room for more Keynesian ideas. It seemed that once again, a crisis in the global economy would see a paradigm shift in economic policy ideas and institutions, as was the case with the emergence of the Keynesian hegemony after the Great Depression of the 1930s or with the neoliberal turn following the oil crises and economic turmoil of the early 1970s (see Hall, 1993).

However, a shift quickly occurred in economic policy-making. With the German government and the European Central Bank leading the charge, cutting public spending became the only game in town (Blyth, 2013). In Europe, political leaders decided to tackle the European debt crisis, triggered by the market panic concerning the Greek public deficit, with austerity policies and competitiveness-enhancing structural reforms. This caused not only social and economic hardships but popular disillusionment with the political status quo, as illustrated by the decline of mainstream centre-left and centre-right parties in Europe. European publics were repeatedly told that there was no alternative to the pain (Borriello, 2017), and new economic rules were put into practice with the aim of strengthening austerity policies already embedded in the European economic constitution (Streeck, 2015).

Indeed, the crisis did not result in a profound shift in the ideational “*blueprints*” (Blyth, 2001: 2) of dominant economic-policy elites and institutions. Mainstream economists quickly found their confidence again and saw no reason to fundamentally adjust the orthodoxy of economic thought that had provided neoliberalism with both intellectual legitimacy and practical ideas (Mirowski, 2013). Dominant national policy institutions, such as ministries of finance, rapidly returned to the path of austerity policies and reforms (Harjuniemi & Ampuja, 2018). It was obvious that we were witnessing not so much the death but rather the “*strange non-death of neoliberalism*” (Crouch, 2011).

So, what is the role of journalism in all this? First, it needs to be plainly stated that journalism still matters. Despite the rapid rise of social media, issues of economic policy are still very much mediated via mainstream journalistic platforms. During economic crises, journalism is an arena where public contestations over the appro-

appropriate course of economic policy take place and where policy is legitimised (Chadwick, McDowell-Naylor, Smith, & Watts, 2018; Davis, 2018). In the aftermath of the crisis, journalism scholarship has shown that the consensus on the necessity of austerity policies has been widely disseminated by journalists (e.g. Doudaki, 2015; Berry, 2016). Despite the critical watchdog role given to journalism in liberal democracies (McNair, 2008), journalism has been unable to provide a platform for alternative voices in economic policy debates. Journalists have, for sure, given some room to critical and deviant voices, but the bigger picture is that journalism has circulated the ideas of the institutions and agents with the most alleged authority on economic policy issues (Ojala & Harjuniemi, 2016). Journalistic representations of the economic crisis have reflected the elite austerity consensus, rendering the sphere of “*legitimate controversy*” (Hallin, 1984: 21) on economic policy issues modest.

This paper deliberates why this has been the case and what the implications are for journalism. I will start by, briefly, sketching the democratic and public functions that journalism has traditionally been accorded by academic scholars. The liberal pluralist perspective emphasises that professional journalism should—and can—reflect a wide array of ideas and present the public with different views, allowing for an open public debate (see Curran, 2002; McNair, 2000). A contrasting perspective is provided by the more critical strand of journalism and media studies, emphasising the role of journalism in the construction and dissemination of hegemonic elite ideas (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Philo, Hewitt, & Beharrell, 1995). Then, in line with the critical view, I show that journalism has not worked to organise a pluralist debate on economic policy amid the economic crisis. On the contrary, journalism has, due to its internal logics and practices, worked to shield the status-quo and reinforced a “*post-democratic public sphere*” (Harjuniemi & Ampuja, 2018) where the dominant elite consensus is shielded from contesting voices and opinions.

Finally, and by building on the lessons from the economic crisis, the paper seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion about journalism’s legitimacy crisis, a crisis that manifests itself in concerns on “fake news” and “post-truth” and in authoritarian politicians’ attack on mainstream media. The argument presented here is straightforward: together with the rise of populist political movements, tapping into the anxieties unleashed by the crisis, these concerns over the disintegration of the rational public sphere signal a crisis in the post-World War II ideal of public communications and liberal political imaginary (Waisbord, 2018). As journalism has worked as the pedagogic branch of this world view (Jutel, 2013: 129-130), the current turmoil is inherently a crisis of the profession. This forces the trade and us, as scholars, to critically evaluate journalism’s democratic role and place in society.

2. Journalism, democracy and the critics

The nexus between journalism and democracy has been strong for centuries. Western political philosophers have been arguing for it since the Enlightenment, and from the late 19th century onwards, journalism has been seen as an essential force in supporting the optimal conditions for modern public life (Zelizer, 2012). Ideally, the press should be a space for rational and open debate on common issues and should work to integrate different parts of the society into a unified public sphere (Hampton, 2010: 4). In liberal thought, journalism is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that members of the public have access to a diverse range of ideas that helps citizens to critically reflect on politics and on their own views as well. Indeed, professional journalism is central in facilitating public opinion and making democratic governance, based on popular consent, possible (Allan, 2004: 47). So when it comes to policy debates, journalism should provide the public with relevant and diverse information on the matter in hand (Nielsen, 2017). It is therefore vital that journalism detaches itself from vested interests in order to provide the public with unbiased knowledge. By committing to the core values of the profession—objectivity and neutrality, for example (Zelizer, 2004)—journalism tries to live up to this mission and present the public with untarnished facts acceptable to all (Muhlmann, 2008: 6-13).

Moreover, journalism contributes to the system of checks and balances, vital for pluralist democratic governance. An independent media and professional journalism are seen to serve a liberal pluralist society where power is distributed across different groups and institutions (Hardy, 2014: 39). Liberated from direct political control during the 19th and 20th centuries (Kaplan, 2002; Conboy, 2004), journalism, with its code of ethics and professional practices, took the role of an independent public watchdog with the mission of keeping an eye on the powerful on behalf of the people (Boyce, 1978; Schudson, 1978).

Members of the critical strand of journalism studies would, however, argue that journalistic representations of current affairs serve the interests of the powerful elites. Media logics, characterised by competition and a middle-of-the-road political stance (calibrated to speak to a mass consumer audience), works to render journalism hostile towards ideas that are too radical or too out of touch with the parameters of dominant opinion (Curran, 1978; Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Moreover, the values and practices of professional journalism, such as dependency on elite sources, work to legitimise certain political positions as authoritative and marginalise others (Tuchman, 1978; Hallin, 1984). The boundaries of journalistic deliberation are constructed by the “*primary definers*” (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978: 57), people who allegedly possess the greatest authority

on the issue. In economic policy debates, this refers to political and administrative elites, economists, market analysts and financiers (Chakravarty & Schiller, 2010; Basu, 2018; Davis, 2018). As noted already by the scholars of the Glasgow Media Group (Philo et al., 1995), mainstream media discourse tends to treat elites as the voices of reason and guardians of the common good, whereas dissidents or, for example, labour union activists are often framed as irresponsible or reckless and solely concerned with their sectional interests.

3. Closing the austerity case

What do the journalistic representations of the economic crisis tell us about journalism and its ability to organise a pluralist exchange on economic policy? I argue that this makes a convincing case for employing the critical perspective, as the logics of journalism have, to a large extent, worked to disseminate the “necessary austerity” narrative.

First, the journalistic representations of the crisis illustrate the close-knit ties between journalistic outlets and the power elites. In Europe, the mainstream press has disseminated the orthodox view concerning the necessity of austerity and reforms and has marginalised alternative thought (Kay & Salter, 2014; Doudaki, Boubouka, Tzalavras, 2016; Kyriakidou & Garcia-Blanco, 2018). National and European elites have been able to use the newspapers to legitimise austerity and provide the public with a certain crisis interpretation, where the crisis has been defined as a problem of loose fiscal discipline and deteriorating economic competitiveness; failures that should be addressed by resorting to austerity and structural reforms (Ojala & Harjuniemi, 2016).

Journalistic representations of the crisis have thus accurately reflected the lack of alternatives presented by established political forces. For example, the Finnish economic policy discussion during the European debt crisis from the period of 2009 to 2014 illustrates how the journalistic mediation of the crisis reflected the ideas formed by the dominant institutions of Finnish economic policy-making (Harjuniemi & Ampuja, 2018). The public discourse rapidly followed suit when the Ministry of Finance, the bureaucratic stronghold of Finnish economic policy groupthink, started to demand austerity and reforms to the Finnish economy. Indeed, the journalistic representations of the economic crisis strongly support findings that journalists do not feel compelled to present opposing views on issues that are characterised by a strong elite consensus (Hallin, 1984).

That elite ideas dominate journalism is hardly surprising. Source-dependency has been well-established by journalism scholarship (e.g. Hall et al., 1978; Allan, 2004: 62-69; Knowles et al., 2017; Basu, 2018). Despite claims of independence, journalism—heavily dependent on the authoritative institutions that it is also supposed to keep an eye on—gives most space and legitimacy to those in power (Tuchman, 1978). It is, however, unsettling that the very historical virtues and professional routines developed to legitimise journalism’s status as the independent public watchdog work to restrict debates on such common issues as economic policy. As journalism, during the late 19th and 20th century, detached itself from partisan positions and morphed into its modern objective form (Schudson, 1978: Curran, 1978; Kaplan, 2002), the trade developed a semi-scientific identity characterised by strong modernist and Enlightenment values: reason, progress and professionalism (Zelizer, 2004; Kantola, 2016). This professional identity manifests itself in the widely-shared ideal of objectivity (Hanusch & Hanitzsch, 2017) according to which the professional journalist can rise above politics and curate the public debate to provide the reasonable public with unbiased knowledge (Jutel, 2016: 1133-1134).

In terms of public debate, the problem is that this critical mind-set easily turns into anti-political cynicism. When discussing politics of austerity, for example, journalists juxtapose the ideological and partisan nature of politics with the seemingly neutral and non-ideological nature of economic facts or the market. This “*realist style*” (Phelan, 2014: 87) of journalism renders austerity, despite the painful consequences, as simply the pragmatic thing to do. Austerity and reforms will modernise the economy and help to regain market confidence in public finances, thus serving the “*common good*” (idib., 106). Anti-austerity and anti-reform sentiments are, on the other hand, depicted as being irrational. They signal either a populist disavowal of the economic facts or a temptation to serve vested interests, groups whose sectional interests are threatened by the economic reforms and spending cuts (Harjuniemi, 2018). This tends to move issues of economic policy outside what Mouffe (2005) would call the “*political*”: debates on economic policy are waged in a post-political register, not as struggles between different politico-ideological projects but between the “*rational*” and “*irrational*” (Harjuniemi, 2018b).

4. The crisis of liberal democracy and the crisis of professional journalism

As stated at the beginning of this paper, the global financial crisis did not lead to any re-calibration in economic policy. In the U.S., the Trump administration, after gaining power with establishment-bashing populism, has continued to dis-

mantle what is left of the American welfare state. In Europe, the austerity policies adopted in 2010 plunged many of the peripheral European nations into a deep socio-economic crisis and the European Central Bank has emerged as the institution keeping the content intact.

However, the angst engendered by the crisis has delivered a severe blow to the legitimacy of the post-World War II liberal democratic order and of established political forces. Such turmoils as the Trump presidency, Brexit, and the rise of populist and authoritarian politics have destabilised the hegemony of globalisation and Third Way neoliberalism (Mouffe, 2018). This unravelling is clearly manifested in the exodus of voters from mainstream centre-left and centre-right parties. Indeed, this resurrection of political ideologies once deemed retrograde marks the end of a technocratic liberal order; an era of political consensus where substantial politico-ideological differences had ceased to exist and Enlightenment principles of scientific rationality could define the optimal approach to governance (Waisbord, 2018).

Importantly for us, it was in this context that Western professional journalism could flourish. Formally abandoning direct political affiliations during the late 19th and early 20th century (Kaplan, 2002; Conboy, 2004), professional journalism worked as the pedagogic branch of the liberal technocratic project (Jutel, 2013). It produced objective reporting via its professional practices rooted in scientific realism (Schudson, 1978; Zelizer, 2012; Kantola, 2016). Journalism walked “*closely to middle-of-the-road elite politics*” (Waisbord, 2018: 4) and sought its place in the hierarchical system of truth-building with scientific experts on top. Instead of being an open forum where a variety of different voices could be heard, 20th century journalists became the technical administrators of the public sphere, vetting and processing voices before they reached the mass public (Nerone, 1995: 51; Kaplan, 2010: 34–35).

These political and epistemic conditions are, however, in a state of flux. Rising economic polarisation, the return of radical politics, and a communication environment characterised by flows of counter-knowledge undermining expert knowledge weaken the foundations on which professional journalism once was able to thrive (Waisbord, 2018). In recent decades, these tendencies have been fuelled by the crisis of journalistic business models and by media policy approaches that have emphasised market-based solutions and deregulation, contributing to a distorted communication system exploited by far-right movements (Freedman, 2018; Pickard, 2018). As marked by a growing distrust towards news (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2018), it is getting increasingly difficult for journalists to speak to mass audiences in the name of the truth. Those most dissatisfied with mainstream journalism are turning to alternative or “fake news”

outlets that can monetise partisanship and anti-establishment grudges by producing identity-based content (Kreiss, 2018). The populist revolt and distrust of traditional forms of truth-telling together with an abundance of online content are, allegedly, adding up to an era of “post-truth”, an epistemic crisis that is in danger of eroding any base of shared reality and democratic discourse (Dahlgren, 2018).

These transformations, of course, create immense challenges for professional journalism. What is the role of journalists in an era of radical politics, when “*the anger at elites includes them*” (Zelizer, 2018: 152)? Relying on the core values of objectivity, facticity and rationality will hardly produce meaningful results. The promise to produce more facts and more truth will not restore journalism’s authority when the liberal values of reasoned public communication are being replaced by bursts of identity-based public expressions (Waisbord, 2018: 3-4). Indeed, the fact-checking habitus of professional journalism has become yet another marker of political tribalism and doubling-down on these virtues might lead to deepening divisions than to a reconciling mode of public communication (Anderson, 2018).

We need to start from the realisation that it is not the lack of professionalism or facts that is the problem. As the case of journalism and the economic crisis shows, the standard features of professional journalism—e.g. objectivity and established sourcing practices—should be considered as problematic *per se*. Journalism, instead of seeing the crisis as an opportunity to discuss the direction of post-crisis societies, has addressed the crisis in a typical manner, letting elites set the agenda and marginalising alternative political ideas. Journalism has thus contributed to a “post-democratic public sphere” where dominant ideas have been shielded from severe ideational challenges (Harjuniemi & Ampuja, 2018). It is no wonder the mediated austerity consensus, echoing the demands set by the economic and political class, has been out of touch with the material reality of the people living in, for example, de-industrialised parts of the U.S. or U.K. (Davis, 2018: 167).

Therefore, I argue that it is not surprising that journalism has been put in an uncomfortable position by such demagogues as Donald Trump who equate the press with enemies of the people (see Freedman, 2018). These concerns should not be arrogantly dismissed. On the contrary, journalism needs to critically assess its routines, practices and virtues. The lessons from the 2008 financial crisis provide us with some clues on how to start repair work and revitalise journalism’s democratic function. The renovations should cover the very foundations of the profession. The profession should rethink the use of sources—not to mention journalistic hiring practices—to create more diversity. An open mind towards politico-economic ideas that might go against consensual elite thought is also needed.

In short, addressing the limits of standard journalistic values is an essential part of any meaningful reform.

A more radical line of thought is, however, to question whether there is a viable future for professional, “above the fray”, journalism that has sought to be autonomous from partisan politics (see Waisbord, 2013). In an era marked by identity-based political communication, the unravelling of the centrist political consensus and a deterioration of traditional business models, we might have to rethink the relationship between journalism and politics. Should journalists and journalism scholars accept that the “unifying” (Muhlmann, 2008: 6) model of journalism—that can produce the objective truth acceptable to all—is not the end of journalism history? Perhaps we will witness a renaissance of politically active journalism; journalism that strengthens shared tribal identities and articulates common political goals and adversaries (see Curran, 1978; Kaplan, 2002).

References

- Allan, S. (2004) *News culture, 2nd Edition*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Anderson, C. W. (2018) ‘Empirical failures: Data journalism, cultural identity, and the Trump campaign’, pp. 33-41 in P. J. Boczkowski and Z. Papacharissi Z (Eds.) *Trump and the media*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Basu, L. (2018) *Media amnesia: Rewriting the economic crisis*. London: Pluto Press.
- Berry, M. (2016) ‘No alternative to austerity: how BBC broadcast news reported the deficit debate’, *Media, Culture and Society*, 38(6): 844-863.
- Blyth, M. (2001) ‘The transformation of the Swedish model: Economic ideas, distributional conflict, and institutional Change’, *World Politics*, 54(1): 1-26.
- Blyth, M. (2013) *Austerity: The history of a dangerous idea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Borriello, A. (2017) “‘There is no alternative’”: How Italian and Spanish leaders’ discourse obscured the political nature of austerity’, *Discourse & Society*, 28(3): 241-261.
- Boyce, G. (1978) ‘The fourth estate: The reappraisal of a concept’, pp. 19-41 in G. Boyce, J. Curran and P. Wingate (Eds.) *Newspaper history: from the 17th century to the present day*. London: Constable.
- Chadwick, A., McDowell-Naylor, D., Smith, A.P., & Watts, E. (2018) ‘Authority signaling: How relational interactions between journalists and politicians create primary definers in UK broadcast news’, *Journalism*, Epub ahead of print 18 March 2018.
- Chakravartty P. & Schiller, D. (2010) ‘Global financial crisis: Neoliberal newspeak and digital capitalism in crisis’, *International Journal of Communication*, 4: 670-692.
- Conboy, M. (2004) *Journalism: A critical history*. London: Sage.
- Crouch, C. (2011) *The strange non-death of neoliberalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Curran, J. (1978) 'The Press as an Agency of social control: An historical perspective', pp. 51-76 in G. Boyce, J. Curran and P. Wingate (Eds.) *Newspaper history: from the 17th Century to the present day*. London: Constable.
- Curran, J. (2002) *Media and power*. London: Routledge.
- Dahlgren, P. (2018) 'Media, knowledge and trust: The deepening epistemic crisis of democracy', *Javnost – The Public*, 25(1): 20-27.
- Davis, A. (2018) 'Whose economy, whose news?', pp. 157-170 in L. Basu, S. Schifferes and S. Knowles (Eds.) *The media and austerity: Comparative perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Doudaki, V. (2015) 'Legitimation mechanisms in the bailout discourse', *Javnost – The Public*, 22(1): 1-17.
- Doudaki, V., Boubouka, A., & Tzalavras, C. (2016) 'Framing the Cypriot economic crisis: In the service of the neoliberal vision', *Journalism*, Epub ahead of print 18 August 2016.
- Freedman, D. (2018) 'Populism and media policy failure', *European Journal of Communication*, Epub ahead of print 30 July 2018.
- Hall, P. (1993) 'Policy paradigms, social learning, and the state: The case of economic policymaking in Britain', *Comparative Politics*, 25(3): 275-296.
- Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., & Roberts, B. (1978) *Policing the crisis: Mugging, the state, and law and order*. London: Macmillan.
- Hallin, D. (1984) 'The media, the war in Vietnam, and political support: A critique of the thesis of an oppositional media', *Journal of Politics*, 46(1): 2-24.
- Hampton, M. (2010) 'The fourth estate ideal in journalism history', pp. 3-13 in S. Allan (Ed.) *The Routledge companion to news and journalism*. Abingdon: Routledge
- Hanusch, F. & Hanitzsch, T. (2017) 'Comparing journalistic cultures across nations', *Journalism Studies*, 18(5): 525-535.
- Hardy, J. (2014) *Critical political economy of the media: An introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Harjuniemi, T. (2018) 'Reason over politics: The Economist's historical framing of austerity', *Journalism Studies*, Epub ahead of print 11 January 2018.
- Harjuniemi, T. (2018b) 'Economic journalism's depoliticization of austerity – The Economist's discursive strategies on austerity 2010-2012', Unpublished article manuscript.
- Harjuniemi, T. & Ampuja, M. (2018) 'Established ideas from established institutions: austerity and structural reforms in the Finnish economic policy debate', *Critical Policy Studies*, Epub ahead of print 20 March 2018.
- Herman, E. & Chomsky, N. (1988) *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Jutel, O. (2013) *Liberalism and its populist excess: Barack Obama, the Tea Party and the media field*. (These, Doctor of Philosophy). University of Otago.
- Jutel, O. (2016) 'The liberal field of journalism and the political: The New York Times, Fox News and the Tea Party', *Journalism*, 17(8): 1129-1145.
- Kantola, A. (2016) 'Liquid journalism', pp. 424-443 in T. Witschge, C.W. Anderson, D. Domingo, & A. Hermilda (Eds.) *The Sage handbook of digital journalism*. London: Sage.

- Kaplan, R. (2002) *Politics and the American press: The rise of objectivity, 1865-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaplan, R. (2010) 'The origins of objectivity in American Journalism', pp. 25-38 in S. Allan (Ed.) *The Routledge companion to news and journalism*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kay, J. & Salter, L. (2014) 'Framing the cuts: An analysis of the BBC's discursive framing of the ConDem cuts agenda', *Journalism*, 15(6): 754-772.
- Knowles, S., Phillips, & G., Lidberg, J. (2017) 'Reporting the global financial crisis', *Journalism Studies*, 18(3): 322-340.
- Kreiss, D. (2018) 'The media are about identity, not information', pp. 93-101 in P. Boczkowski and Z. Papacharissi Z (Eds.) *Trump and the Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Kyriakidou, M. & Garcia-Blanco, I. (2018) 'Safeguarding the status quo: The press and the emergence of a new left in Greece and Spain', pp. 128-140 in L. Basu, S. Schifferes and S. Knowles (Eds.) *The media and austerity: Comparative perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- McNair, B. (2000) *Journalism and democracy: An evaluation of the political public sphere*. London: Routledge.
- McNair, B. (2008) 'Journalism and democracy', pp. 237-249 in K. Wahl-Jorgensen and T. Hanitzsch (Eds.) *The handbook of journalism studies*. New York: Routledge.
- Mirowski, P. (2013) *Never let a serious crisis go to waste: How neoliberalism survived the financial meltdown*. New York: Verso.
- Mouffe, C. (2005) *On the political*. New York: Routledge.
- Mouffe, C. (2018) *For a left populism*. London: Verso.
- Muhlmann, G. (2008) *A political history of journalism*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Nerone, J. (Ed.) (1995) *Last rights: Revisiting four theories of the Press*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Kalogeropoulos, A., Levy, D., & Nielsen, R. (2018) *Reuters Institute digital news report*. Oxford: University of Oxford.
- Nielsen, R. (2017) 'The one thing journalism just might do for democracy', *Journalism Studies*, 18(10): 1251-1262.
- Ojala, M. & Harjuniemi, T. (2016) 'Mediating the German ideology: Ordoliberal framing in European press coverage of the Eurozone crisis', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 24(3): 414-430.
- Phelan, S. (2014) *Neoliberalism, media and the political*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Philo, G., Hewitt, J., & Beharrell, P. (1995) 'And now they're out again', pp. 3-36 in G. Philo (Ed.) *Glasgow Media Group Reader, Volume 2*. London: Routledge.
- Pickard, V. (2018) 'When commercialism trumps democracy: Media pathologies and the rise of misinformation society', pp. 195-203 in P. Boczkowski and Z. Papacharissi (Eds.) *Trump and the media*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Schudson, M. (1978) *Discovering the news: A social history of American newspapers*. New York: Basic Books.

- Streeck, W. (2015) 'Heller, Schmitt and the Euro', *European Law Journal*, 21(3): 361-370.
- Tooze, A. (2018) *Crashed: How a decade of financial crises changed the world*. London: Allan Lane.
- Tuchman, G. (1978) *Making news: A study in the construction of reality*. New York: Free Press.
- Waisbord, S. (2013) *Reinventing professionalism: Journalism and news in global perspective*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Waisbord, S. (2018) 'Truth is what happens to news', *Journalism Studies*, 19(13): 1866-1878.
- Zelizer, B. (2004) 'When facts, truth, and reality are god-terms: On journalism's uneasy place in cultural studies', *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 1(1): 100-119.
- Zelizer, B. (2012) 'On the shelf life of democracy in journalism scholarship', *Journalism*, 14(4): 459-473.
- Zelizer, B. (2018) 'Resetting journalism in the aftermath of Brexit and Trump', *European Journal of Communication*, 33(2): 140-156.

Biography

Timo Harjuniemi is a doctoral researcher at the Department of Social Research, University of Helsinki. He is currently working on a PhD dissertation on austerity and journalism.

timo.harjuniemi@helsinki.fi



SECTION 2

**MEDIA AND
THE CONSTRUCTION
OF SOCIAL REALITY**

The construction of the homeless in the Greek street paper *shedia*

Vaia Doudaki, Nico Carpentier

Abstract

The chapter deploys discourse theory to study the construction of the homeless subject position in a Greek street paper called *shedia*. After a brief outline of the relevant parts of Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) discourse theory, the article first reports on the theoretical work that outlines the elements that construct the homeless subject position, keeping in mind the existence of a hegemonic version of this homeless subject position, which is driven by stigma and othering. While mainstream media often replicate this problematic representation, street papers offer counter-hegemonic (and more respectful) articulations of the homeless subject position. In the case study that follows, 11 print issues (totalling 726 pages) of the Greek street paper were analysed through textual analysis. On the basis of this analysis of *shedia*'s coverage, we can see three nodal points of the hegemonic discourse on the homeless at work: the absence of the home as stigma, the lack of agency and the political identity of the denizen. The counter-hegemonic discourse, that can also be found in *shedia*, has three nodal points that are the inverse of those of the hegemonic discourse: the alternative home, the attribution of agency and the political identity of the citizen. Arguably, this case study is relevant because it shows the mirror-image-logics of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic representations, and the significance of using high theory and political philosophy to further our understanding of social practices.

Keywords: homeless, construction, discourse theory, hegemony, street paper, home, house, agency, citizenship

“Who among us, in his idle hours, has not taken a delicious pleasure in constructing for himself a model apartment, a dream house, a house of dreams?”

Charles Baudelaire (quoted in Benjamin, 1939/1999: 227)

1. Introduction¹

Homeless people are very much part of modern (urban) life, and many middle-class people regularly—albeit very briefly—meet homeless people, for instance, on the streets or when traveling with public transport. Snow and Anderson (1987: 1336) start their article, “Identity Work among the Homeless”, with a series of concepts that have been used to refer to those at the lowest part of the social hierarchy, which includes concepts such as *ribauz*, *lumpenproletariat*, untouchables and underclass. The middle-class gaze of us—better-off city dwellers—in the street or in the tube, only seems to confirm this.

Among the vast academic literature on homelessness, the above-mentioned Snow and Anderson’s article is one of the early publications that focused on the identities of homeless people, showing the complexities and diversities that characterize this social group, but also doing what still happens only too rarely—listening to homeless people—which also gently counters the significant stigma that this group is confronted with on an almost permanent basis.

This article takes a similar approach, by deploying discourse theory: a theoretical framework that is rooted in political philosophy, to better understand the discursive construction of the homeless subject position in the Greek street paper *shedia*. In particular, Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) discourse theory has the capacity of theorizing the discursive-political struggles that can be found in *shedia*, as this magazine shows the articulation of the disempowering hegemonic discourse on homeless people, attempting to dislocate it and offering an alternative, counter-hegemonic discourse, centred around three nodal points: the home, agency and citizenship.

2. Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) provide an outline of their discourse theory, which is embedded in a post-structuralist and post-Marxist agenda. In contrast to many other approaches in discourse studies, Laclau and

¹ Parts of this chapter have already been published, see Carpentier & Doudaki, 2019 and Doudaki & Carpentier, 2019

Mouffe's discourse theory uses a macro-textual and macro-contextual (see Carpentier, 2017: 16-17) definition of discourses as frameworks of intelligibility. Discourses thus become seen as necessary instruments to give meaning to the social world, without denying the latter's material dimensions. This also implies that discourses provide subjects with points of identification, which Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 115) call "*subject positions*". Similar to Althusser's notion of interpellation, these subject positions offer subjects the building blocks of their subjectivity, as discursive structures for the construction of the self.

Moreover, Laclau and Mouffe emphasize the structural openness of discourses, which are always vulnerable to re-articulation, avoiding an ultimate and total closure of meaning. Discourses are often coherent entities, gaining their stability from privileged signifiers—or nodal points—but this stability is never to be taken for granted, as discourses can change, become insignificant or disintegrate. This contingency also impacts subject positions, that can never totally saturate the subject, as there are always a multiplicity of subject positions at work, and subjects always construct unique identificatory relationships with these subject positions. But at the same time, subject positions exercise considerable power, by providing structures of meaning that structure people's subjectivities, how they see, feel, experience and think about others and themselves, and which subjects and groups they like or dislike, consider friends or enemies, or consider even human or not. Of course, subjects do not identify with all discourses and subject positions. In some cases, they will, but in other cases they might distance themselves, remain insensitive or become hostile towards other discourses, which implies, as Van Brussel (2018) has argued, discursive recognition without identification.

Finally, Laclau and Mouffe also strongly thematize the political dimensions of the discursive, as discourses engage in struggles with each other, over the establishment of hegemony. Not all discursive struggles result in hegemony, as some struggles simply continue without any discourse achieving victory, but in some cases a discourse manages to gain a dominant position and to transform itself into a social imaginary that can benefit from the luxury of taken-for-grantedness, normalization and eventually sedimentation. But in this scenario, as the below example of homelessness will illustrate, even counter-hegemonic discourses are able to contest the hegemonic discourse and offer points of resistance, creating the threat that the once victorious discourse could be removed from its (discursive) throne.

3. Constructions of the homeless and the home

One area where we can see this struggle at work is in relation to the subject position of the homeless person. The homeless is a subject position, contested, fluid, contradictory, as well as an object of identification and dis-identification, acceptance and rejection, but still very real in its existence. As a subject position, it is particular, because it is articulated through a series of disempowering signifiers that together form a stigma. The vortex of this stigma generates strong absorptive forces that tend to reduce the individual to this one subject position, ignoring the multiplicity of subject positions that make up a person's subjectivity. This reduction can even be found in (some of) the academic literature on homelessness, which in turn has provoked a series of critical reconsiderations of what is often called *homeless identity*, addressing the issues in the “*extensive literature focusing on homelessness and identity*” where “*often homelessness is presented as constituting a discrete and one-dimensional identity that people avoid or embrace*” (Parsell, 2011: 443).

The homeless stigma is simultaneously discursive and material, affective and cognitive, temporal and spatial, dealing with absences and presences, working with selves and others. It is an assemblage of material routines, sleeping places, “*tattered and soiled clothes*” (Snow & Anderson, 1987: 1339-1340), interactions with companions, social workers, police officers, kind or aggressive passers-by, policies aimed at objectivation, disciplining, invisibility, removal and criminalization, all structured through the absence of one crucial material component: the home. Snow and Anderson (1987: 1340) describe how central antagonism is to this assemblage:

Actual or threatened proximity to them not only engenders fear and enmity in other citizens but also frequently invites the most visceral kinds of responses, ranging from shouts of invective to organized neighborhood opposition to proposed shelter locations to ‘troll-busting’ campaigns aimed at terrorization.

Even if the subject position of the homeless is ‘only’ part of the assemblage of homelessness, it still merits our attention, because of its centrality to the operations of the stigma, and because of the hegemonic forces that attempt to construct this subject position through the stigma, objectifying and dehumanizing homeless people, denying them access to the signifiers of agency and citizenship, reducing them to passive denizens². But also the resistance against the hegemonic articulation of

2 Denizenship originally (see Hammar, 1989) referred to the (reduced) rights of permanent residents in a foreign country. Here, we use it in the expanded meaning, as the reduced political, civil and social citizenship rights (see Marshall, 1992) within a populace. Turner (2016) calls the latter denizenship type 2.

the homeless, attempting to subjectivize and humanize them(selves), makes this a highly relevant component of the assemblage of homelessness.

In the construction of the subject position of the homeless, the absence of the home—or what McCarthy (2013: 54 – referring to Swain, 2011) calls “*rooflessness*”—plays a crucial role, both in articulating the subject position and in organizing the logics of stigmatization. Here, we should keep the centrality of the home in Western imaginaries in mind, as exemplified by the centrality of the home in Felski’s³ (1999/2000: 18 – our emphasis) seminal definition of the everyday, as:

[...] grounded in three key facets: time, space and modality. The temporality of the everyday [...] is that of repetition, ‘the spatial ordering of the everyday is anchored in a sense of home’ and the characteristic mode of experiencing the everyday is that of habit.

In this imaginary, the home is the house, a material shelter that generates a private sphere for the (bourgeois) nuclear family, a process that Hollows (2008: 10) called the “*familialization of domestic culture*”. The home is also an archive and storage space, containing a multitude of objects, tempting Maleuvre (1999: 115) to the following description: “*it is as an owner of a great many objects that the bourgeois individual inhabits the home. To dwell is to possess. Home and property strike a perfect constellation in the concept of the private collection.*”

The (possession of the) home itself functions as a normative ideal, which is actively imposed as one of the requirements of modern life. Heidegger’s (1993: 363) choice for using the notion of homelessness, as a metaphor to capture alienation, is just one of the many possible illustrations of the centrality of the home in the Western imaginations. While, for Heidegger, home/being homed is “*a condition in which humankind is at one with itself, balanced between the earth and the sky, between physicality and spirituality*”, and homelessness refers to “*the alienation of that balance, an estrangement of body and spirit*” (Smyth & Croft, 2006: 15). Societal groups that are outside this hegemonic discourse (and its materialization into a home) are, in different degrees, subjected to interventions that aim to align their behaviour with this hegemonic discourse. Powell (2008: 88), for instance, describes how the nomadic life of Roma and Travellers exposes them to societal pressures to “*conform to a sedentary way of life*”. The sedentarist hegemony—with sedentarism defined as “*the system of ideas and practices which serve to normalise and reproduce sedentary modes of existence and pathologise and repress nomadic modes of existence*” (McVeigh, 1997: 9)—not only affects Roma and Travellers, though. Also, the subject position of

3 This is not to argue that Felski does not pay attention to hybridity and fluidity.

the homeless is articulated through this anti-nomadist discourse, where the lack of a home is a sign of “*failure and degradation*” (Hughes-Edwards, 2006: 122), and “*representations of homelessness can often work to reaffirm idealized notions of domestic life in which the home is equated with ‘safety and security’ and the streets with ‘fear and danger’*” (Hollows, 2008: 121, with reference to Wardhaugh, 1999: 96).

The central position of the home in Western imaginaries is not without contestations. Two key contestations are important here, as they also have the potential to impact on the stigma articulated with the subject position of the homeless. Morley’s (2000: 47) emphasis on the mobile home as symbolic space (and not so much a place) represents one type of contestation, exemplified by this citation: “*home may not be so much a singular physical entity fixed in a particular place, but rather a mobile, symbolic habitat, a performative way of life and of doing things in which one makes one’s home while in movement.*” Even if there are many—pleasant and unpleasant—ways of organizing and experiencing mobile domesticity—consider, for instance, Richter’s (2005) book *Home on the Rails*, about female bourgeois railroad travel—the more positive evaluation of mobile domesticity also offers the potential for more benevolent articulations of the homeless subject positions. The second contestation focuses more on the problematization of the home as the site of disciplining interventions, unequal power relations and violence. Here, Haraway’s (1991: 171-72) description of the home can be used as an illustration of this contestation:

Home: Women-headed households, serial monogamy, flight of men, old women alone, technology of domestic work, paid homework, re-emergence of home sweat-shops, home-based businesses and telecommuting, electronic cottage, urban homelessness, migration, module architecture, reinforced (simulated) nuclear family, intense domestic violence.

4. Media constructions of the homeless

There are many locations where the discourses on the homeless subject position circulate, but if we look at mainstream media, homelessness is not an issue that they frequently cover; when it is addressed, the hegemonic discourse of homelessness is largely reproduced, conveying “*mainstream society’s messages of power, influence, and authority*”, since “[b]y exercising our power to name, we construct a social phenomenon, homelessness, the criteria used to define it, and a stereotype of the people to whom it refers” (Daly, 1996: 9). But in many cases, homeless people are not visible, and thus become—to use Tuchman’s (1978) concept—“*symbolically annihilated*”. When homelessness is covered by mainstream media, episodic coverage dominates, focusing on the tragic death of an anonymous individual or on

charity work being done to support homeless people (especially around the Christmas holidays periods) (Howley, 2003: 280). Only rarely, the structural or systemic reasons of homelessness are addressed.

The mainstream media coverage of homeless people is aligned with the hegemonic discourse of stigmatization, as outlined above. Homeless people are portrayed as a “*threat*” to the well-being of society, largely through “*them versus us*” articulations (Whang & Min, 1999a). The processes and signifying practices of othering are evident even in more sympathetic approaches of the homeless, since they are then reduced to being victims and helpless, dependent for their salvation on society’s benevolence, while the rest of society is assumed to be healthy and powerful (Whang & Min, 1999a.). When they are not presented as victims, homeless people are represented as responsible for their situation. In these cases, responsibility is attributed to the individuals, disconnected from any structural causes and dimensions, employing again binary oppositional schemata (Whang & Min, 1999b). Furthermore, in mainstream media, ‘experts’ dominate as sources on homelessness. When news about homelessness appears, the homeless remain largely absent, which renders them voiceless, whereas various authority holders speak on their behalf or (more often) against them. In the cases where homeless people are given the opportunity to speak, their role is usually “*limited to the de-valued voice of experience*” (Schneider 2011: 71), which contributes to the construction of the dominant discourse of the homeless and the perpetuation of their marginalization and stigmatization.

5. Counter voices: Street papers

The mainstream media coverage, and its alignment with the hegemonic discourse of stigmatization and sedentarism, is not the only media environment that allows for the circulation of the homeless subject position. Some media publications explicitly resist the hegemonic discourse of homelessness, and engage in a discursive struggle over the construction of this subject position. The most poignant example is the so-called street press, which made its appearance in the late 19th century, but has been proliferating from the late 1980s and 1990s onward. *Street News*, established in 1989 in New York, is considered to be the first contemporary street newspaper and has served as a prototype for street papers around the world. Also, *The Big Issue*, launched in 1991 in London, paved the way for the flourishing of street papers across Europe.

Street papers, circulating most often in the format of magazines or newspapers, demonstrate considerable diversity as to their format, design, content and op-

erational models, but also consistency in regards to their approach and philosophy. They do share a common main purpose, which is supported by their distribution model, and which is to support homeless and other socially excluded people to find their way back into society, through employment (Harter, Edwards, McClanahan, Hopson, & Carson-Stern, 2004; Boukhari, 1999; Howley, 2005). Homeless and poor people are the sole vendors of these editions, having the opportunity to gain some income and potentially reconnect with society.

At the same time, street papers have a strong focus on the coverage of homelessness issues, poverty and social exclusion, broadening the scope of the latter by bringing more inclusive perspectives of their constituents and dimensions, and raising awareness on social inequality and injustice (Harter et al., 2004). They publish “*highly personalized accounts of life on the streets, coupled with fearless critiques of contemporary economic conditions and regressive (often repressive) social policy*” (Howley, 2003: 280-281). By bringing in the voices and perspectives of the homeless and poor people, but also of activists, artists and civil society, street papers broaden the perspective of what homelessness and social exclusion is, and highlight the structural dimensions of causes and effects of the increasing social and economic inequalities. As Howley argues, “*street papers challenge the basic assumption that capitalism is a viable, let alone an equitable system of human relations*” (Howley, 2003: 288).

However, there is a need to be careful with univocally celebrating street papers, especially when considering the actual range of opportunities that is offered to vendors to express themselves. Torck (2001) argues that the space given to the vendors’ voices in street papers is generally limited, and restricted to specific writing genres, like the personal narratives, a restriction that in fact perpetuates their stereotypical representations. In many cases, street papers’ vendors are not part of the management and editorial teams, which raises questions about how participatory and grassroots-based these publications are. Moreover, the search for sustainable (business) models has driven some street papers towards (more mainstream) content of general interest, moving away from content that is advocating for homeless people. For example, *The Big Issue*, whose model has been considered successful in achieving high sales, has been criticized for focusing too much on news about entertainment and the arts, not exhibiting sufficient interest in issues of homelessness or poverty and in hosting the vendors’ original voices (Torck, 2001).

These tensions and debates reflect the different, and to a certain degree, competing visions of the street papers’ mission, and relate to their efforts to balance: providing employment opportunities to the homeless (arguing for a business-oriented model) and covering issues related to social and economic injustice, by host-

ing the voice of the communities affected (arguing for an alternative media organization model, promoting participation in management and content production, and non-hierarchical organization). Still, even when considering this diversity, street papers have the capacity to move away from the hegemonic discourse on homeless people, and offer different, more respectful articulations of this subject position.

6. Countering stigmatization: A case study of *shedia*

In order to exemplify how these counter-hegemonic articulations work, how an alternative articulation of homeless people is constructed, but also how we can still see (traces of) the hegemonic discourse on the homeless, we will focus in this case study on *shedia* (*σχεδία*, meaning raft), the only active street paper currently operative in Greece. It circulates in the form of a monthly magazine and its first issue was published in February 2013. It is operated through the NGO Diogenes, which was established in 2010, in Athens, with the aim to support, through a wide range of activities, the efforts of homeless and socially excluded people to (re) integrate into the social tissue. *Shedia* is a member of the International Network of Street Papers (INSP).

Following the model of street papers around the world, *shedia* is sold by its network of vendors in public places, in the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki. Its network of vendors includes: homeless, long-term unemployed, people living in poverty, refugees, asylum-seekers, and people trying to battle drug addiction. *Shedia*'s vision is a fair world, "*without poverty, in which each individual has access to a safe home and enjoys the right to live with dignity, as an equal member of our society*"⁴ (*shedia*, 2017). The street paper's main priority is "*to support our fellow citizens experiencing poverty and social exclusion in their most extreme forms to support themselves. Activating the people we are addressing and trying to support them, is a fundamental component of our interventionist approach*" (*shedia*, 2017).

Shedia had 186 active vendors in 2017, whereas it has employed 486 vendors since 2013. Its vendors sell the magazine for 4 euros, with 2.7 euros per issue going directly and indirectly (social insurance) to the vendor. In 2017, *shedia* had eight full-time and two part-time employed members of staff, 32 voluntary content contributors, and 31 volunteers supporting *shedia*'s activities; there were also a number of other occasional volunteers and contributors. *shedia*'s revenue comes mainly from sales and subscriptions, and, to a lesser degree, from donations, ad-

4 All quotes from *Shedia*'s articles and website that are included in this text, have been translated from Greek to English.

vertising and fundraising activities. In 2017, its monthly average sales were 23,000 copies (shedia, 2017).

In this case study, the *shedia* publications covered a period of one year (July 2017 – June 2018); 11 print issues and 726 pages in total were analysed through textual analysis (Saldaña, 2009). An inductive approach was used to identify the elements and nodal points of the articulation of the subject position of the homeless identity.

7. Homelessness in *shedia*

Shedia's signifying practices show the duality of the positions that subjects (individuals, or, in this case, organizations) can take towards discourses, identifying with some, and recognizing the existence of others—in the latter case, without identifying with them. In *shedia*, we can find the recognition of the hegemonic discourse on the homeless subject position, but *shedia*'s articles dislocate this discourse in favour of a counter-hegemonic discourse, that moves away from the objectivation of homeless people, focusing on their subjectivation. In *shedia*'s coverage we can see three nodal points of the hegemonic discourse on the homeless at work: the absence of the home as stigma, the lack of agency and the political identity of the denizen. The counter-hegemonic discourse also has three nodal points that are the inverse of those of the hegemonic discourse: the alternative home, the attribution of agency and the political identity of the citizen.

7.1. *From the bourgeois home to multiplicity and dignity*

The material absence of a home—or the lack of a permanent residence as it is translated—is crucial in the construction of the homeless subject position, and forms one of its nodal points. The *shedia* articles recognize (and critique) the existence of a hegemonic discourse that articulates the home in such a way that homeless people become discredited, and *shedia* renders this discourse visible. One discursive element of this hegemonic discourse is the permanent residence, preferably home ownership, as the benchmark of a successful and socially acceptable life. It is the precondition of someone's public identity and the key to accessing the services and facilities of organized society. Another element of the hegemonic discourse is that the home is constructed primarily, or exclusively, as property and through its economic value, with significant emphasis on the material elements (building, furniture, etc.). This construction of home as property, organized around the capitalist logic and the dominant models of the banking

system and the housing market, uses the home-as-a-house definition, articulating it as a source of profit. Thirdly, the hegemonic discourse is grounded in a dichotomy—either one has a permanent residence or not—and thus leaves no space for the possibility of a ‘homed’ person with a ‘normal’ life to be found without home at some point of his/her life.

Even if *shedia* does recognize this hegemonic discourse (and the specific way that the home, as its nodal point, is articulated), it does not identify with it. In contrast, the *shedia* articles support an alternative (and counter-hegemonic) discourse on the homeless subject position, by referring to alternative, broader and more fluid approaches of the home, instructed by the homeless people’s living experiences and more symbolic and affective understandings of the value of home. Moreover, the *shedia* articles attempt to dislocate the hegemonic sedentary discourse, by using two strategies. The first strategy points to the perverse and anti-social consequences of bourgeois housing policies, which reject affordable housing (as it is not profitable), and facilities and shelters for the homeless (as they undermine the economic value of the surrounding houses). As a consequence, we see increasing inequalities, also at intersectional levels, between the privileged and the disprivileged (from which the capitalist system feeds), and thus increasing the levels of homelessness. Moreover, the encroachment on public space, and its privatization, are problematized, where, for instance, urban public spaces become inaccessible for homeless people, while they remain underused by the population at large. A second strategy questions the safety and tranquillity of the (bourgeois) home. Its immobility and fixity is sometimes related in the *shedia* articles to its being also a place of isolation and inactivity, and a dangerous and violent place, which forces its inhabitants into homelessness, either due to domestic violence and toxic family relations, or to social/external factors of conflict and war.

The *shedia* articles propose an alternative discourse, which still positions the home as a nodal point of this discourse, but that simultaneously produces a more empowered subject position of the homeless. In this alternative discourse, the home is defined as a symbolic space, which opens up opportunities for articulating it as mobile and multiple. Not restricting the home to the house renders the home flexible and hybrid, adjustable to the people’s needs and living conditions. Here, the home can include temporary and/or transit places, the neighbourhood and the surrounding natural environments. Sometimes the home is simply what one carries with him/her, consisting of his/her valuable belongings. It might not be the home of choice, or the ideal home, but the home one manages to create, or inhabit, after abandoning an abusive parental home, or it might be the temporary shelter that still offers safety. This articulation entails the awareness of fragility, precarity, contin-

gency and multiplicity in relation to the home, which functions as both a burden and a liberating force, as a disabling and enabling condition for the homeless.

The articulation of the home as symbolic space, which we can find in the articles, moves the definition of the home away from its economic value, and sees it as the benchmark of a dignified life, focusing on the quality of life. A home provides its inhabitants with dignified living conditions that are lacking in some of the temporary shelters, and even more so, in warehouses, tents, in places with no water and electricity, etc. In this sense, dignity gains priority over the house that stops being a home, as in some cases the life on the streets is chosen over a violent and toxic home environment. Another element in this shift away from the home's economic value is the articulation of the home as a memory with high affective value. In this re-articulation, the home—often either lost or forcefully abandoned, and usually romanticized—becomes the synonym of childhood, a safe haven, and a family space that offered (and could again offer) love and happiness.

7.2. *From removing to attributing agency*

The subject position of the homeless is also articulated around his/her agency or lack thereof, which is the second nodal point. In the hegemonic discourse on the homeless subject position that we can find in the *shedia* articles, the homeless become objectified, and represented as inactive, useless and weak. The *shedia* articles argue that in the hegemonic discourse, homeless people are represented as powerless and lacking agency, if they are represented at all. Here, the subject position of the homeless is articulated through their inactivity, uselessness, lack of purpose in life, non-embeddedness in, or disconnection from, the social tissue, and (lack of) capacity to function as 'productive' members of society.

The *shedia* articles attempt to dislocate this hegemonic construction. Obviously, through *shedia*'s publishing and distribution practices, the invisibility of homelessness is countered, but the need—and the social responsibility—to support homeless people in regaining voice and visibility, is also explicitly addressed, both as a critique and as action taken, by civil society, activists and artists, trying to raise awareness, to destigmatize, and to practically support homeless people. Moreover, the *shedia* articles take aim at the attribution of individual responsibility to homeless people. It is emphasized that the responsibility for the homeless persons' disempowerment lies with the political-economic system, and not with the individuals themselves. For instance, in the *shedia* articles we can find the critique on the combination of low wages and unaffordable housing, especially in the prosperous mega-cities of the West, like in New York, Paris, Toronto, etc., which makes it still

impossible for employees to have a “decent” residence.

The *shedia* articles also invoke an alternative discourse, that focuses on the homeless’ agency, resilience and (social) activity—including their possible employment—while still acknowledging the limits to this agency. One element of this construction is related to the homeless person taking on particular roles, such as employee or expert. The articles refer to homeless people who work, and whose income is not sufficient to allow them to maintain a residence, and to those who function as tour guides, taking visitors to the backstreets of central Athens in *shedia*’s “Invisible tours” project. The homeless are also articulated as having agency by stressing that they engage in particular activities, constructing both physical/bodily and intellectual agency, ranging from sports to capacity building seminars and the arts. Still, these are mainly activities organized by *shedia*—or by collaborating or similar organizations, in Greece and abroad—in an effort to help homeless people socialize, empower themselves and (re)connect with society. *Shedia* attributes, for instance, a lot of importance to the Greek homeless football team, created through its founding NGO, Diogenes, and the team’s participation in the Homeless World Cup, which is seen as a substantial means to activate and socialize individuals living on the streets. A third way in which homeless people are represented as having agency is through the possession of particular characteristics. They are, for instance, represented as having a developed sense of solidarity; they are seen as members of society who help one another and other members of society, being especially supportive to people in need or in a weak position (e.g., when their fellow citizens are exposed to the dangers of life on the streets). Homeless people are also represented as resourceful, and being aware of how they are seen by others. They may even perform the hegemonic homeless subject position, in order to help others. For example, a man in a wheelchair wrote to the magazine about how a homeless person offered to help him, when he could not pass with his wheelchair, as the pavement ramp was blocked by a fancy car. The homeless person then forced the car owner “*to come out of his hole*”, by leaning on the car and activating its alarm; the owner, infuriated by the fact that a “*street person*” would touch his car, rushed to take his car and leave (issue 58, p. 12). Another agency-enhancing characteristic is the homeless’ resilience against material, but also psychological and social hardships, which is seen as sometimes to exceed that of people in much better financial and living conditions. There are, for instance, a number of stories in *shedia* about homeless vendors consoling people that would confide in them their physical or mental health problems.

At the same time, even if the *shedia* articles systematically highlight the structural causes of homelessness, and focus on the homeless’ humanity, or on their efforts to tackle their problems, the articles still articulate homeless people as

in need of help, even if it is a different kind of help than the one that is found in the hegemonic discourse. The main aim of *shedia*—to “*help people help themselves*”, which aligns with the broader vision of street papers around the world—lies in the acknowledgment that homeless individuals have the agency to take control of their own lives and get empowered, but they still need society’s assistance to do so.

7.3. *From denizen to citizen*

The hegemonic discourse on homeless people also affects the public/civic component of this subject position, as they become disconnected from the polis and its (full) citizenship. As is the case with the other nodal points of the hegemonic discourse on the homeless, *shedia* recognizes the existence of this hegemonic discourse, but simultaneously attempts to dislocate it. In one of *shedia*’s issues, one of the venders uses the word “*dismemberment*” (issue 56, p. 47) to describe her experience, which captures this reduction of citizenship to denizenship. This reduction, linked to the rather oppressive state policies, affects the more traditional political and civic citizenship rights, but also what Marshall (1992) called “*social citizenship rights*”, depriving homeless people of social insurance, healthcare, education and employment. Homeless people are constructed as a threat to other people’s safety (as thieves and/or being violent⁵) and health (as carriers of diseases). They are a threat and miasma, also due to their very existence and visibility in the city, as their material presence (and the presence of facilities for the homeless) threatens the economic value of the house-as-property, and frustrates citybranding initiatives. These problematizations make homeless individuals lose the right to inhabit not only private spaces, but also public spaces. They “*are transformed from political bodies, that is citizens, to simple bodies, to materials, to numbers*” (issue 59, p. 30-31). Moreover, the homeless are not only objectified and stigmatized, but become, more and more, criminalized (e.g. the practice of not allowing homeless persons to sleep in parks and on squares in residential areas, is becoming widespread).

Shedia’s articles also contain an alternative discourse, which starts from the (re)humanization of the homeless, and which invites for a reconfiguration of citizenship, towards a more inclusive and diverse version. These articles construct citizenship as affective⁶, through the stories they contain, describing the homeless’

5 *Shedia*’s articles do contain a few references to incidents with homeless people as perpetrators, but they are exceptional.

6 See the academic literature on affective citizenship, for instance, Mookherjee (2005) and Di Gregorio & Merolli (2016).

feelings, needs, (lack of) well-being, and their everyday lives and living conditions, often told by the homeless themselves. By positioning the homeless people in the center of these stories, their human face—largely lost through the processes of stigmatization and objectivation—is reconstructed, also by referring to particular characteristics, such as civility, kindness, helpfulness and solidarity (as outlined above).

In these signifying practices, the homeless are not critiqued for their weaknesses and addictions; rather, these stories provide the space to explain the motivations and reasons behind addiction, to sketch its multi-layered reality, and to generate understanding that legitimizes the use of more inclusionary models of citizenship (accepting that citizens can have problems and still remain citizens). For example, the consumption of alcohol appears often in the homeless' stories; the problems it creates are not concealed and alcoholism is not glorified; at the same time, the nuances of the ways that alcohol becomes a refuge, or solace, in dealing with the physical harshness of being a homeless person (cold, rain, no regular access to food and (warm) water, for instance), but also the emotional and psychological hardships of loneliness, fear, and despair, are explained.

The alternative discourse, secondly, builds on pluralist forms of citizenship, not only by articulating homeless people as one of the many different groups of citizens, but also by showing the internal diversity of the homeless, rejecting their homogenization, and instead emphasizing the cross-cutting connections with many other identities. Homeless people appear as members of diverse social groups, countering the stereotype of the anonymous individuals that exist—disconnected from the social—as a separate (social) category. In this context, the subject position of the homeless intersects with the subject positions of the immigrant (especially the ones who have no 'legal papers') and the refugee (especially when living in unsuitable accommodation, in camps and temporary settlements). Moreover, the articles show that homeless people can be well-educated people, or, as already mentioned, they can be people with employment who cannot afford accommodation. Homeless people can also be couples with children and pets, and families that are forced to live on the streets due to economic reasons, or forced displacement (e.g. due to conflict and war). This subjectified articulation of the homeless then also includes representations of the homeless as responsible and caring people, taking care of their children, other family members or their pets, supporting and helping others in need, being socially aware and displaying solidarity.

8. Conclusion

Shedia is a location where the disempowering and stigmatizing—and sometimes fear-inducing, sometimes criminalizing, sometimes patronizing—hegemonic discourse on the homeless subject position is structurally contested. The magazine offers a significant counter-voice for a deeply problematic form of othering, firstly by rendering the hegemonic discourse visible and then, secondly, by dislocating a multitude of its discursive elements. And, thirdly, *shedia* also invokes a counter-hegemonic discourse, by re-articulating the three nodal points of the hegemonic discourse. The (signifier of the) bourgeois home as economic asset is opened up, to demonstrate a variety of homes, where the home becomes articulated as a symbolic-affective space. The agency that the homeless subject position lacks, becomes reinstated. And the denizen, having his/her political, civic and social rights denied, is transformed into a citizen again.

From a broader perspective, this case study also demonstrates the relevance of using high theory and political philosophy to further our understanding of social practices, and support empirical research. This cross-fertilization allows not only a better understanding of the structural processes in social practice, but also contributes to the further development of theoretical frameworks. This case study also shows the importance of studying resistant practices and political struggles, as they show the contingency of the social, and bring hope for generating more empowering and humanizing frameworks of intelligibility into thinking (and feeling) the identities of stigmatized groups.

Moreover, this case study is also relevant because it analyses how resistance can produce a mirror image of the discourse it is resisting, with the three nodal points still very present (even if they are inversed). This comes with a cost, for a number of reasons. Through this photonegative logic, the hegemonic discourse still obtains a presence, offering itself for identification⁷. A second issue is that the magazine's articles still, to some degree, confirm the modernist hegemony of the home and sedentary life, pushing more nomadic lifestyles out of the picture. Finally, some of the very dark sides of the homeless subject position get filtered out of the alternative discourse, even if there is attention for the milder dark sides (e.g. alcohol abuse) that can still be integrated into the alternative discourse. Despite these issues, it is hard not to see *shedia* as a materialization of the hope for a more respectful way of thinking about homelessness and (thus) for a better life for homeless people.

7 At the same time, *shedia's* approach brings out the distinction between discursive recognition and identification very clearly. As this distinction is still underused in discourse theory, it has high theoretical relevance.

References

- Benjamin, W. (1999) *The arcades project* (H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin, Trans.). Cambridge: Belknap (Original work published 1939).
- Boukhari, S. (1999) 'The press takes to the street', *Unesco Courier* 52: 43-44.
- Carpentier, N. (2017) *The discursive-material knot: Cyprus in conflict and community media participation*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Carpentier, N. & Doudaki, V. (2019) 'The construction of the homeless as a discursive-political struggle: A discursive-theoretical re-reading of the homeless subject position', *Filosofija. Sociologija*, 30(1): 71-79.
- Doudaki, V., Carpentier, N. (2019) 'Critiquing hegemony and fostering alternative ways of thinking homelessness: The articulation of the homeless subject position in the Greek street paper *shedia*', *Communications. Media. Design*, in press.
- Daly, G. (1996) *Homeless: Policies, strategies and lives on the street*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Di Gregorio, M. & Merolli, J. L. (2016) 'Introduction: Affective citizenship and the politics of identity, control, resistance', *Citizenship Studies*, 20(8): 933-942.
- Felski, R. (1999/2000) 'The invention of everyday life', *New Formations* 39: 15-31.
- Garafola, N. (2000) 'The word from the curb: Street papers give voice to people locked out of the major media', *Utne Reader* (Sept./Oct.). <https://www.utne.com/media/the-word-from-the-curb>. Accessed 21 October 2018.
- Hammar, T. (1989) 'State, nation, and dual citizenship', pp. 81-95 in R. W. Brubaker (Ed.) *Immigration and the politics of citizenship in Europe and North America*. Lanham & London: German Marshall Fund of the US.
- Haraway, D. (1991) *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. London: Free Association Press.
- Harter, L. M., Edwards, A., McClanahan, A., Hopson, M. C., Carson-Stern, E. (2004) 'Organizing for survival and social change: The case of street wise', *Communication Studies* 55(2): 407-424.
- Heidegger, M. (1993) *Basic writings*. (rev. edn; ed. D. F. Krell). London and New York: Routledge.
- Hollows, J. (2008) *Domestic cultures*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Howley, K. (2003) 'A poverty of voices: Street papers as communicative democracy', *Journalism* 4(3): 273-292.
- Howley, K. (2005) *Community media: People, places, and communication technologies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hughes-Edwards, M. (2006) "'The house [...] has cancer": Representations of domestic space in the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy', pp. 121-139 in G. Smyth and J. Croft. (Eds.) *Our house: The representation of domestic space in modern culture*. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi.
- Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. (1985) *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. London: Verso.

- Maleuvre, D. (1999) *Museum memories: History, technology, art*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Marshall, T. H. (1992) 'Citizenship and social class', pp. 1-51 in T. H. Marshall and T. B. Bottomore (Eds.) *Citizenship and social class*. London: Pluto Press.
- McCarthy, L. (2013) 'Homelessness and identity: A critical review of the literature and theory', *People, Place & Policy Online*, 7(1): 46-58.
- McVeigh, R. (1997) 'Theorising sedentarism: The roots of anti-nomadism', pp. 7-25 in T. Acton (Ed.) *Gypsy politics and traveller Identity*. Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press.
- Mookherjee, M. (2005) 'Affective citizenship: Feminism, postcolonialism and the politics of recognition', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 8(1): 31-50.
- Morley, D. (2000) *Home territories: Media, mobility and identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Parsell, C. (2010) 'Homeless identities: Enacted and ascribed', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 62(3): 442-461.
- Powell, R. (2008) 'Understanding the stigmatization of gypsies: Power and the dialectics of (dis) identification', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 25(2): 87-109.
- Richter, A. G. (2005) *Home on the rails: Women, the railroad, and the rise of public domesticity*. Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press.
- Saldaña, J. (2009) *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: Sage.
- Schneider, B. (2011) 'Sourcing homelessness: How journalists use sources to frame homelessness', *Journalism* 13(1): 71-86.
- shedia (2017). ΕΤΗΣΙΑ ΕΚΘΕΣΗ 2017 Μ.Κ.Ο (Annual Report 2017 Μ.Κ.Ο). http://www.shedia.gr/media/uploads/apologismos_2017_c.pdf.
- Smyth, G. & Croft, J. (2006) 'Introduction: Culture and domestic space', pp. 11-26 in G. Smyth and J. Croft (Eds.) *Our house: The representation of domestic space in modern culture*. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi.
- Snow, D. & Anderson, L. (1987) 'Identity work among the homeless: The verbal construction and avowal of personal identities', *American Journal of Sociology* 92: 1336-1371.
- Swain, J. (2011) 'Busting the myth', *Inside Housing*. <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/comment/comment/busting-the-myth-29621>.
- Torck, D. (2001) 'Voices of homeless people in street newspapers: A cross-cultural exploration', *Discourse & Society* 12(3): 371-392.
- Tuchman, G. (1978) 'Introduction: The symbolic annihilation of women by the mass media', pp. 3-38 in G. Tuchman, A. K. Daniels and J. Benet (Eds.) *Hearth and home: Images of women in the mass media*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Turner, B. S. (2016) 'We are all denizens now: On the erosion of citizenship', *Citizenship Studies*, 20(6-7): 679-692.
- Van Brussel, L. (2018) 'The right to die: A Belgian case study combining reception studies and discourse theory', *Media, Culture & Society* 40(3): 381-396.
- Wardhaugh, J. (1999) 'The unaccommodated woman: Home, homelessness and identity', *Sociological Review* 47(1): 91-108.

- Whang, I. & Min, E. (1999a) 'Discourse analysis of television news on public antagonism against the homeless', pp. 95-107 in E. Min (Ed.) *Reading the homeless: The media's image of homeless culture*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Whang, I. & Min, E. (1999b) 'Blaming the homeless: The populist aspect of network TV news', pp. 121-133 in E. Min (Ed.) *Reading the homeless: The media's image of homeless culture*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Biographies

Vaia Doudaki is a researcher in the Department of Media Studies at Charles University (Czech Republic). She has worked as an Associate Professor (Docent) in the Department of Informatics and Media at Uppsala University (Sweden) and a Lecturer and Assistant Professor of Media Studies and Journalism in the Department of Communication and Internet Studies at the Cyprus University of Technology. She holds a PhD from the Department of Communication, Media and Culture, at Panteion University (Athens, Greece), specialising in the sociology of news production.

Email: vaia.doudaki@fsv.cuni.cz

Nico Carpentier is a Docent in the Department of Media Studies at Charles University (Czech Republic). In addition, he holds two part-time positions, those of Associate Professor in the Communication Studies Department of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB - Free University of Brussels, Belgium) and of Senior Researcher in the Department of Informatics and Media at Uppsala University (Sweden). He is also a Research Fellow at the Cyprus University of Technology (Cyprus) and Loughborough University (UK).

Email: nico.carpentier@fsv.cuni.cz

Mediation and place: The sharpening and weakening of boundaries

Magnus Andersson

Abstract

This chapter starts off in communication geography and discuss the dynamic relationship between media and place. The main argument is that processes of mediation are central to the meaning of place although without determination; mediations may both strengthen and weaken boundaries of place. This argument is based on an interdisciplinary double theorization where the concept of place as well as media are elaborated. Hence, place is here understood as composed of social relations and infused with meaning and power, while media are considered broadly, including infrastructures, representations and communication practices.

Keywords: Mediation, place, double theorization, communication geography, the concept of media

1. Introduction

Media studies is a proliferating research area. This is related to the development of communication technologies and the associated abundance of media forms in our everyday life. The advances within technology are, however, not the only reason for the dynamics of the field; meta-theoretical currents within social and cultural theory are also important for the development of media studies. In recent years, media studies has been moulded by a number of theoretical “turns” – for example a spatial turn (Warf & Arias, 2009), material turn (Bennett & Joyce, 2010), practice turn (Shove, Pantzar & Watson, 2012), mobility turn (Sheller & Urry, 2006) – which have had a substantial impact on varied branches of media research. The topic of this chapter is the spatial turn and its implication for media studies, with a particular focus on the inter-relationship between media and place. The aim is not only to point out communication geography as a recent supplement to the wide family of media studies traditions, but also to stress the necessity of interdisciplinarity in this particular context. A meta-theoretical turn is also an interdisciplinary bridge.

The main argument of the chapter is that media are complex things that may both strengthen and weaken boundaries of places. This is based on theoretical elaborations of place as well as media; a so-called double theorization (Andersson & Jansson, 2010). This leads to a view where, on the one hand, place is constituted of social relations and invested by meaning and power, and, on the other hand, media are more than symbolic content, namely infrastructures/materials, representations and practices.

2. Meta-theoretical turns and media studies

Time and space, temporal and spatial structures, have always been important themes in social and cultural theory. With the digitalization and the presence of communication technologies in all aspects of life, the centrality of time and space has increased. Of particular interest in this context is the interdependence between, and entanglement of, media and temporal and spatial arrangements.

Like other appeals for specific theoretical perspectives the spatial turn should be conceived as a theoretical argument. It should be understood as a plea for a spatial perspective on things; that there always is a mutual sharpening between space and social phenomenon. In media studies this reciprocity is captured by André Jansson and Jesper Falkheimer claiming a focus on “*how communication produces space and how space produces communication*” (2006: 9). Attention to place,

space and mobility have a long history within media studies. Transport was for example a central aspect of the Toronto school with Harold Innis and later on Marshall McLuhan, scholars who stressed the overlap between transport and media (which recently became the point of departure in a book by David Morley (2017)). Scholars like James Carey (1989) and Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) developed Innis and McLuhan's spatial media studies, with an addition of cultural theory. Place, space and movement have also been present within cultural studies research on media; maybe most salient through concepts such as *mobile privatization* (Williams, 1974) and, later on, private mobilization (Spigel, 1992). Nevertheless, it is in the 2000's that the spatial turn emerged as a concept in media studies, and with that a somewhat firmer framework. Important contributions are, for example: *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries* (Morley & Robins, 1995), *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (Morley, 2000), *Geographies of Communication: The Spatial Turn in Media Studies* (Falkheimer & Jansson, 2006), *Mediaspace: Place, Scale and Culture* (Couldry & McCarthy, 2004), *Media, Place and Mobility* (Moores, 2012). This is a heterogenous group of books, yet, the curiosity and a will to elaborate on the spatial aspects of media and the media aspects of place and space is a common denominator.

An essential prerequisite for applying communication geography, i.e. a spatial turn in media studies, is an open mind not only regarding empirical questions, but also vis-à-vis theory. It is, however, not enough to elaborate on media in relation to geography; a supplementary elaboration of place and space is necessary. The risk with a monodisciplinary elaboration of media would be that we reduce place to a static container for social interaction and community, something few geographers would agree upon.

3. Double theorization

In order to grasp the meaning of place in times when processes of mediation are entangled in all social and cultural processes, we need to dig into the concepts of space and place as well as media and mediation. The definition of place was in the 1990s a question that caused a heated debate within human and cultural geography. One of the more salient voices at that time was Doreen Massey, who from a sociocultural vantage point stressed place as relational, i.e. always dependent on social relations:

what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus. [...] Instead then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries

around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself (Massey 1994: 154).

Another way to put it: links make places. Massey's stress on "*networks of social relations*" underscores the importance of media for the meaning of place, since the relations beyond the place are mediated to very large degree. Another important implication of this perspective is that places are always dynamic; their meaning change due to the constellation of social relations. This is something to think of in relation to current political debates on nationalism; the meaning of a nation is always in transition.

The stress of social relations comprises feelings and experiences of place; the sense of place. It is a reason to add a phenomenological perspective, stressing that place, in contrast to anonymous space, is invested with meaning and is closely related to power (Cresswell, 2004). A phenomenological perspective implies that we pay attention not only to social relations, but also the involvement of meaning and power. It thus features aspects such as sense of place, place attachment and that places may arouse fear, anxiety, warmth, or other emotions. We can also note that Tim Cresswell uses the same principle to distinguish between movement and mobility; the latter is imbued with meaning and power whilst he views movement as displacement "*before the type, strategies and social implications of that movement are considered*" (Cresswell, 2006: 3).

In order to study the role of media for place – where place is understood as a slice of space that is produced by social relations and infused with meaning and power – we also need to elaborate the concept of media, and not take its inarticulate meaning for granted (Andersson, 2017). The concept of media is, surprisingly, seldom defined by media scholars. There are, of course, scholars who elaborate what media mean (see Couldry, 2000: 6; Hepp, 2012: 21; Krotz, 2014). Nevertheless, within the field of media and communication there are many studies that equate "the media" with institutional (mass) media and/or journalism and their representations. Hence, the concept of media is reduced to an organized institutional production of symbols. An aspect of this view is an implicit assumption about communication as linear, with clear demarcations between producers, content and audiences. What I want to argue is that the studies that take representation, mass media discourse and transmission as a point of departure, should be complemented with studies of other aspects (see below). Digital media studies and media history are inspirational precursors when it comes to unfold the meaning of media.

In the wake of digital media and their significance in all parts and spheres of society, the focus of media studies – and disciplines related to media studies - has been broadened. There has been an emphasis of, on the one hand, material aspects, technology and infrastructure, and on the other hand, practice theory. These theoretical developments are important and inspirational since they put a focus on things that have been neglected in media studies. This can be illustrated by a mobile phone: its mediated content is not all there is, there is also the material phone itself, a Wi-Fi infrastructure and of course a range of practices connected to the phone (Hjort, Burgess, & Richardson, 2013; Madianou, 2014). A conclusion to draw is that materiality/infrastructure and practices should be added to representations.

A drawback of the unexpressed, although taken-for-granted definition of media as institutional media, is that it omits many ‘mediating technologies’ like CCTV, letters and PowerPoint. An interesting detail in this respect is that the multifunctionality of mobiles and laptops reminds us how many communication media we have neglected in the past. For example, e-mails and mail servers throw light on the meaning of personal letters, post offices and postal infrastructures of previous periods, while digital games remind us about the historical meaning of board games and card games. In this context we can learn from media historians who have taken the question of how to define media much more seriously, and who also affirm the difficulties in discerning media from its immediate social contexts; its practices, rituals, institutions and so on (Marvin, 1988). As Lisa Gitelman puts it,

Naturalizing, essentializing or ceding agency to media is something that happens at a lexical level every time anyone says ‘the media’ in English, as if media were a unified natural entity, like the wind (Gitelman, 2006: 2).

The implication of this is that we should avoid expressions like “due to media...” or “thanks to media...” since it becomes a way to ascribe agency to media, which in turn is to confirm technological determinism. Instead, Gitelman advocates specifications: the concept of media should be defined broadly with an inclusive character, although the media aspects have to be specified in use. In other words, we should affirm that the media comprise representation (in a broad range), materialities (like artefacts and infrastructures) and practices, yet, in each empirical context we should pinpoint which aspect we are referring to.

4. Media, communication and place: In practice

In line with the elaboration above I am not going to argue that media affect place in a particular way. Rather, since aspects of media are constitutive of place, there will

be a range of outcomes in the mediatized place. In other words, this is an argument for the centrality of media and mediation – although without a determined outcome. Processes of mediation may contribute to weakened, as well as, sharpened boundaries of place – and everything in between. In addition, different processes with opposite outcomes may occur at the same time, although in different layers. This is illustrated by an argument from the geographer Paul Cloke – not concerning mediation but the relationship between the country and the city:

Rural society and rural space can no longer be seen as welded together. Rather, rurality is characterized by a multiplicity of social spaces overlapping the same geographical area, so while the geographic spaces of the city and the countryside have become blurred it is in the social distinction of rurality that significant differences between the rural and urban remain (Cloke, 2006: 20).

Cloke is thus arguing that infrastructures of different kinds – roads, public transports, broadbands – are linking the countryside and city tighter together. Simultaneously, the social depicting of the rural and the urban are becoming more distinct. It is not mentioned by Cloke, but we can assume that mediated representations of dynamic vivid cityscapes and peaceful and quite rural villages in mass media, adverts and social media play a part in the sharpening of this distinction. The principle of this argument holds for places as well; due to media infrastructure places are more interconnected while representations of places tend to cultivate their specificity.

This spatial dialectic of media has been discussed in other contexts. For example, in relation to the home where domestic media have been seen as links to the surrounding world that expand the home as well as the centre of socio-cultural rituals, which in a way shut the world out and enclose the home (Andersson, 2006). In a similar vein, Jansson analyses social media practices in relation to “the ambiguous balance between *encapsulation* and *decapsulation* in glocal settings” (2011: 240, *italics in original*). The dialectic is also discussed by Scott McQuire in relation to his concept of ‘geomedia’:

Digital media have become increasingly personalized and embedded, and are widely used to activate local situations and connect particular places. In other words, as much as digital media enable *emancipation* from place, they have also become a key modality of contemporary *placemaking* (2016: 6, *italics in original*).

Having established these conjunctions is an important step. Next is to follow Gitelman’s suggestion and specify, which in this context means to scrutinize the aspects of media in the light of different spatial outcomes. In other words, which

aspects contribute to sharpened and weakened boundaries respectively. I will discuss this briefly from three vantage points: infrastructure, representation and communication practices.

We are surrounded by visible and invisible infrastructures: older ones, like electricity, postal service and distribution of newsagents; and newer ones, like CCTV and Wi-Fi (Graham & Marvin, 2001). Infrastructures are primarily links that connect places. It is thereby easy to see how infrastructures dissolve place through weakening its boundaries. Yet, infrastructures also shape places through an impact of the movement and flows of people – just like the arrival of electricity once had an impact on the social micro-geography of the home. Erika Polson's ethnographical study from Havana illustrates this phenomenon on a larger scale (2018). She describes how a previous dynamic urban square, where the social life revolved around a couple of phone booths, suddenly is abandoned in favour of a spot on the other side of the road where one of Havana's few portals to the Internet is placed. The argument here is that infrastructures, whether we are talking about phone booths, Wi-Fi hotspots or CCTV, have an impact on the flow of people and thereby contribute to the making of place.

Media infrastructures, as we just saw, have the potential of both sharpening and weakening the boundaries of place. The impact of representation is clearer. There might of course be examples where representations weaken boundaries of place, although the general tendency is that representations accentuate the meaning of a place through demarcation and distinctions. An indication of this is the enormous economic investments, by regional stakeholders, in place branding and the distribution of positive images of their global city or rural municipality. The discursive power of representations on the meaning of place is a well-known phenomenon. Without delving into this topic it is worth mentioning that these type of sociocultural processes are more complex than they might look: the meaning of place can seldom be deduced from representations.

Mass media are not the only form of representation that shapes places. Also, commercial shop signs (Trinch & Snajdr, 2017), urban screens (Krajina, 2009), and graffiti (Campbell, McMillen, & Svendsen, 2019) contribute to the distinctiveness of a place. These are important for communities of different kinds, as identification, appropriation and, of course, commercialization. Their shaping of place may occur at different levels; there are the individual messages of signboards on the one hand, and the general texture on the other hand. Time Square in New York, where it is the large amount - the bricolage - of signs that signifies.

Another branch of representations are the ones created by social media users (hence, they can be considered as practices just as much as representations). Of particular interest in this context are geographical hashtags, presenting neighbourhoods, public spaces, villages, cities and even nations in a different fashion, based on a very different logic, than the mass media images. Such examples would be Molenbeek in Brussels (Belgium) or Rosengård in Malmö (Sweden), suburbs that, by national and to some degree international, news organisations have associated with migration, criminality, and terrorism. However, #Molenbeek and #Rosengård on Instagram tell a very different story. Both forms of representation are important for the social construction of Molenbeek and Rosengård, although in very different ways, for different groups.

Media practices are spatial practices, and so is communication. A thing not in relation to practice is how communication evolves around ‘presence’. Face-to-face communication is characterized by the creation of a bubble or communicative space for the participants, which screens out the surroundings (Asplund, 1987). The phenomenon is obvious for someone coming late to a mingle party. We can draw on this when we think of a phone conversation; how we are sort of in two contexts at once. (Mass) media practices are similar. When reading a book, we are in the plot, as well as on the comfortable sofa where the reading practice is conducted. We immerse ourselves in films or games, while sitting in the cinema or the living room. Scannell discusses this “*magic*” aspect of mediation as “*doubling of place*”, meaning “*being at two places at once*” (1996: 91), Morley (2017) discusses the same phenomenon as “*transport of the mind*” and Annette Hill (2019) coins the concept as “*roaming audiences*”. Media practices as travelling practices has thus been described in several ways, and a common denominator is the blurred boundaries of place; other places and other realms that are part of the individual place. Yet, media practices are also placemaking practices (Moores, 2012). The hashtags described above are good examples of Massey’s argument that it is constellations of social relations that gives place their specificity (1994: 154). The range of mobile phone practices on trains, cafes and public spaces, are also contributing to the meaning of place – based on social interaction as they are. Hence, we cannot state that media practices dissolve places; they work both ways depending on the particular context.

It has not been the goal of this text to provide a detailed description of how to approach place and media. My hope is rather that these initial thoughts on an approach towards mediation and the meaning of place work as inspiration and can be developed in a range of directions.

References

- Andersson, M. (2006) 'The flexible home', pp. 171-188 in J. Falkheimer and A. Jansson (Eds.) *Geographies of communication: The spatial turn in media studies*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Andersson M. (2017) 'Mediatization from below' pp. 35-56 in O. Driessen, G. Bolin, A. Hepp, and S. Hjarvard (Eds.) *Dynamics of mediatization: Institutional change and everyday transformations in a digital age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Andersson, M. & Jansson, A. (2010) 'Rural media spaces: Communication geography on new terrain', *Culture unbound Journal of Current Cultural Research*, 2: 121-130.
- Asplund, J. (1987) *Om hälsningsceremonier, mikromakt och asocial pratsamhet*. Göteborg: Korpen.
- Bennett, T. & Joyce, P. (Eds.) (2010) *Material powers: Cultural studies, histories and the material turn*. London: Routledge.
- Campbell, L., McMillen, H. & Svendsen, E. (2019) 'The written park: Reading multiple urban park subjectivities through signage, writing and graffiti', *Space and Culture*.
- Carey, J. (1989) *Communication as culture: Essays on media and society*. New York: Routledge.
- Cloke, P. (2006) 'Conceptualizing rurality', pp 18-28 in P. Cloke, T. Marsden and P. Mooney (Eds.) *Handbook of rural studies*. London: Sage.
- Couldry, N. (2000) *The place of media power: Pilgrims and witnesses of the media age*. London: Routledge.
- Couldry, N. & McCarthy, A. (Eds.) (2004) *Media space: Place, scale and culture in a media age*. London: Routledge.
- Cresswell, T. (2004) *Place: A short introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Cresswell, T. (2006) *On the move: Mobility in the modern western world*. London: Routledge.
- Falkheimer, J. & Jansson, A. (Eds.) (2006) *Geographies of communication: The spatial turn in media studies*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Gitelman, L. (2006) *Always already new: Media, history, and the data of culture*. Cambridge (MA): The MIT Press.
- Graham, S. & Marvin, S. (2001) *Splintering urbanism: Networked infrastructures, technological mobilities and the urban condition*. London: Routledge.
- Hepp, A. (2012) 'Mediatization and the "molding force" of the media', *Communications*, 37(1): 1-25.
- Hill, A. (2019) *Media experiences: Engaging with drama and reality television*. London: Routledge.
- Hjort, L., Burgess, J., & Richardson, I. (Eds.) (2013) *Studying mobile media: Cultural technologies, mobile communication and the iPhone*. London: Routledge.
- Jansson, A. & Falkheimer, J. (2006) 'Towards a geography of communication', pp. 7-26 in J. Falkheimer and A. Jansson (Eds.) *Geographies of communication: The spatial turn in media studies*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Jansson, A. (2011) 'Cosmopolitan capsules: Mediated networking and social control in expatriate spaces', in Christensen, M., Jansson, A. and Christensen, C. (eds) *Online territories: Globalization, mediated practices and social space*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Krajina, Z. (2009) 'Exploring Urban Screens', *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*, (1)2: 401-430.

- Krotz, F. (2014) 'Media, mediatization and mediatized worlds: A discussion of the basic concepts', pp. 72-87 in Hepp, A. and Krotz, F. (Eds.) *Mediatized worlds: Culture and society in a media age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Madianou, M. (2014) 'Smartphones as polymedia', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19(3): 667-680
- Marvin, C. (1988) *When old technologies were new: Thinking about communication in the late nineteenth century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Massey, D. (1994) *Space, place and gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- McQuire, S. (2016) *Geomedia: Networked cities and the future of public space*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Meyrowitz, J. (1985) *No sense of place: The impact of electronic media on social behaviour*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Moore, S. (2012) *Media, place & mobility*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Morley, D. (2000) *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Morley, D. (2017) *Communications and mobility: The migrant, the mobile phone and the container box*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Morley, D. & Robins, K. (1995) *Spaces of identity: Global media, electronic landscapes and cultural boundaries*. London: Routledge.
- Polson, E. (2018) 'Information supercall: The social internet of Havana's WiFi streets', pp. 67-78 in R. Wilken, G. Goggin and H. Horst (Eds.), *Location technologies in international context*. London: Routledge.
- Scannell, P. (1996) *Radio, television & modern life*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sheller, M. & Urry, J. (2006) 'The new mobilities paradigm', *Environment and Planning A*, 38(2): 207-226.
- Shove, E., Pantzar, M. & Watson, M. (2012) *The dynamics of social practice: Everyday life and how it changes*. London: Sage.
- Spigel, L. (1992) *Make room for TV: Television and family ideals in postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Trinch, S. & Snajdr, E. (2017) 'What the signs say: Gentrification and the disappearance of capitalism without distinction in Brooklyn', *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 21(1): 64-89.
- Warf, B. & Arias, S. (Eds.) (2009) *The spatial turn: Interdisciplinary perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Williams, R. (1974) *Television: Technology and cultural form*. London: Fontana.

Biography

Magnus Andersson is associate professor at the Department of Communication and Media at Lund University. He holds a PhD in Media and Communication Studies from University of Gothenburg. His research is within the field of media and cultural studies with a particular interest in questions on mediation, mediatization and media practices of everyday life and how these aspects relates to mobilities, immobilities and place.

**“Yay! I am officially an #estonian #eResident!”
Representations of Estonian e-residency as a novel
kind of state-related status and affiliation on Twitter**

Piia Tammpuu

Abstract

New forms of translocal communication supported by digital infrastructures are seen to extend personal spaces of interaction as well as to intensify the complexity of spatial relations. Using the case of Estonian e-residency, this study examines the concept of *virtual residency* as a novel kind of state-related status and affiliation. Estonian e-residency is a government-supported transnational digital identity scheme which gives non-residents of the country remote access to the state’s digital infrastructure and e-services via means of digital authentication. Drawing on theorisations on the construction of the self and identity in social media, the study scrutinizes the ways in which e-residency is represented among its users by analysing personal “status-updates” about becoming an e-resident on Twitter. The analysis focuses on self-identities and attachments that are accentuated in relation to one’s status as an e-resident, and on the types of *digital subjectivity* constructed around the concept of e-residency. The analysis is based on a small-scale Twitter corpus consisting of thematic tweets (n=525) by individual Twitter users (n=271) who explicitly present themselves as Estonian e-residents in their microblogging practices. Qualitative textual analysis combined with basic quantitative metrics are applied as the main method in the study. The findings suggest that digitally enabled transnationalism and digital nomadism appear as the two major perspectives from which one’s self-identity as an Estonian e-resident are constructed. The significance attributed to one’s status as an e-resident emphasizes the increased opportunities of connectivity and mobility that are seen as part of one’s self-realisation in contemporary societies.

Keywords: transnationalism, digital nomadism, e-residency, self-identity, Twitter

1. Introduction

Communication technologies reshape the space of human agency by extending the scope of physical and virtual interactions into which people are able to enter (Adams, 1995). New forms of translocal communication supported by digital infrastructures are likewise seen to expand personal spaces of interaction but also to intensify the complexity of spatial relations (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). Using the case of Estonian e-residency, this study explores the concept of *virtual residency* as a novel kind of state-related status and affiliation backed by a government-supported digital identity scheme.

In 2014, the Estonian government approved the concept of *e-residency* – the idea of issuing a special digital identity card (the e-resident ID) to non-residents of the country with the aim to give remote access to Estonia’s digital infrastructure and e-services via means of digital authentication and without the requirement of (nor with the right to) physical residency in the country. Although the concept suggests an analogy to physical residency, e-residency is rather claimed to challenge traditional notions of residency, citizenship and territoriality (Kotka, Vargas, & Korjus, 2015) and offer a model of algorithmic de-territorial form of “*stateless citizenship*” (Calzada, 2018). While e-residency does not grant formal citizenship status, it offers a range of digital benefits, independent of one’s location and nationality, that are otherwise available only to the citizens and residents of the state. In this respect, e-residency can also be seen as a means which turns the digitalised nation-state into a globally marketable and sellable commodity (Tammpuu & Masso, 2018).

In addition to theorisations that seek to explain the implications of e-residency, this study aims to examine the ways in which e-residency is represented as a special status and affiliation among its users by analysing personal “status-updates” about becoming an Estonian e-resident on Twitter, the popular microblogging platform. Personal tweets enable the analysis of both individual discourses as well as the ways they come to form certain collectively shared streams of meaning and representation (see e.g. Bozdog & Smets, 2017; cf. Murthy, 2018). The analysis focuses on self-identities and attachments that are accentuated in relation to one’s status as an e-resident, and on the types of *digital subjectivity* constructed around the concept of e-residency.

2. Being an e-resident as a novel kind of status and affiliation

Government-supported digital identity systems can be considered as mechanisms of (digital) inclusion which define and delimit the range of digital subjects entitled to particular digital rights and benefits. Digital subjects covered by such systems are usually defined and delimited based on other instruments of inclusion, such

as citizenship or residency. Estonian e-residency as a transnational digital identity scheme targeted to non-residents of the country is based on a different logic in which the inclusion into the digital nation is untied from other forms of territorial and political attachment and belonging. Digital identity systems also appear as mechanisms of digital enablement which give access to different types of digital interactions and consequently reshape personal activity space(s). Hence, a digital identity not only reflects certain aspects of one’s personal identity but also enhances particular social identities and relationships through the socio-spatial contexts in which such digitally mediated interactions take place. Thus the question is what kinds of (additional) identities and affiliations e-residency could offer to its holders.

The major focus of the e-residency programme has been on supporting location-independent business and work by offering means to act independent of one’s (physical) location and be digitally mobile. Moving, as well as the capacity to move between places, either physically or virtually, can be seen as a kind of personal capital that relates to and can be converted into other kinds of capital (Kaufmann, Bergman, & Joye, 2004; Urry, 2007). Accordingly, the opportunities for mobility can also be sources of a higher social status and power. This highlights the potential of e-residency to advance one’s status, particularly in the context where connectivity and mobility are increasingly seen as mandatory elements of self-realisation (Jansson, 2018).

Based on individual applications of e-residency, different groups can be distinguished as the main beneficiaries of the e-residency programme. Among the early adopters of e-residency, there were mostly people from Estonia’s neighbouring countries (Finland and Russia). After the implementation of the online application platform in 2015 and the involvement of Estonian embassies as service-points for issuing the e-resident ID, the geographical range of nationals applying for Estonian e-residency has expanded fast (see e.g. Kotka et al., 2015). By January 2019, ca 53,000 citizens from 166 countries had applied for Estonian e-residency and ca 50,000 of them had already been issued their e-resident ID. Altogether, individuals working in virtual businesses and/or interested in location-independent international business (or work) constitute the largest group of applicants since the beginning of the programme in 2014 (as of January 2019, 41% of total number of applicants), followed by the group of entrepreneurs interested more specifically in registering their business to Estonia (27% of applicants).¹ While the majority of applicants has thus a business-related motivation to become an e-resident, there are also those who would like to obtain e-residency in order to take advantage of secure digital authentication in general (9% of applicants). Besides the aforementioned groups, a share of applicants describes themselves as “fans of e-residency” (14% of applicants), thus expressing a more general interest in the concept rather than a clear intention

1 Up-to-date statistics about the application trends of Estonian e-residency are presented on the webpage <https://app.cyfe.com/dashboards/195223/5587fe4e52036102283711615553>

to use it. The main motivations thus allow one to distinguish, on the one hand, business-related vs other kind of incentives for becoming an e-resident, and on the other hand, instrumental, usage-related vs non-instrumental interest in e-residency. On the whole, the applicants of e-residency have been predominantly male (88 % of all applicants). As entrepreneurs form the major target group of the e-residency programme, this may reflect, among other aspects, the global gender gap in entrepreneurship. At the same time, this gender imbalance can be seen as contributing to the reproduction of gendered inequalities concerning digital capacities and inclusion.

3. Self-identity and community building on Twitter

Twitter is a microblogging platform designed to broadcast short but regular bursts of content, mainly in the form of users' "status-updates", to audiences beyond a user's direct social network (Murthy, 2018: 12). An important part of the communication on Twitter, similarly to other social media platforms, is about the creation and the presentation of the "self" where the act of tweeting can be seen as an explicit instance of self-production (Murthy, 2018: 31). Accordingly, "status-updating"-practice on Twitter may become a meaningful part of people's identity construction as well as of their identity maintenance: "*I tweet, therefore I am*" (Murthy, 2018: 33; Zappavigna, 2014: 209).

Using Foucault's notion for culturally evolved means and practices that are employed for taking care of the self, Marwick argues that social media embodies neoliberal technologies of the self which impose the ideals of entrepreneurialism and "*self-realisation*" (Marwick, 2013a: 11-14). According to Marwick, social media fosters an "*individualistic, competitive notion of identity that prioritises individual status-seeking*" and encourages people to produce corresponding types of subjectivities (Marwick, 2013a: 17). Being driven by the logic of attention economy that prioritises visibility, ordinary users are apt to adopt marketing and advertising techniques drawn from commercials and celebrity culture to "*self-promote*" themselves via social media platforms (Marwick, 2013a; Page, 2012). This has made scholars view Twitter as a "*linguistic marketplace*", that is a site for self-mediation suited to performances of self-promotion and self-branding (Page, 2012; cf. Murthy, 2018).

Within the linguistic marketplace of Twitter, users can employ different semiotic resources that help them to increase visibility and attain attention. For example, by using hashtags that make their tweets searchable, tweeters can make their professional identity searchable and promote their identity as affiliated within a wider professional field (Page, 2012: 198). Twitter is also unique in facilitating public interactions across discrete social networks by providing an opportunity to communicate directly and in a seamless way via @-mention not only with one's friends

but also with other users of Twitter (Murthy, 2018: 5). Mentioning a user with the @-character serves as a kind of "*amplified*" reference and potential tool for self-promotion since other users may also view the mention (Zappavigna, 2017: 210).

The aforementioned communicative affordances of Twitter also highlight its potential for constructing shared meanings, values and identities to facilitate community building (Stephansen & Couldry, 2014). An effective mechanism of community-building is through tagging that may lead to the emergence of "*hashtags-communities*" (Murthy, 2018) and "*ad hoc*' publics" formed around particular issues or topics discussed on Twitter (Bruns & Burgess, 2011). For analysing how affiliation is enacted in discourse by the use of hashtags, Zappavigna (2014; 2017) has proposed the concept of "*ambient affiliation*" to denote "*social bonding where microbloggers as individuals do not necessarily have to interact directly, but may engage in practices such as hashtagging in order to participate in particular kinds of 'belonging'*" (Zappavigna, 2017: 216). Hashtags also play a role in performing an identity, as appending a hashtag presupposes that a post on Twitter has an ambient audience (imagined "others") who may share, or contest, the values construed by the accompanying verbal text (Zappavigna, 2014: 211).

4. Method and data

This study applies a qualitative "*small-data*" approach to researching Twitter, which enables to focus on a particular user group and gain more in-depth understanding of the processes of meaning-making (see e.g. Bozdag & Smets, 2017; Iveson, 2017; Marwick, 2013b; Stephansen & Couldry, 2014).

The Twitter corpus used in the study was compiled through purposeful multistage sampling. In the first stage, the aim was to identify individual Twitter users who explicitly present themselves as (potential) e-residents in their microblogging practices. For that purpose, a systematic monthly-based screening of tweets on Estonian e-residency was carried out by using the "advanced search" function of Twitter and a list of keywords and hashtags referring to Estonian e-residency. The search covered a three-year period, starting from December 2014, when the Estonian e-residency programme was officially launched, to December 2017. In this way, 271 individual Twitter users as (potential) e-residents were identified. In the second stage, a systematic individual account-based screening was conducted among the selected users by using the same list of keywords and hashtags and covering the same temporal scope. In this stage, the English language was set as an additional limitation for the search. As a result, a corpus of 525 tweets including an explicit self-reference about being or becoming an Estonian e-resident posted by 271 individual Twitter users was compiled.

For the analysis of the corpus, a qualitative textual analysis combined with basic quantitative metrics (e.g. frequencies of hashtags) was applied. All tweets were manually coded in Excel and also stored as separate files in the picture format. The coding comprised, on the one hand, aspects which characterise the use of different semiotic resources and multimodality in tweets, as well as the interactive dimension of tweeting (e.g. use of hashtags and @-mentions; attached visuals and other linked sources; the number of likes, comments and retweets of a tweet). On the other hand, thematic codes were inductively developed through the close reading of tweets (e.g. spatial and scalar references included in the tweets; professional, social and cultural references used for self-identification).

In addition, some profile data (e.g. professional field, gender, location), if provided by the particular user on Twitter, were collected about the users selected for the analysis. Profile data revealed that the vast majority of users in the sample were male, with only 10 per cent being female users. This is roughly similar to the overall gender division among applicants of e-residency, as referred earlier in this paper. Technology, engineering, (start-up) business and entrepreneurship, data analytics and consultancy, but also travelling, were the most frequently listed professional fields and activities in the personal Twitter profiles. It is also notable that several users mentioned the fact of being an Estonian e-resident in their Twitter profile.

5. Findings

5.1. *Becoming an e-resident as a “status-update” on Twitter*

The novelty of the concept of *virtual residency* is undoubtedly an aspect that makes e-residency a compelling topic in the social media context. As ordinary microbloggers on Twitter compete for attention and visibility, becoming an e-resident, even if in a relatively marginal and unknown country like Estonia, is therefore an event that is considered to be worth sharing with others. The following tweets can be seen as typical examples of personal “status-updates” on Twitter to announce about one’s becoming an e-resident of Estonia. Usually, these tweets include a hashtag referring to e-residency or e-residents as a common marker:

Estonian Police and Border Guard Board granted me today e-residency of Estonia. Feeling good about it. #E-resident of #Estonia (14/12/2015).

I picked up my #eresidency card this morning. Yay! I am officially an #estonian #eResident! (23/08/2017).

While some users had only a single “status-update” in relation to be(com)ing an e-resident, others tweeted repeatedly about their way to e-residency (submitting the application, being approved and receiving the e-resident ID) or shared their experiences of using the e-resident ID in practice. In several cases, these “status-updates” also provided some photo-evidence, for example such as an attached or a linked Instagram photo of the personal e-resident ID card or a photo of the person (or a selfie) demonstrating his/her e-resident ID. Often these photos had been taken in front of an Estonian embassy or a service-point of Estonian Police and Boarder Guard Board where the card was issued, thus indicating the involvement of the Estonian state. In some instances, the tweets also took the form of an explicit self-promotion, for example by including a link to a personal blog or to a video clip about one’s personal experiences of e-residency.

However, besides self-representation and self-promotion, these individual tweets form an inseparable part of the marketing communication of the e-residency programme on Twitter. By including @e_Residents, the official Twitter account for communicating the news and updates of the e-residency programme, into their personal posts, individual Twitter users not only have the probability to be tweeted back by the communication team of the e-residency programme but also attain additional visibility among the followers of the programme on Twitter. As the following examples demonstrate, the use of the account @e_Residents in the individual tweets indicates a rather subtle and seamless interaction in some cases:

Just applied to become one of the @e_Residents of #Estonia. [-] (27/10/2015).²

Finally got my @e_Residents card. looking forward to making full use of it. [-] (21/04/2017).

In a similar way, the users also employed the institutional Twitter account @e_Estonia, aimed at creating the image and reputation of Estonia as “e-Estonia”, an advanced digital society, by posting news on Estonia’s digital developments and innovations on Twitter:

Just applied to be an e-resident in @e_estonia an amazing initiative (11/11/2015).

Thus, besides seeking personal visibility and attention, the personal “status-updates” about be(com)ing an e-resident also contribute to the promotion and marketing of the e-residency programme as well as to Estonia’s nation-branding in social media.

2 Here and elsewhere in the text, the symbol [-] marks that the original tweet has been shortened.

5.2. *Being an e-resident as an affiliation with an imagined collectivity*

The individual tweets on be(com)ing an e-resident also indicate an imagined affiliation with a broader collectivity of e-residents. On the one hand, this kind of collectivity is constructed around the processes of digitalisation and related agents, as shown in the example below:

[-] I'm happy to be one of those digital people! [-] (21/09/2015).

[-] I'm feeling proud and honored for being a part of digital revolution. [-] (03/11/2017).

An additional aspect which characterises such imagined affiliation, especially during the first years of the e-residency programme, is the imagination of being among the first adopters of e-residency globally:

Proud to be one of the first adapt to global trend #eresidency (02/11/15).

I'm very proud to be one of the first @e_Residents in the world :) [-] (02/12/2015).

This suggests an imagination of e-residents as a “*pioneering community*”, the concept proposed by Hepp (2016) to typify groups acting as “*intermediaries between the development and the appropriation of new (media) technologies*” and characterised by experimental use of technology and active engagement with its development (Hepp, 2016: 918).

On the other hand, the imagined affiliation is explicitly associated with Estonia, particularly with the notion of “e-Estonia” as the signifier of the Estonian digital society:

Honoured to be in the first wave of E-estonians [-] (26/06/2015).

[-] I'm now officially part of the Estonia e-residency virtual state (10/07/2017).

Independent of whether e-residency is considered within a global or a national framework, a common denominator attributed to the imagined affiliation related to one's status as an e-resident is thus a favourable attitude towards digital technologies and digitalisation in general.

5.3. *E-residency as an additional layer of transnational identity*

Since Estonian e-residency does not substitute existing territorial and political attachments but rather provides an additional (state-related) status and affiliation, one's national identity and categories of belonging are presented as co-existing with one's

status as an e-resident. However, as revealed from the tweets below, it is not just one’s nationality that is being emphasised in relation to one’s status as an e-resident but also the fact of being a pioneer among one’s co-nationals in obtaining that status:

Mission accomplished. I just collected my Estonian e-resident card. First Maldivian #eresident of #estonia (10/02/2016).

Only 620 Indians have e-Residency of Estonia! Happy to be 621st Indian! #ProudIndian (30/04/2017).

But becoming an Estonian e-resident may be also presented as an act of protest to express criticism towards one’s national government:

Today I finally became an #Estonian #eResident. Let’s just say it’s a small protest to the embarrassing government we have here in #Finland. (24/01/2017).

This kind of opposition to the national authorities became especially evident in the context of Brexit, which enabled some to highlight the advantage of Estonian e-residency as offering digital residency in the European Union:

Yay! My Estonian e-resident application has been successful! Do your worst, brexiteers... #stayingin #iloveEU (08/11/2016).

The following self-representations illustrate in an even more explicit way how e-residency is presented as another layer of transnational self-identity and affiliation within other (trans)national attachments, experienced and institutionalised through citizenship, residency, tax residency and professional activity. Here the presentation of e-residency as an additional “status” in one’s “collection of affiliations” can also be seen as a demonstration of increased personal capital achieved through such “status upgrade”:

Belgian, resident in Serbia, company based in Estonia, working for African Regional Org. I have now a digital identity; I am e-Resident. (08/10/2015).

[-] Italian citizen, Finnish resident, Estonian e-resident and Russian tax payer. [-] (11/10/2016).

The perception of e-residency as enabling transnationality thus stresses its significance in creating multi-local affiliations and activity-spaces encompassing multiple national settings.

5.4. E-residency as an enabler of digital mobility

Another way of presenting one's status as an e-resident is by emphasizing the capacity to "digitally surpass" territorially bound (national) spaces of action and to relocate flexibly between places while being "connected". Such capacity is emphasised for example by notions and hashtags such as be(com)ing "global", "location-independent" and "stateless":

Application submitted for #eResidency of Estonia (@e_Residents). Seems perfect for a #stateless international business person. (22/10/2015).

Another step towards being global – received Estonia e-Residency! (30/04/2017).

I'm looking into Estonian e-residency myself #estonia #eresidency #locationindependent (03/07/2017).

The enhanced opportunities for connectivity and mobility obtained through e-residency appear here as premises of (professional) self-realisation and are often captured by the notion of "digital nomad", which is included as a frequent self-reference in the tweets:

Applying for the #estonia #eResidency right now. "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for a #digitalnomad" #freedom #remotework (19/07/2017).

#Estonia E-residency! The card will connect you anywhere. Today Copenhagen. #eresidency #digitalnomad [-] (03/08/2017).

#digitalnomad is also the most frequently used hashtag in the analysed Twitter corpus besides #eresidency and #eresident. Being a "digital nomad" thus turns out to be a more popular category for self-identification among e-residents than being a "digital citizen", for example. However, the use of the hashtag #digitalnomad in the particular tweets does not enable to one to identify all possible connotations that the particular self-reference(s) has for particular e-residents. Yet, it highlights the importance of e-residency in supporting social identities and (digital) subjectivities not only anchored in particular physical or territorial contexts but also experienced and expressed through mobility as in the case of nomadic mode of subjectivity (D'Andrea, 2006).

6. Conclusions

This study examined the ways in which Estonian e-residency is imagined and presented as a particular status and affiliation by its holders on Twitter. By em-

phasizing the (digital) benefits and advantages that one has due to the status as an Estonian e-resident, the personal “status-updates” on Twitter about be(com)ing an e-resident generally serve as indications of a “status-upgrade”. As Estonian e-residency does not come to substitute but rather supplement existing national or state-related affiliations, such as citizenship or residency, it is seen to offer a novel kind of transnational belonging and status. In this context, e-residency is also presented as part of one’s (strategic) collection of transnational affiliations (“multiple affiliations at multiple sites”). These manifold affiliations indicate not only one’s “embeddedness” in different socio-spatial contexts but also the scope and intensity of one’s transnationality as a certain personal capital. In general, the significance attributed to one’s status as an e-resident emphasizes the increased opportunities of connectivity and mobility that are seen as part of one’s self-realisation in contemporary societies (Jansson, 2018). “Transnationalism” and “digital nomadism” are accordingly the two major perspectives from which one’s status and self-identity as an Estonian e-resident are constructed.

References

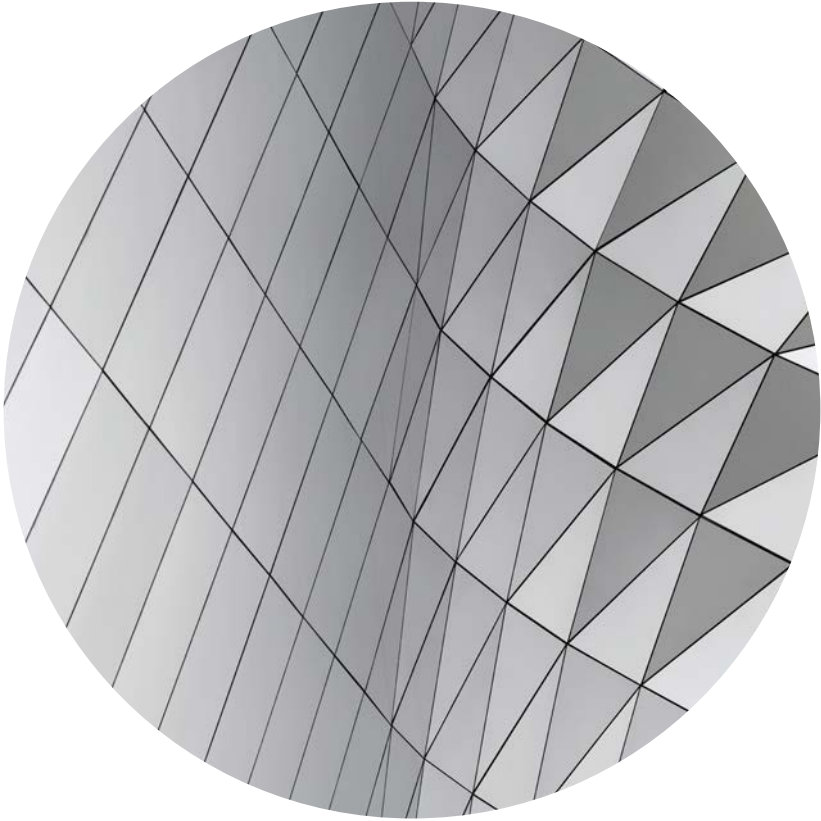
- Adams, P. C. (1995) *The boundless self: Communication in physical and virtual spaces*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Bozdag, C. & Smets, K. (2017) ‘Understanding the images of Alan Kurdi with “small data”: A qualitative, comparative analysis of Tweets about refugees in Turkey and Flanders (Belgium)’, *International Journal of Communication*, 11: 4046-4069.
- Bruns, A. & Burgess, J.E. (2011) ‘The use of Twitter hashtags in the formation of ad hoc publics’, *Proceedings of the 6th European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) General Conference 2011*.
- Calzada, I. (2018) “‘Algorithmic nations’: Seeing like a city-regional and techno-political conceptual assemblage’, *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, 5(1): 267-289.
- Couldry, N. & Hepp, A. (2017) *The mediated construction of reality*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- D’Andrea, A. (2006) ‘Neo-nomadism: A theory of post-identitarian mobility in the global age’, *Mobilities*, 1(1): 95-119.
- Iveson, M. (2017) ‘Gendered dimensions of Catalan nationalism and identity construction on Twitter’, *Discourse & Communication*, 11(1): 51-68.
- Jansson, A. (2018) *Mediatization and mobile lives: A critical approach*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hepp, A. (2016) ‘Pioneer communities: Collective actors in deep mediatization’, *Media, Culture & Society*, 38(6): 918-933.
- Kaufmann, V., Bergman, M.M., & Joye, D. (2004) ‘Motility: Mobility as capital’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28(4): 745-56.

- Kotka, T., Vargas, C. I., & Korjus, K. (2015) 'Estonian e-residency: Redefining the nation-state in the digital era', *Working Paper Series*. Oxford: Cyber Studies Programme.
- Marwick, A. E. (2013a) *Status update: Celebrity, publicity and branding in the social media age*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press.
- Marwick, A. E. (2013b) 'Ethnographic and qualitative research on Twitter', pp. 109-122 in K. Weller, A. Bruns, C. Puschmann, J. Burgess & M. Mahrt (Eds.) *Twitter and Society*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Murthy, D. (2018) *Twitter: Social communication in the Twitter age*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge, UK; Medford, USA: Polity Press.
- Page, R. (2012) 'The linguistics of self-branding and micro-celebrity in Twitter: The role of hashtags', *Discourse and Communication*, 6(2): 181-201.
- Stephansen, H. S. & Couldry, N. (2014) 'Understanding micro-processes of community building and mutual learning on Twitter: a "small data" approach', *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(10): 1212-1227.
- Tammpuu, P., Masso, A. (2018) "'Welcome to the virtual state": Estonian e-residency and the digitalised state as a commodity', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 21(5): 543-560.
- Urry, J. (2007) *Mobilities*. Cambridge, UK; Malden, US: Polity Press.
- Zappavigna, M. (2014) 'Enacting identity in microblogging through ambient affiliation', *Discourse and Communication*, 8(2): 209-228.
- Zappavigna, M. (2017) 'Twitter', pp. 201-224 in W. Bublitz (Ed.) *Pragmatics of social media*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Biography

Piia Tammpuu is a PhD Candidate at the Institute of Social Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia. She has graduated from sociology at the University of Tartu and received a master's degree in Nationalism Studies at Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. Her doctoral research focuses on digitally enabled and supported modes of transnationalism and mobility.

E-mail: piia.tammpuu@gmail.com



SECTION 3

MEDIATIZATIONS

Situational analysis as a research method for the reconstruction of communicative figurations

Karsten D. Wolf, Konstanze Wegmann

Abstract

This article proposes *Situational Analysis* as a method for the reconstruction of *communicative figurations*. The meta theory of mediatization serves as a frame for arguing why new methods for analysing relations between media and society are needed. Communicative figurations are introduced as an analytical concept for opening these media-related changes on the macro, micro and meso level for analysis, and Situational Analysis is suggested as a research method, respectively a theory-method-package, for this. situations include all aspects of communicative figurations and make all of these elements, the relations between them and the complexity of the situation visible and analysable. By explicitly also considering non-human actants, Situational Analysis is opening up and helping to answer questions about the intertwining of media and society in a mediatized everyday life by reconstructing media environment, ensembles and repertoires¹ not centred on one medium (but on a ‘network’ with other media) or on media as such (but on the intertwining with society). Additionally, discourses and implicated actors are taken into account and open the data for the analysis of power relations within and between communicative figurations/social worlds. This article aims to contribute to the methodological discourse of media and communication studies and to introduce Situational Analysis as a method helping to analyse relations between media and society, for example by using communicative figurations as an analytical concept.

Keywords: Mediatization; communicative figurations, situational analysis, grounded theory, discourse analysis

1 The term “media environment” describes the current entirety of all media potentially available for everybody within society, “media ensemble” refers to the media used by a social domain, and “media repertoire” includes all media used by an individual for his/her everyday social practices (see e.g. Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012).

1. Introduction – Mediatization as a meta theory

Nowadays, technical process and its pace of innovation become especially obvious through everyday (digital) information and communication technologies, and these developments transform our lifeworlds, experiences and practices within. Parts of media and communication studies research this continuing process of change as *mediatization*. Mediatization is not to be understood as a concept for describing an increasing spread of technical media in society and its influences. It is rather defined as a meta theory for researching how our communicative practices and contexts/situations of social practice transform through media, as well as how these media, in turn, are reshaped through communicative practices (Couldry & Hepp, 2016; Krotz, 2007). Mediatization as a process can be retraced back far to the beginnings of modernity, and is not linear but contradictory and depends on the local/cultural context (Hjarvard, 2013; Lundby, 2014; Meyen, 2009; Thompson, 1995). Mediatization Theory mediates between the two extreme positions *How do media influence people?* vs. *What do people do with media?* (Hjarvard, 2013) on the macro level (media influence on e.g. communicative practices, attitudes), the micro level (people's influence on the development of media through their actual use) and the meso level (reciprocal influence of media, culture and society). Media are part of all social spheres, like politics, religion and education. Thereby, media should not be seen as central agents of change but rather as an element of the whole system which should be considered and integrated into theories in order to be able to analyse, understand and model communicative, and therefore all social, processes. At the same time, media are so deeply integrated in our society and culture that analytically separating them from the context/situation doesn't seem possible anymore. The following chapter will introduce *communicative figurations* as an analytical concept for analysing media-related changes. Building on this, this article aims to suggest *Situational Analysis* by Adele Clarke (2005) as a method for the reconstruction of communicative figurations.

2. (Researching) Communicative figurations

As a consequence of Mediatization Theory, the Communicative Figurations Research Network (CoFi) by the Universities of Bremen and Hamburg developed the research paradigm of a non-media-centred analysis of communicative processes (Hepp & CoFi Research Network, 2017; Moores, 2012; Morley, 2009; Krajina, Moores, & Morley, 2014). *Social domains* here, like groups, communities, organisations or even whole social fields, serve as elements of analysis, or respectively, empirical starting points (Hepp & CoFi Research Network, 2017; Moores, 2012;

Morley, 2009; Krajina, Moores, & Morley, 2014). They include concepts like social fields (Bourdieu, 1993), (sub)systems (systems theory; Luhmann, 2012), (small) life-worlds (social phenomenology; Luckmann, 1970; Schütz, 1967) and social worlds (symbolic interactionism; Clarke 2011; Shibutani, 1955). Every social domain has a typical constellation of actors (Schimank, 2010), which describes all relevant actors and their relations to each other. For analysing the communicative processes, it's important that the social domain's actors share *practices* relating to one another. By taking social domains as elements of analysis, it's possible not to analyse just one-way media 'influences' but rather 1) how communicative practices, under conditions of deep mediatization, transform; 2) how media also change to adapt to these communicative practices; and 3) what consequences this has for the social subsystem(s) that the social domain is part of.

The CoFi Research Network describes these networks of communicative practices, in recourse to the *process sociology* approach by Norbert Elias (1978), as *communicative figurations*. This concept of figurations was the result of the confrontation with two fundamental problems of sociological analysis: on the one hand, the autonomy of the individual while the individual and society, at the same time, are dependent on each other; on the other hand, the distinction between social change and structural change. According to Elias, every structural change can be understood as a transforming interrelation between individuals and society; and these dynamic relations, these networks of individuals, he calls *figurations* (Elias, 1978). From a communication and media studies perspective, communicative figurations describe the processes of the communicative construction of social reality within different parts of society, different social domains – symbolically constructed by their constellation of actors and media ensembles. Communicative figurations can include the perspectives of individuals, communities and organisations. Describing, for example, the community of a family and its crossmedia practices, like the use of the smartphone and of different apps, landline calls with grandparents or handwritten notes on the fridge, as well as their constellation of actors, like members of patchwork families and their reciprocal communicative relations, shows that these communicative practices are essential for the construction and dynamic stability of family structures (Hasebrink, 2014).

In summary, every communicative figuration can be described by the following three elements (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2017):

1. The structural basis of every communicative figuration is a **constellation of actors**, a network of actors who are interrelated by communicative practices and a specific balance of power;
2. Every communicative figuration is signified by a **frame of relevance**,

which is guiding the practices of its actors and their reciprocal alignment with each other. This frame of relevance defines the communicative figuration's "topic" and its orientation (e.g. concerning dominant values, attitudes, interpretations)

3. Communicative figurations are constituted by **communicative practices**, which are intertwined with other social practices and based on an ensemble of different media.

The concept of communicative figurations, and Mediatization Theory, add a link between the macro level (media, communities, organisations) and the micro level (individuals and their goals and practices), and thereby enable the analysis of the reciprocal communicative construction of social processes.

But how does one research communicative figurations? In general, qualitative methods are a typical choice for research projects in the context of mediatization. Examples for data collection methods are individual or group interviews, media diaries, visual artefacts, online texts, like comments or blog posts, as well as ethnographical studies; Grounded Theory, Qualitative Content Analysis or Discourse Analysis are often used for analysing the data. Additionally, multi-method designs and multi-site studies are found in projects of mediatization research. Depending on the project, the integration of quantitative methods, for example when it comes to collecting data for a large scale of users, may also be reasonable. Another method for the research of communicative figurations is qualitative network maps (Hepp, Berg & Roitsch, 2012). Here, data is collected by the use of media diaries and qualitative interviews. While being interviewed, the interviewee draws maps of his or her own communication repertoire, including media, communication partners and information about how different ways of communication are used.

In the following, we will suggest *Situational Analysis* as a method for data analysis for the reconstruction of communicative figurations.

3. Situational Analysis by Adele Clarke

Situational Analysis (SA) is a method by Adele Clarke, which she herself describes as "Grounded Theory After the Postmodern Turn" (2005), also respectively known as "Grounded Theory After the Interpretive Turn" (Clarke, Friese, & Washburn, 2018). Historically, Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM), developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss² (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), successfully aimed at establishing a qualitative research method in the context of a quantitative research para-

2 Anselm Strauss himself studied and worked with Herbert Blumer, the father of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), who himself referred to his academic teacher George Herbert Mead.

digm of 1960s sociology. A central goal was to disprove the quantitative research establishment's critique of qualitative methods – being subjective in their hermeneutic interpretations – by developing systematic processes of data collection and analysis, as well as by transparently documenting the inductive/abductive processes of theory formation. Research in the tradition of GTM focuses on social processes and mainly uses interviews, observations and field notes as data, being abstracted and systematized for developing fragmented theories from the data – the *theory* is *grounded* in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). By comparing results from different GTM studies with similar research interests, formal theories with a larger social scope can be developed. A characteristic of GTM is – similar to Research Based Design (Koppel, 2017) – an iterative and mainly explorative proceeding. In this process, theory is formulated and further – at this point of theory formulation – missing units for analysis are identified. GTM therefore is to be understood as a style of research rather than a strictly defined method set or sequence. *But then why a new method?*

Adele Clarke studied and worked with Anselm Strauss in medical sociology at UCSF (University of California, San Francisco) since the 1980s and later took over his chair. She integrated constructivist, interactionist, feminist and later also postmodern, poststructuralist and interpretive perspectives in her own research and, from these perspectives being confronted with GTM, developed Situational Analysis (Clarke, 2005). In summary, Situational Analysis aims at the following five main goals:

(1) Reconstruction of situations

The main goal of SA is the reconstruction of the complexity of situations.³ Clarke dissolves the dichotomy of situation and context – found in the “conditional matrix” of GTM – by arguing that the conditions *of* the situation are *in* the situation and are *constituting* the situation *from the inside*, instead of influencing it from the outside as context (Clarke et al., 2018). In recourse to postmodernism, Clarke focuses on complexity, for example contradictions, heterogeneity and “situatedness”, in contrast to thinking in clear and linear causalities. As a consequence, she moves away from the coding paradigm of axial coding (GTM) and, in her own version of the “conditional matrix” (the “situational matrix”, Clarke et al., 2018: 45), integrates two central new aspects into SA – discourses and non-human actants.

(2) Integration of discourses

For analysing structural processes, Strauss (e.g. 1978) and others developed Social Worlds/Arenas Theory. Strauss himself, however, never connected it with GTM.

3 Situations, in the context of SA, can be defined as “no fixed, i.e. locally-temporally defined entities, but relational structures which include everything made relevant through the interactions taking place” (Strübing, 2018: 687; own translation).

Clarke understands SA as a methodological development of GTM and Social Worlds/Arenas Theory as such, as well as an integration of both (Clarke et al., 2018), and identifies parallels between Strauss' Social Worlds/Arenas Theory and Foucault's Discourse Theory. Foucault argues that power circulates in the form of discourses and gets reproduced and confirmed as 'truth' through people's everyday practices according to the ideas of a social 'norm' ("Technology of the self", Foucault, 1988). Individuals as well as collectives, in this sense, are constituted by discourses through actively behaving according to these discursively circulating ideas. Clarke et al. (2018) state that discourse formations as well as social worlds are constituted by contradictory discourses that are permanently negotiated, evaluated and positioned within these discourse formations/social worlds. Both can be understood as mergers of more powerful, or respectively influential, and less powerful people who share certain interpretations, values and norms. As a consequence, SA – different from GTM – explicitly considers discourses and discourse positions in data analysis. Like Foucault (see e.g. the concept of the "dispositif"⁴), and like Mediatization Theory as well as the concept of communicative figurations, Clarke (et al., 2018) aims to focus on the analysis of relations (e.g. power relations, ascriptions) between elements (discourses, media, people), not on the analysis of the elements themselves.

(3) Integration of non-human elements and actants

As a next step, Clarke adds poststructuralist considerations about the agency of non-human elements – relating to pragmatism, interactionism and Science & Technology Studies (STS), especially Actor-Network-Theory (ANT)⁵ (Clarke et al., 2018) – to her 'theory-method-package'. Clarke emphasises that objects have been considered in pragmatism and interactionism ever since and that the analysis of relations – like in Discourse Theory and SA – has always been central to them. However, she argues, objects have never explicitly been included and the analysis of their agency has never really been developed methodologically. Bösch, Gläser, Meister, & Schubert (2015) also state that most publications on material agency – from different disciplines and relating to different social phenomena⁶ – focus on theoretical conceptualising rather than on developing methodological approaches. However, finding ways of analysing the intertwining of material and human agency, they argue, is the central requirement as well as the central challenge for empirical efforts and considerations.

4 Understood as "the system of relations that can be established between these [discourses, institutions, laws; remark of authors] elements" (Foucault, 1980).

5 Actor-Network-Theory was developed by, above others, Latour (e.g. 1987).

6 For example human-machine interaction (e.g. Fink & Weyer, 2014), tourism (e.g. Ren, 2010), workplace (e.g. Suchman, 2007) and environmental social movements (e.g. Lockie, 2004).

Kirchhoff (2009) contrasts two positions within Material Agency Theory; When a material object and a human actor constitute an activity together and thereby fulfil the same functions, the “*weak view*” understands the material object and the human actor as a “*causally coupled system*”, leading to a necessity of also considering the material object in the analysis of the activity; the “*strong view*” (e.g. ANT), in contrast, goes one step further and states that there is no principled difference in their contribution to the outcome based on their *materiality*. In the “*strong view*”, categories like “*technological*” and “*social*” therefore are seen as fluent; the focus is on the relationality between these categories and the activity is understood as the result of the cooperation within the network (Latour, 1999). Another strong view on material agency is the framework of Material Engagement Theory (Malafouris 2013), which argues “*the built environment plays an active role in the structure of agency*” (Ransom, 2017: 2). Malafouris states that “*material signs do not represent, they enact*” (Malafouris 2013: 118). For the scope of this chapter, the explicit integration of non-human elements and actants (as formulated in the strong views) represents an important fit between Situational Analysis and mediatization research.

The growing distribution of media based on software makes the difference between human actors and non-human actants even smaller. Software is encoded agency in the form of (software) code created by the act of human programming. When a program is running, what/who is the actant/actor? The software that is running or the programmer’s intentions while coding it? And because software is materialised in the hardware (processor design, algorithms realised in hardware , etc.), defining and extending the practices of (hardware) use in the form of apps – which can be updated or downloaded – one has to question the difference between hardware and software. All technical media (not only the digital ones) have to be considered in the analysis. Situational Analysis here seems to be a suitable method for analysing all elements (whether human or non-human) relevant for the situation – and especially for interaction within the situation (see Strübing, 2018) – as a communicative figuration. In recourse to Discourse Theory, power relations are also explicitly considered and made analysable. Abstract objects such as norms and values contributing to discourses and power relations, which are in SA, are conceptualised as actants with agency.

(4) Identification of implicated/silent/hidden actors

Throughout the whole research process of SA, questions should be asked about *who* or *what* could be relevant but hasn’t been mentioned yet in the data, and *why* is this actor or actant not mentioned. Clarke (e.g. 2005) calls these actors and actants “*implicated/silent actors/actants*”. These can, on the one hand, be actors or actants physically present but not heard, ignored and/or overlooked; on the other hand, actors or

actants physically absent but being discursively constructed within the social world. Central analytical questions are: “Whose constructions of whom/what exist? Which are taken as the ‘real’ constructions or the ones that matter most in the situation by the various participants? Which are contested? Whose are ignored? By whom?” (Clarke et al., 2018: 77). The concept of implicated actors and actants should help to analyse power relations within social worlds, as well as the “situatedness” of less powerful actors and actants and the consequences this has for them within the situation.

(5) *Visualising through maps*

Considering all aspects discussed, Clarke develops three kinds of maps that should open the data for analysis:

Situational Maps:

Developing situational maps is a process of mapping everything relevant in the situation. These may be individual (e.g. friends, media actors, colleagues, politicians) and collective actors (e.g. on- or offline based communities, organisations, political parties/groups) as well as non-human actants (e.g. media, economic elements, discourses, symbols, conflicts, sites of action), always also the implicated ones. The goal of situational maps is to analyse the relations between these elements and show the complexity of the situation (Clarke, 2009). Situational maps, as most other kinds of maps as well, should be updated and reworked throughout the whole process of analysis. To make the process transparent, the initial maps should be saved and memos should be written.

Social Worlds/Arenas Maps:

Social Worlds/Arenas⁷ maps include all discourses, identities, shared values, sites of action, relations, etc. that are found in the data. Clarke et al. (2018: 148) define social worlds as “*groupings of varying sizes, each of which has ‘a life of its own’ that is distinctively collective [...]. Participants in social worlds generate shared perspectives that form the basis for both individual and collective identities.*” There are not only differences between distinctive social worlds (interworld differences) but also within a social world (intra-world differences), in terms of some perspectives and characteristics. These differences can lead to split-ups, Bucher (1962) calls “*segments*” or “*subworlds*”. Arenas consist of diverse social worlds and within arenas diverse conflicts are carried out (Strauss, 1978). As many different social worlds meet in one arena, arenas consisting over a long period of time, can be described as ‘sites’ of diverse and complex discourses. To be able to understand a specific social world, it is necessary to *1) understand the arenas the social*

7 Social Worlds/Arenas is a theory developed by Strauss (e.g. 1978) and others, which he himself never combined with Grounded Theory.

world is part of; 2) understand the other social worlds they meet in the arenas as well as; 3) the discourses negotiated there (Clarke et al., 2018).

Positional Maps:

Positional maps visualise positions in discourse (and those not mentioned) within relevant discourses and focus on analysing similarities and differences. Positional maps help to show heterogeneities and conflicts within a discourse, and also within individuals and groups. Questions guiding the analysis of discourse are (Clarke et al., 2018: 168): “*What is X about? Why do people keep talking about it? Why does it seem to matter so much? Who or what in Y arguing against in this quote from my data.*” While situational maps aim to show complexity, positional maps focus on contrasting different positions and identifying hidden ones, which should, in the sense of theoretical sampling (GTM), lead to further data collection.

4. Conclusion – Situational Analysis as a research method for the reconstruction of communicative figurations

This article introduced Situational Analysis as a method for the reconstruction of communicative figurations. The meta theory of mediatization served as a frame for arguing why new methods for analysing relations between media and society are needed. Communicative figurations were introduced as an analytical concept for opening these media-related changes on the macro, micro and meso level for analysis, and SA – a method from the context of Health Sciences – was suggested as a research method, respectively a theory-method-package, for this purpose. Situations, defined as “*no fixed, i.e. locally-temporally defined entities, but relational structures which include everything made relevant through the interactions taking place*” (Strübing, 2018: 687; own translation), as a concept include all aspects of communicative figurations (constellation of actors, frame of relevance, communicative practices) and make all of these elements, the relations between them and the complexity of the situation visible and analysable. By explicitly considering non-human actants also, SA is opening up and helping to answer questions about the intertwining of media and society in a mediatized everyday life by reconstructing the media environment, ensembles and repertoires not centred on one medium (but a ‘network’ with other media) or on media as such (but intertwined with society). Additionally, discourses and implicated actors are taken into account and open the data for the analysis of power relations within and between communicative figurations/social worlds.

This article aimed to contribute to the methodological discourse of media and communication studies. Although not all aspects and potentials of SA could be discussed in depth in this article, for example by clarifying some aspects or the dif-

ferent kinds of maps using examples from our own research (see Wolf & Wudarski, 2017), it introduced Situational Analysis as a method helping to analyse relations between media and society, for example by using communicative figurations as an analytical concept.

References

- Blumer, H. (1969) *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Böschen, S., Gläser, J., Meister, M., & Schubert, C. (2015) 'Introduction: Material agency as a challenge to empirical research', *Nature and Culture*, 10(3): 257-268.
- Bucher, R. (1962) 'Pathology: A study of social movements within a profession', *Social Problems*, 10: 40-51.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993) *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Clarke, A. E. (2005) *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the postmodern turn*. London: Sage.
- Clarke, A. E. (2009) 'From grounded theory to situational analysis: What's new? Why? How?', pp. 194-233 in J. M. Morse, P. N. Stern, J. Corbin, B. Bowers, K. Charmaz and A. E. Clarke (Eds.) *Developing grounded theory. The Second Generation*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Clarke, A. E. (2011) 'Social Worlds', pp. 384-385 in G. Ritzer and J. M. Ryan (Eds.) *The concise encyclopedia of sociology*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Clarke, A. E., Friese, C., & Washburn, R. (2018) *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the interpretive turn*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage.
- Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. L. (2015) *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Couldry, N. & Hepp, A. (2016) *The mediated construction of reality*. Cambridge, UK: John Wiley & Sons.
- Elias, N. (1978) *What is sociology?*. London: Hutchinson.
- Fink, R. D., Weyer, J. (2014) 'Interaction of human actors and non-human agents. A sociological simulation model of hybrid systems', *Science, Technology & Innovation Studies*, 10(1): 47-64.
- Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977* (ed. by C. Gordon). New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. (1988) 'Technologies of the self', pp. 16-49 in L. Martin, H. Gutman and P. Hutton (Eds.) *Technologies of the self: A seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967) *Discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine.
- Hasebrink, U. (2014) 'Die kommunikative figuration von familien: Medien, kommunikation und informationstechnologie im familienalltag', pp. 225-240 in M. Rupp, M. Kapella and N. F. Schneider (Eds.) *Die zukunft der familie: Anforderungen an familienpolitik und familienwissenschaft*. Opladen: Barbara Budrich.

- Hasebrink, U., Domeyer, H. (2012) 'Media repertoires as patterns of behaviour and as meaningful practices: A multimethod approach to media use in converging media environments', *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, 9(2): 757-783.
- Hepp, A., Berg, M., Roitsch, C. (2012) 'Die mediatisierung subjektiver vergemeinschaftungshorizonte: Zur kommunikativen vernetzung und medienvermittelten gemeinschaftsbildung junger menschen', pp. 227-256 in F. Krotz and A. Hepp (Eds.) *Mediatisierte welten: Forschungsfelder und beschreibungsansätze*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Hepp, A. & CoFi (Communicative Figurations) Research Network (2017) 'Transforming communications. Media-Related changes in times of deep mediatization', *Working Paper No. 16*. Downloaded on 12 December 2018 from http://www.zemki.uni-bremen.de/fileadmin/redak_zemki/dateien/Kofi-Arbeitspapiere/CoFi_EWP_Hepp-Research-Network.pdf.
- Hepp, A., Hasebrink, U. (2017) 'How to research cross-media practices? Investigating media repertoires and media ensembles', *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 23(4): 362-377.
- Hjarvard, S. (2013) *The mediatization of culture and society*. London: Routledge.
- Kirchhoff, M. (2009) 'Material agency: A theoretical framework for ascribing agency to material culture', *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology*, 13(3): 206-220.
- Koppel, I. (2017) *Entwicklung einer online-diagnostik für die alphabetisierung: Eine design-based research-studie*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Krajina, Z., Moores, S. & Morley, D. (2014) 'Non-media-centric media studies: A cross-generational conversation', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 17(6): 682-700.
- Krotz, F. (2007) *Mediatisierung: Fallstudien zum wandel von kommunikation*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Latour, B. (1987) *Science in action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. (1999) *Pandora's hope: Essays on the reality of science studies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lockie, S. (2004) 'Collective agency, non-human causality, and environmental social movements: A case study of the Australian landcare movement', *Journal of Sociology*, 40(1): 41-57.
- Luckmann, B. (1970) 'The small life-worlds of modern man', *Social Research*, 37(4): 580-596.
- Luhmann, N. (2012) *Theory of society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Lundby, K. (2014) 'Mediatization of communication', pp. 3-35 in K. Lundby (Ed.) *Mediatization of communication*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Malafouris, L. (2013) *How things shape the mind: A theory of material engagement*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Meyen, M. (2009) 'Medialisierung', *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft*, 57(1): 23-38.
- Moores, S. (2012) *Media, place and mobility*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Morley, D. (2009) 'For a materialist, non-media-centric media studies', *Television & New Media*, 10(1): 114-116.

- Ransom, T. G. (2017) 'Process, habit, and flow: A phenomenological approach to material agency', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, (18)1: 19-37. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-017-9541-z>
- Ren, C. (2011) 'Non-Human agency, radical ontology and tourism realities', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(3): 858-881.
- Schimank, U. (2010) *Handeln und strukturen. Einführung in die akteurstheoretische soziologie*. Weinheim: Juventa.
- Schulz, W. (2004) 'Reconstructing mediatization as an analytical concept', *European Journal of Communication*, 19(1): 87-101.
- Schütz, A. (1967) *The phenomenology of the social world*. St. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Shibutani, T. (1955) 'Reference groups as perspectives', *American Journal of Sociology*, 60(6): 562-569.
- Strauss, A. L. (1978) 'A social world perspective', *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, 1: 119-128.
- Strübing, J. (2018) 'Situationsanalyse: Eine pragmatische erweiterung der grounded theory unter dem eindruck der postmoderne', pp. 681-706 in L. Akremi, N. Baur, H. Knoblauch and B. Traue (Eds.) *Handbuch interpretativ forschen*. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa.
- Suchman, L. A. (2007) *Human and machine reconfigurations: Plans and situated actions*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Thompson, J. B. (1995) *The media and modernity. A social theory of the media*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wolf, K. D., Wudarski, U. (2017) 'Communicative figurations of expertization: DIY_MAKER and Multi-Player Online Gaming (MOG) as cultures of amateur learning', pp. 123-149 in A. Hepp, U. Hasebrink and A. Breiter (Eds.) *Communicative figurations – Transforming communications in times of deep mediatization*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan/Springer Nature

Biographies

Dr. Karsten D. Wolf is a professor at the Department for Educational Sciences for the subject of media education and teaching methodology in multimedia learning environments at the University of Bremen, and head of the ZeMKI lab "Media Education and Educational Media".

Email: wolf@uni-bremen.de

Konstanze Wegmann, M.A., is a research associate at the Department for Educational Sciences in the subject of media education and teaching methodology in multimedia learning environments at the University of Bremen, and member of the ZeMKI lab "Media Education and Educational Media".

Email: kwegmann@uni-bremen.de

Football and mediatization: A serious academic pursuit or just scholars playing silly games?

Michael Skey

Abstract

This paper seeks to extend current debates around mediatization by avoiding some of the more extravagant claims about the media's all-encompassing role as both an institution and influence. Instead, it starts with a primary interest in the everyday activities of 'ordinary' people in a given social domain and utilizes Schulz's four dimensions of mediatization as a means of grounding the concept. Football fans in East Africa provide a novel case study, allowing opportunities to show how football-related activities are increasingly orientated towards the schedules and performances of leagues, clubs and players in Europe and, as a result, become inextricably bound up with, and informed by, media.

Keywords: Mediatization, sport, power, fans, Africa, English Premier League

1. Introduction

To its adherents, mediatization is a means of understanding both the media's increasing significance as an institutional actor as well as indicating the extent to which everyday interactions are mediated in an era of digital technologies. To its critics, mediatization is, at best, another of those grand, sweeping narratives of change that obscures more than it reveals, at worst, academic grandstanding by a discipline still looking to justify its existence to the academy and the wider world. This paper tries to steer a course between those two opposing poles, using insights from the more grounded approaches to mediatization, whilst avoiding some of the more extravagant claims about the media's all-encompassing role as both an institution and influence.

The paper is divided into four parts. In the next section, we first define mediatization and then engage with some of the key arguments of its main proponents and critics. Of particular relevance, in the former case, will be Schulz's four dimensions of mediatization, which, in our view, provides one of the most grounded and practical frameworks for operationalising the concept in relation to empirical research. The third part of the paper discusses method and the salience of our case study, before the final section provides a number of examples culled from our engagements with football fans, watching, discussing and playing football, as well as interviews with football journalists in East Africa.

2. Mediatization

After first being developed in relation to the study of politics in the later 1990's (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999), debates around mediatization have mushroomed over the past two decades. Theoretically, its main proponents have argued that mediatization can not only be used to track the media's influence over longer-term historical periods but also to assess the impact of digital technologies on contemporary forms of social organisation and practice (Hjarvard, 2008; Couldry & Hepp, 2013). Much of this work has focused on relationships at the institutional level, with mediatization defined "*as the influence of media institutions and practices on other fields of social and institutional practice*" (Livingstone & Lunt, 2014: 705).

While mediatization may have become the "*word of the decade*" for many media scholars (Corner, 2018), some have been much more critical, arguing that the concept is so poorly defined that it risks becoming a dumping ground for studies of very different phenomena (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014). Others have questioned the novelty of the concept and the extent to which it trades in simplistic narratives of social change that over-emphasise the role of a "*singularised media*" as a causal agent (Corner, 2018: 83).

Some of these accusations have been partly addressed in the literature. For instance, Livingstone and Lunt (2014) suggest that mediatization may be best employed as a meso-level concept rather than one designed to “describe overall developmental trends in society across different contexts” (Hjavarð, 2008: 113). To this end, they argue that it offers greatest purchase when focusing on those “domains of society ... [that] have their own institutional logics or cultural order; their own entrenched governance regimes, rules and norms, resources and expertise” (Hjavarð, 2008: 706).

It is our contention that football may be viewed as a social domain defined by a range of socio-cultural practices and organisational norms that have influenced and been influenced by various media over time (Sandvoss, 2003). In the following section, we address a further critique of mediatization, which questions the somewhat nebulous nature of a concept that, at times, seems as if it has no boundaries (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014: 1040). Here, it is argued that Winfried Schulz’s four dimensions of mediatization are particularly helpful in operationalising this concept in order to identify “more defined indicators for the purposes of analytic differentiation” (Corner, 2018: 83).

2.1. Grounding mediatization

In this section, we wish to situate this study within current theorisations of mediatization. In trying to move beyond general claims about the influence of media across time, we have found that Schulz’s (2004) framework offers a productive means of both grounding the concept and making sense of our data. Schulz identifies four dimensions of mediatization, which he labels as: *extension*, *substitution*, *amalgamation*, and *accommodation*. *Extension* refers to the ways in which communication through technologies overcomes physical constraints, connecting individuals and groups in previously distant areas. In relation to football, the growing availability of satellite and digital technologies now means that increasing numbers of football fans can access live games while social media platforms have also connected organisers, clubs, players and fans in new ways (Price, Farrington, & Hall, 2013). *Substitution* refers to the process whereby “media partly or completely substitute social activities and social institutions and thus change their character” (Schulz, 2004: 23). This might refer to people watching football on television rather than in a stadium or playing a football video game with friends instead of kicking a ball around in the local park. Schulz labels the process whereby media and non-media practices become interwoven as *amalgamation*. Examples of this in the domain of football might include the ways in which fans follow updates or place bets on a mobile phone when attending a live game.

Accommodation usually refers to the manner in which non-media institutions have to adapt their own practices in order to meet the demands of the media. It is worth noting that, starting in the domain of politics, this has been one of the most popular arguments, and areas of research, in relation to mediatization. It is commonly associated with what has been labelled “*the structuralist/institutional tradition*” (Hjavar, 2008; Deacon & Stanyer, 2014) and provides a top-down perspective that views media institutions as independent actors who are increasingly able to influence, and in some cases, dominate forms of social communication. In football, the most obvious example of accommodation would include the moving of live matches from one date to another in accordance with media schedules.

However, while such top-down forms are obviously important in tracking the influence of particular media organisations in a given domain, we believe that a complementary bottom-up perspective can also offer us important insights by exploring the ways in which individuals increasingly *accommodate* mediated practices and forms of knowledge in their football-related interactions. For instance, consider how an increasing number of people are required to navigate through complex media environments in order to access particular forms of content or display their knowledge as a fan. An emphasis on practical, embodied forms of knowledge and practice not only makes sense in analysing how football is currently followed (whether physically or virtually) but is also key in tracking the extent to which media environments become part of the familiar landscapes which people inhabit when participating in football-related activities. Moreover, it is by foregrounding these processes that we can begin to offer a more sophisticated analysis of the ways in which media become central to this particular domain of everyday life. In the following section, we outline a brief rationale for how our data was collected and analysed, before noting the significance of the East African context.

3. Methods

This paper is based on a research project that was carried out in three East African countries: Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania. The data was collected during March and April 2018 and involved participant observation as well as a series of ‘on-the-fly’ interviews with people (mainly men) on the street, in taxis, in pubs and at local football matches. In many cases, we approached those wearing the shirts of European club teams (of which there were many) and asked them general questions about their affiliations. In other instances, local people approached us (we were something of a novelty as white Europeans) and after telling them about our interest in football, we had a conversation about their interests, preferences and so on. Some of these interviews were very brief, lasting a couple of minutes. In other

cases, we chatted for extended periods of time with individuals or small groups watching games in a pub or as we travelled around the city in buses and taxis. Most of these informal interviews were not recorded and we made notes immediately after they concluded. In this way, around 40 interviews were carried out with football fans and these were complemented with more formal discussions with sports journalists in Zambia and the organisers of a sport-development charity, also in Lusaka, Zambia. As we were using a form of purposive sampling, there is no suggestion that this sample is remotely representative of the population in East Africa. Likewise, we also need to be acutely aware that although the interviews we carried out were very informal, and might be seen as resembling ‘natural’ conversations with correspondingly high levels of ecological validity, there is obviously a major power differential between ourselves as white, middle-class Europeans speaking with Africans from a variety of different class backgrounds. To this end, it was noticeable that some of the people we spoke to were very reserved and somewhat ill-at-ease in our presence. At the same time, it is also worth stating that many people seemed more than happy to chat with us, notably when they found out our interest in football! On our return to the UK, we transcribed the more formal interviews and begun to code all our data using Schulz’s four dimensions as an initial framework for analysis.

4. African football fandom

The project focused on Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania for both practical and theoretical reasons. First, we were able to access pre-existing support networks in both Zambia and Tanzania through our academic institutions. East Africa is also an interesting case from a theoretical perspective since —although football is incredibly popular —local leagues and clubs are not that well supported (with one or two notable exceptions), while European leagues and clubs (notably the English Premier League) are avidly followed by large numbers (Monks, 2016). When it comes to wider research on African football fandom, there is a small, but growing, body of work. Almost all these studies note the profound impact that occurred in the 1990’s, as “*new television technologies, telecommunications, and information technologies, coupled with the liberalisation of media, opened up African space to transnational television broadcasters*” (Akindes, 2011: 2177). This meant that increasing numbers of African football fans were able to watch games involving foreign leagues and clubs, and in many cases these are compared favourably with local versions, which continue to be plagued by poor organisation, lack of investment and, in some cases, corruption (Omobowale, 2009). Akindes argues, in an echo of the cultural imperialism thesis, that this rapid transformation of the African

mediasphere means that “*African football fans are placed in a passive and remote position; they have become football content consumers of just a handful of European teams*” (Akindes, 2011: 2187). While, however, flows in football content from Europe to Africa are not reciprocated and, as we will see, have had a significant impact on everyday football-related activities, whether fans should be characterised as passive and/or mere ‘consumers’ is open to question. For instance, Solomon Waliaula (2015) has argued that fans of the English Premier League in Kenya, far from being passive consumers of Western products, use talk about their favourite teams and players as a “*form of social currency*” to boost their own standing and, in some cases, commercial operations. It is these forms of interaction and sociability, alongside the wider social structures and technologies that underpin and inform them, that are of particular interest and in the following sections, we will use illustrative examples from our own data, and the work of Waliaula, to highlight the grounded approach to mediatization we have been advocating thus far.

5. Following football: Extension and substitution

When looking to apply Schulz’s framework to our own empirical study of football fandom in East Africa, the dimension of *extension*—the connection between distant groups through media—would seem to be the most obvious. The popularity of foreign players, clubs and leagues can be seen on a daily basis in a range of ‘ordinary’ settings, from people wearing replica club shirts, posters in shop windows, logos adorning taxis, buses and private vehicles, people watching games in bars, restaurants and betting shops and so on. Furthermore, we can safely assume, given relative levels of wealth in East Africa and the fact that only one Western team, Everton, has ever played a game in the region, that their support for, and knowledge of said players etc., *has* to come through communication technologies, whether satellite television, websites, internet feeds or mobile phone networks. While research into football in Europe has also noted the increasing shift from local to mediated forms of fandom, there is still the *possibility* of Norwegian fans of, say, Manchester United going to see their favourite club—with many actually doing so (Hognestad, 2006). For fans in East Africa, their *only* connection with these clubs is mediated. However, much of our interview data supports other studies in Africa which point not only to processes of extension but also substitution as people shift their attention from the local league and instead become orientated towards, and then passionate about, games taking place in Europe.

They stopped [going to live games]. The numbers really drastically dropped. Because again when the social set up in most cases is that every bar has a TV. And they pay for DS TV and

they show Manchester. And everybody likes beer
(Moses, Football journalist, Lusaka)

Interviewer: Do you think the interest in the English Premier league has a negative impact on the Zambian league? Is that true?

Wedi: It is true, it is true. When Manchester City was playing Man United at 1400 hours, then the stadium would be empty.

Interviewer: So the Premier league is more popular?

Wedi: Yes, they are denying the income that the teams could have got in by going to watch football team from England

(Manager, Youth Sports Organisation, Lusaka, Zambia)

People in Zambia prefer the English Premier League to the Zambian Premier League. On Sunday if you go to any bar, it will be full of people watching the EPL. In fact, I had to ask the bar staff to turn on the ZPL game this afternoon!

(Ian, Football fan, Bar in Lusaka)

These insights are supported by studies in other African countries, including Nigeria where Omobowale talks about a “*redirection of fans’ alignment with European clubs*” (2009: 624), the Ivory Coast, where a top official laments “*empty stadiums*” (quoted in Akindes, 2011: 2183) and Kenya, where the rivalry between two Manchester sides is more keenly anticipated than the final of a major African tournament (Akindes, 2011: 2184). There are a number of points worth making in relation to these quotes. First, is the manner in which they point to a shift from the local to the trans-national, a reorientation that is built on access to newer forms of communication technology (satellite television and digital platforms) in combination with other political and socio-economic factors.

The references to bars and other establishments showing the EPL (English Premier League) are also worth exploring in relation to some of our earlier discussions of the practices of media users. Given the cost of accessing satellite television, the majority of East African fans tend to watch foreign games in public places or as part of a group of friends where payments can be shared. These places have not only become an important feature of the local economy but also, at least initially, have had to be incorporated into fans’ social and mental landscapes. In other words, if people wanted to watch foreign football they had to first find out about these places and then accommodate the demands of foreign media schedules into existing patterns of work, family and leisure. For instance, a young fan in Kenya discussed how he negotiated with his parents about when he should do his household chores

You know I was such a deep and committed fan [of the EPL] that every Saturday my parents understood, and wouldn't assign me work to do, I preferred to work on Sundays.
(quoted in Waliula, 2015: 28)

This strikes us as both a useful way of extending Schulz's dimension of *accommodation* and providing a complementary 'bottom up' perspective on media's influence in a given domain, starting with what people are doing, and then analysing how such activities are bound up with media. In this case, a growing interest in foreign football (*extension*) means, in many cases, a concomitant shift away from the local game (*substitution*), the emergence of new establishments to cater for these interests (*accommodation* as a top-down perspective) and the development of new forms of mediated knowledge and practice (*accommodation* as a bottom-up perspective).

In the final part of this paper, we will look at further illustrative examples from the East African context, this time focusing on these practices and the manner in which they are designed to underpin the cultivation of mediated knowledge that can be put to use in other football-related activities.

6. Digital orientations

The relationship between digital media and football has been the subject of much scholarly interest with recent studies pointing to the emergence of new online fan communities (Rowe, Ruddock, & Hutchins, 2010), the novel connections that social media have generated between clubs, players and journalists (Price et al., 2013), and the creative ways in which fans of the game seek to access football-related content (David & Millward, 2012). All of these insights can also be applied to the (East) African context although questions of access and affordability are of particular salience here. This idea is borne out by many of the interviews we conducted:

Do people follow through mobile phones, through Facebook through WhatsApp? Do they also use those, or is it much more about television?

Much more on television. Then on the phone ... they may be getting it through the Premier league website. You can follow it on the phone ... in terms of scores and stuff like that. Just follow the scores and get the updates

So do fans have conversations with WhatsApp?

WhatsApp is very popular nowadays. Facebook is as well. In fact, Facebook is probably more popular compared to WhatsApp

(Cuthbert, football fan, Lusaka)

Again, these wider socio-economic factors caution us against making broad, general claims about the extent to which digital technologies are transforming a social domain or impacting on the habits of media users. In East Africa, television, radio and, to a lesser extent, newspapers remain the dominant ways of consuming football. However, it is worth briefly noting how online platforms are used. In the East African countries we visited, it was easy to find Facebook pages set up by fans of foreign football clubs in England and Spain. Some of these pages attracted up to 40,000 followers but the majority had much less and tended to involve between 1,000-10,000 followers. Likewise, most of these pages generated relatively little active engagement and seemed to represent an outward facing news bulletin board where fans could find out basic details about their favourite club, an idea confirmed by many of the people we spoke to. What is of interest, for our study, is the ways in which this information from online sources is utilised and how it links back to our earlier theoretical framework.

7. “You start seeking out for more information”

We noted earlier that new establishments had grown up around the practice of watching televised foreign football in East Africa. It was also argued that new cultural norms and hierarchies have emerged in relation to these activities with fans, not only wanting to watch the games but also display their knowledge about players, clubs and the league as a whole. As a supporter, in Waliula’s study (2015: 31) in Kenya, comments:

You start seeking out for more information, going out to watch the matches, and indeed you get thrilled at how the game is played. That way you start knowing more and more about the teams, the players transfers, etc. and sometimes it is very exciting, like here, when the fans ask each other questions, you see one of them respond very informatively, and he strikes you as a very well informed person ... You start to gain interest, so that you too can be informed and participate in these conversations

(my emphasis, Norris, football fan in Eldoret, Kenya)

While Norris only makes reference to television as a mediated source of information, many of the people we spoke to also discussed the importance of digital sources, ranging from official websites of clubs, the social networking accounts of their favourite players or the aforementioned Facebook groups, in providing the sort of insights that can then be used to prove one’s credentials in more public settings. The best example we can give of this came from a man who we spoke to at length whilst travelling on a minibus in Lusaka. The man was wearing a Manchester

United replica shirt and was happy to talk football and technology, being the proud owner of an iPhone. Indeed, he talked at length about how he used his phone to keep up-to-date on the club's activities, including transfer targets, team selections and tactics, match reports and so on. He was a supporter who had navigated his way to a whole host of sites, discussion groups and social networking accounts that provided him with information that could then be used to inform his discussions with friends and family. We had similar discussions with fans in pubs who used certain sites in a largely habitual manner (Moore, 2015: 205) in the pursuit of further information about their favourite teams. This information would, in many cases, give them a competitive advantage when it came to discussing said teams in public settings.

The fact that it is so increasingly routine for people in East Africa to follow football through mediated forms, to orientate themselves towards foreign players and clubs, to accommodate, into everyday routines, the schedules of leagues thousands of miles away, actually tells us something rather important about the significance of media in this particular domain and the power of media to shape disparate lives. Moreover, Schulz's framework allows us to move away from some of the grander claims of mediatization scholarship to identify those processes whereby daily activities are not only bound up with, or informed by, media but also increasingly viewed as normal, part of the way of being a football fan in East Africa in the contemporary era.

References

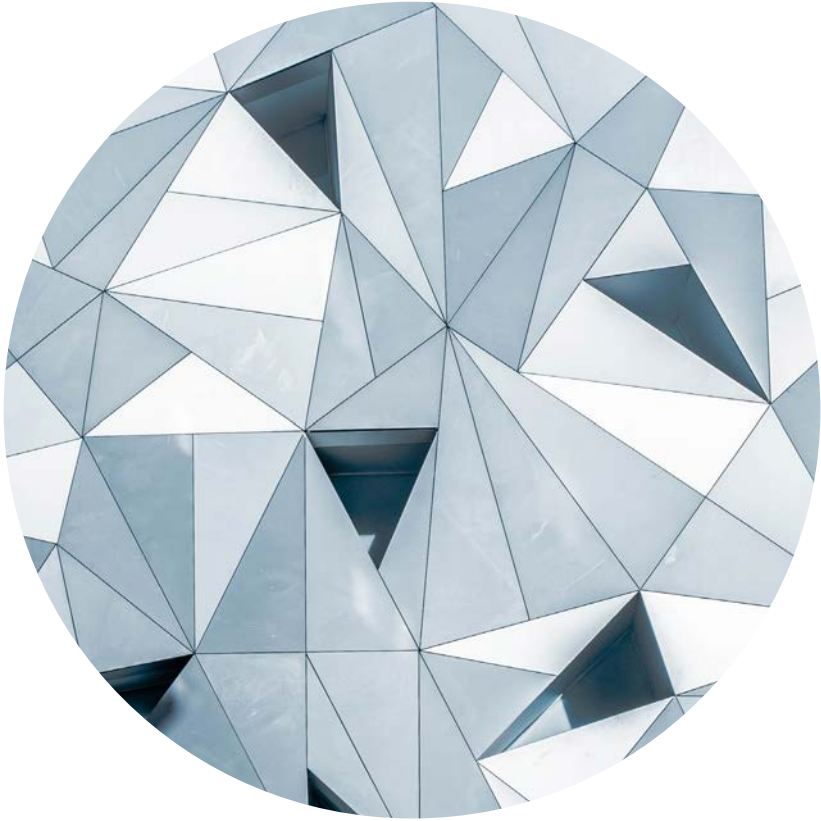
- Akintunde, G. (2011) 'Football bars: Urban sub-Saharan Africa's translocal "stadiums"', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28(15): 2176-2190
- Corner, J. (2018) "'Mediatization': Media theory's word of the decade", *Media Theory*, 2(2): 79-90.
- Couldry, N. & Hepp, A. (2013) 'Conceptualizing mediatization: Contexts, traditions, arguments', *Communication Theory*, 23(3): 191-202.
- David, M. & Millward, P. (2012) 'Football's coming home?: Digital reterritorialization, contradictions in the transnational coverage of sport and the sociology of alternative football broadcasts', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 63(2): 349-369.
- Deacon, D. & Stanyer, J. (2014) 'Mediatization: Key concept or conceptual bandwagon?', *Media, Culture & Society*, 36(7): 1032-1044. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443714542218>
- Frandsen, K. (2016) 'Sports organizations in a new wave of mediatization', *Communication & Sport*, 4(4): 385-400.
- Hjarvard, S. (2008) 'The mediatization of society: A theory of the media as agents of social and cultural change', *Nordicom Review*, 29(2): 104-134.
- Hognestad, H. K. (2006) 'Transnational passions: a statistical study of Norwegian football supporters', *Soccer & Society*, 7(4): 439-462.

- Livingstone, S. & Lunt, P. (2014) 'Mediatization: An emerging paradigm for media and communication studies' in K. Lundby (Ed.) *Mediatization of Communication*, pp. 703-724. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Mazzoleni, G. & Schulz, W. (1999) "'Mediatization" of politics: A challenge for democracy?', *Political communication*, 16(3): 247-261.
- Monks, K. (2016) 'New TV deal brings free Premier League games to 50 African countries', <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/03/29/football/premier-league-econet-africa/index.html> (accessed on 31st January 2019).
- Moores, Shaun (2015) 'Arguments for a non-media-centric, non-representational approach to media and place', pp. 132-159 in *Communications/ Media/ Geographies. Routledge Studies in Human Geography*. New York: Routledge.
- Omobowale, A. O. (2009) 'Sports and European soccer fans in Nigeria'. *Journal of Asian and African studies*, 44(6): 624-634.
- Price, J., Farrington, N., & Hall, L. (2013) 'Changing the game? The impact of Twitter on relationships between football clubs, supporters and the sports media', *Soccer & Society*, 14(4): 446-461.
- Rowe, D., Ruddock, A., & Hutchins, B. (2010) 'Cultures of complaint: Online fan message boards and networked digital media sport communities', *Convergence*, 16(3): 298-315.
- Sandvoss, C. (2003) *A game of two halves: Football, television, and globalization*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Schulz, W. (2004) 'Reconstructing mediatization as an analytical concept', *European Journal of Communication*, 19(1): 87-101.
- Waliaula, S. (2015) 'Performing identity in the English Premier League football fandom in Eldoret', pp 17-34 in D. Chaftziefstathiou and A. K. Talentino (Eds.), *Sporting Boundaries, Sporting Events and Commodification*, Oxford, United Kingdom: Inter-Disciplinary Press.

Biography

Michael Skey is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Social Sciences at Loughborough University. He has published widely on the subjects of nationalism, globalization and cosmopolitanism and his most recent work focuses on media events, communication and sport and theories of media power.

Email(s): m.skey@lboro.ac.uk



SECTION 4

**MEDIA, HEALTH
AND SOCIABILITY**

Tradition and the digital: A study of dating attitudes among Australia-based Chinese dating app users

Xu Chen

Abstract

Dating practices in contemporary China are still driven in many ways by Chinese courtship traditions, such as parental involvement and male privilege. While new technologies are often seen as forces for cultural innovation, the role of dating apps in reconfiguring dating practices has received little attention in Chinese contexts, despite the rapid rise of these technologies in China. This situation stands in contrast to the levels of attention paid to dating apps and their role in transforming intimate cultures in Western contexts. Accordingly, drawing on data from 23 interviews from an ongoing project about Australia-based Chinese people's engagement with the dating apps Tinder and Tantan, this paper examines young Chinese people's current attitudes towards dating and marriage. It looks, in particular, at how such attitudes appear to shape and be shaped by the use of dating applications. While it shows that dating apps have the potential to reconfigure young Chinese people's attitudes to dating, I argue that the role of dating apps in this process mainly functions as reinforcement and acceleration, without fundamentally changing users' dating attitudes.

Keywords: dating apps, dating cultures, China, Australia

1. Introduction

In September 2012, Tinder launched in the Apple App Store, and within a week, it had attracted 1,000 users (News.com, 2014). Today, Tinder has become the premier mainstream dating app for the heterosexual market (Duguay, 2017), with users in 196 countries (Dredge, 2014). Because of Chinese government censorship—colloquially known as the ‘Great Firewall of China’—it is difficult to access Tinder in mainland China. As is the case with other categories of social media, this situation has created opportunities for local entrepreneurs to develop similar apps that are more suited to the Chinese market. Two years after Tinder’s release, Tantan, its Chinese equivalent, was released in China in August 2014. According to Trustdata (2017), the number of monthly active users on Tantan had reached 3.4 million by September 2017. In explaining his motivation for developing Tantan, CEO and co-founder of Tantan, Yu Wang (2016), has claimed that, in China many young people come by themselves to large cities such as Beijing and Shanghai to seek better job opportunities, but they lack the time and opportunity to meet people of the opposite sex¹. This situation is compounded by the fact that, while Western dating culture has typically revolved around parties, nightclubs and bars, China does not have such traditions. Additionally, as Yu Wang has also indicated, before the advent of Chinese dating apps, the online alternatives in China were strongly oriented either to marriage (e.g. Baihe.com) or to sex (e.g. Momo in its early stage), even though the latter is much more stigmatized in China than in the West. As a result, Chinese young people have faced particular social-cultural obstacles in making friends when they arrive in a new place. Tantan was therefore designed for young people aged 18 to 35 to help them connect with strangers, both for romantic relationships and friendships. Compared with Tinder, Tantan is a relatively new and developing dating app. When Tantan first launched in the app store, it was reported in the press to be a carbon copy of Tinder, as it simply drew on the swipe right or left model from Tinder without any additional innovations. However, after two years’ development, Tantan added some new functions, making it more fit for Chinese users, such as *Moments* (*pengyou quan*) and *Secret crush* (*niming anlian biaobai*).² These devel-

1 Yu Wang’s statement indicates that Tantan’s targeted users are heterosexuals, although there would undoubtedly be a (growing) proportion of these young people who would be seeking partners of the same sex, or both.

2 *Moments* and *Secret crush* are two features embedded in Tantan. *Moments* operates in a similar way to Facebook’s timeline where users are able to post their updates and browse others’ posts. *Secret crush* enables users to show their affection for someone without saying it directly. In order to use it you need to have your lover’s contact on your phone, and Tantan will send her/him a message “Someone around you has a crush on you and wants to invite you to Tantan.” She/he would not know who employs Tantan to send out this message.

opments are in keeping with Williams' (1974) statement that technology is always shaped socially and culturally.

Although Tantan's target market is mainland China, there are many Chinese users of the app in Australia. Australia is an immigrant society, and by 30 June 2017, Chinese immigrants accounted for 2.5% of Australia's total population, which makes Chinese immigrants the second largest sub-group of Australian immigrants, closely following those from the United Kingdom (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Outside the *Great Firewall of China*, Chinese people in Australia have more options if they want to use mobile dating apps. For instance, they have access both to Tinder and Tantan.

The study of dating apps is very much in its infancy and existing research primarily focuses on two issues. One is the affordances of dating apps (Duguay, 2017) and another is users' engagement patterns (see, for example, Ward, 2016; Timmermans and De Caluwé, 2017). Most of this work has been conducted in the Western context. There are plenty of studies looking at the role of online dating technologies in reconfiguring intimacy (Enguix & Gómez-Narváez, 2018; Haywood, 2018; Rochadiat, Tong & Novak, 2018), for instance, on Instagram and Grindr, intimacies can be reconfigured when some users post private selfies in relatively public spaces (Enguix & Gómez-Narváez, 2018), while such studies in the Chinese context are relatively few (Chen, Davies & Elliott, 2002). This is even less the case when it comes to examining the role of dating apps in this reconfiguration (Chan, 2018), despite the rapid rise of these technologies in China in terms of application development and use.

Given that the number of Chinese immigrants in Australia has grown exponentially and that mobile dating apps have also gained popularity in China in recent years, this paper examines the role of dating app use in reconfiguring users' dating attitudes in this particular context. While detailing these complexities in cross-cultural uses of dating apps, this paper also provides us with a lens to better understand the interplay between new technologies and cultural innovation in more general contexts.

2. Chinese dating culture revisited: From arranged marriage to pluralistic values

Arranged marriage (*fumubaoban*) by parents has been a dominant form of courtship in Chinese society for centuries, and it still exists in certain rural areas in China. In traditional Chinese culture, it is widely believed that only a marriage that

is completely arranged by parents can be socially acceptable. The bride and groom may not even have the chance to see each other before the wedding day (Moore, 1998). Some parents made binding child betrothal agreements (*wawaqin*) for their children, and in some cases such an agreement has been made even before children are born (Wolf & Huang, 1980). In such marriage arrangements, people have no say in their own marriage, and in this patrilocal pattern, the bride has been seen more as a new member of the family than as a partner of the groom (Whyte, 1992). In his book, *Chinese Family and Kinship*, Baker (1979) points out that traditional Chinese society had a patrilineal kinship system, in which the husband's most important role in the family is to have male heirs to continue the ancestral line and the family name. Thus, the purpose of marriage was not so much to serve the interests of the couple, but to carry on the family line.

Arranged marriage customs were exposed to increasing criticism in the early decades of the 20th century, with reformers denouncing Confucian family norms that emerged with the May 4th Movement of 1919. While the growth of wage labour and the spread of Western ideas in China began to influence young people in their choice of partner from this period onwards (Lang, 1946; Levy, 1949), it was not until 1950, the year after the foundation of the PRC (People's Republic of China), that arranged marriages were legally abolished by the Marriage Law of the PRC. The Marriage Law aimed to put an end to traditional arranged marriages in favour of free choice unions. Alongside the new marriage law, the government also adopted other measures, such as launching a nationwide propaganda campaign (Xu & Whyte, 1990), to help abolish traditional marriage customs. Nevertheless, most parents still wished to exert their influence when it came to their children's choice of marriage partner (Yan, 2003), especially in rural areas (Xia & Zhou, 2003). Since 1978, the government headed by Deng Xiaoping began to carry out a series of reform policies, bringing unprecedented changes to Chinese society. As a consequence, the practice of dating started to emerge in China (Whyte, 1992; Xu, 1997; Xia & Zhou, 2003; Yan, 2003; Luo, 2008). Young people were gaining more mobility and independence than ever before (Xia & Zhou, 2003; Luo, 2008) and Western values and ideas regarding dating culture began to spread widely in China as a result of large-scale Westernization (Xia & Zhou, 2003; Yan, 2003).

China's cultural roots are sufficiently deep, however, to ensure that cultural change occurs very slowly (Moore, 1998). Thus, in present-day China, traditional and modern values and ideas co-exist, and this exerts an influence on Chinese people's dating practices. As a result, on the one hand, typical Chinese dating is often described as implicit (Moore, 1998), male dominated (Chen, Davies & Elliott, 2002; Luo, 2008; Luo & Sun, 2015), parental involved (Luo, 2008; de Seta

& Zhang, 2015) and marriage-oriented (Tang & Zuo, 2000; Xia & Zhou, 2003; Schultz & Lavenda, 2014). On the other hand, new values in dating practice have been observed in contemporary China, such as openness about sex (Farrer, 2014), and freedom of love (Wang, 2017).

3. Digital dating technologies and the potential to disrupt the tradition

The internet has always been regarded as a resource to meet people's romantic wishes and requirements, and, as such, dating applications exist that cater for a wide range of different demographic and sexual orientation groups (Egan, 2000). The traditional definition of online dating focuses on a person's use of online dating websites to find a potential partner and tends to exclude other online platforms, such as general SNSs (Social Networking Services) and online forums (Barraket & Henry-Waring, 2008; Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Specher, 2012) and the answer to the second question (superiority). Online dating practices are often associated with stigma and considered unsafe, and users have, at times, been characterised as desperate people (Anderson, 2005; Whitty & Carr, 2006). Mediated dating practices, however, have carried a certain stigma since well before the advent of online dating. In America, for example, personal ads for romance placed in newspapers or magazines were also largely stigmatized as an early iteration of mediated dating (Finkel *et al.*, 2012) and the answer to the second question (superiority). The ubiquitous use of the Internet and Web 2.0 in our daily lives has demonstrated that online social experience is not inherently unsafe (Degim & Johnson, 2015), but the affordable cost of online dating services and the decreased social stigma associated with online dating due to their widespread take-up, has meant that online dating has developed rapidly from margin to mainstream and been embraced by many people (St John, 2002; Sautter, Tippett & Morgan, 2010). In 2015, it was reported that 15% of American adults had had experience of using dating services (Smith, 2016). While media coverage tends to portray online dating services as adopted by those who are 'looking for love, or sex' (Feuer, 2015), Couch and Liamputtong (2008) have studied individuals' motivations for using online dating websites. They have discovered that online daters engage in such practices for a wide range of reasons, including: seeking a soul mate, casual sex, fun, relaxation, boredom, meeting new people and facing up to new personal circumstances. Although online daters may have multiple motivations and even though technologies are by no means deterministic in terms of cultural innovation, some research has shown the potential of online dating technology for disrupting or counteracting tradition. For example, a study about the use of online dating websites among Muslim Amer-

ican women has revealed that the adoption of these technologies provides them with greater opportunities for partner selection and more control over courtship management. This may in turn have a transformative effect on traditional Muslim courtship practices that have hitherto highly restricted Muslim women's autonomy (Rochadiat, Tong & Novak, 2018).

Parallels could be found in China in terms of the situation of online dating. With the ubiquitous use of the internet in daily lives, it has become increasingly more common for Chinese young people to meet their first romantic partners online (Xia & Zhou, 2003). Moreover, in China online dating has tended to have a marked impact on dating culture from the very beginning. For instance, a study on an early online Chinese dating game called 'Raising Men for Fun' has argued that this game reverses traditional Chinese gender roles, as women in this game are dominant, or so-called 'masters'. This may indeed signify that online interpersonal relationship building is beginning to emerge as a powerful force for cultural change (Chen, Davies & Elliott, 2002). This force can also be seen on a flirting app Momo, where there is a *aimei* (erotic and ambiguous) flirting atmosphere, providing a 'safe haven' for users to escape peer pressure and the family narratives surrounding relationships in the 'real world' (Luo & Sun, 2015). On the other hand, how much of the cultural change seen online can actually be translated into real life (offline) in China remains a complex issue. This can be seen in Liu's (2016) study showing the transformation of Momo and its dominant, advertised use in recent years. Initially emerging as "a genius tool for getting laid (*Yuepao Shenqi*)", Momo was a "radical" social media platform largely inconsistent with the "conservative-leaning sexual culture of Chinese society" (p. 562). Hence, while it succeeded in attracting hundreds of millions of users, it faced pressure from the Chinese government and society at large. As a profit-making enterprise first and foremost, Momo showed no interest in challenging government policies or in attempting to reshape mainstream values in China. It thus launched a sustained 'sanitising project' to rebuild itself as an app for making friends based on common interests.

The dearth of dating app studies in the Chinese context has been shown in the generally available literature, let alone in the context of Australian Chinese diaspora. Given the unique features of Chinese culture, and the potential of cultural transformation shaped by the adoption of dating apps, this paper explores the role of dating apps in helping young Chinese people negotiate their dating attitudes.

4. Methods

This paper draws upon data collected in 23 interviews carried out in the course of an ongoing PhD project that explores and contrasts the engagement with Tinder and Tantan by the Chinese diaspora in Australia. Before interviewing participants, I did some ethnographic observations on these two apps to get a general sense of how they functioned. However, given the special features of Tinder and Tantan, namely that users are not able to communicate with each other unless there is a mutual like between them, and mindful of ethical considerations, in this phase, my aim of platform observations was mainly to understand the affordances of Tinder and Tantan without observing users' practices directly.

In October 2017, I began to recruit participants through advertisements distributed in WeChat and Facebook groups as well as using these two dating apps (Blackwell, Birnholtz & Abbott, 2015; Ward, 2016). A snowball strategy was also used to encourage participants to inform their networks and to assist in this recruiting. The criteria for selecting my participants were that they identified themselves as part of the Australian Chinese diaspora, and whether they had used Tinder and/or Tantan at least once in the last three months. The age of my participants ranged from 21 to 31, with 11 males and 12 females. Interviews lasted from 26 minutes to one hour and 47 minutes. Before scheduling each interview, participants were offered the option of speaking either in English or Chinese, and the result was that all but one interview was conducted in Chinese. Interviews were transcribed, and the Chinese ones were translated into English. Using NVivo 12 I employed the thematic coding method (Attride-Stirling, 2001) to analyze all interview data. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect individuals' privacy.

5. Findings

Many studies focusing on Tinder have explored users' motivations and identified multiple motivations such as looking for romantic partners, seeking casual sex, releasing pressure and so forth, and given the similarities of Tantan's digital infrastructure to that of Tinder, all my participants' motivations for using Tinder and/or Tantan fall into one of these categories summarized by previous researchers (Ward, 2016; Ranzini & Lutz, 2017; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017). However, as the situation of my participants (membership of the Australian Chinese diaspora) is unique compared to those in previous studies, I have identified two main motivations for using Tinder and/or Tantan among my participants: (1) using Tinder in order to learn more about local culture and (2) using Tantan for emotional support.

This echoes my participants' perception of user base on these apps that in Australia predominant users on Tinder are white people, while predominant users on Tantan are Chinese people. But it should be noted that, although they may believe that interacting with white people on Tinder is helpful for learning about local (in this case Australian) culture, it is not necessarily true that all white users on Tinder in Australia are local.

Despite the fact that the time spent by my participants in Australia varied from 3 months to 32 years, all of them perceived Australia to be a Western society. As such, they, as ethnic Chinese or Asians, clearly felt that their cultural background in relationship to dating was different from the mainstream dating culture in Australia. This perception is in line with previous studies about Chinese and Western dating, whereby Chinese dating culture is viewed as being relatively conservative and Western dating culture is seen as relatively open (Le Espiritu, 2001; Tong, 2003; Luo, 2008). More specifically, when discussing dating culture or their experiences on dating apps, participants tended to single out the following three categories or topics: attitudes toward sex, intergenerational relationships and gender relations. This parallels themes examined in a piece of research that has studied Chinese American young people's dating culture (Luo, 2008). In the sections that follow I will examine the role of dating apps in helping reconfigure participants' dating attitudes by discussing each of these three themes in turn.

6. Rethinking attitudes towards sex

Location-Based Services (LBS) are an important affordance of Tinder and Tantan, and this feature encourages users to meet other users within their immediate neighbourhoods. Moreover, such an affordance may create a sense of what Hjorth (2013) refers to as 'mobile intimacy' for all users of this service, which helps explain why these apps are often labelled as hook-up apps, since this affordance can be used by users for facilitating casual sex. For instance, Momo, as the first mobile social media equipped with LBS in China, it quickly became, in its early stages, a well-known hook-up app (Liu, 2016). While only one of my participants said he uses Tinder and Tantan just for casual sex, all of them said they had been aware that the app they were using had a reputation of being a hook-up app. Thus, no matter what their purpose in using these apps is, many of them, especially Tinder users, suggested that sex is a topic that cannot be avoided when communicating with their matches on these apps. For example, Lucy, 25, who comes from Taiwan, described her feelings when discussing sexual topics with one of her matches on Tinder in the following terms: Chinese people don't talk about this. How could it be possible for

Chinese to talk about your performance in bed! That guy didn't mean how good he is (in bed), he just said he discussed with his friends about Asian girls' performance in bed. I felt it is very funny. As I am a Chinese girl myself, I thought: really?

Although many of my participants told me that they are not conservative about dating, which is contrary to stereotypical depictions of Chinese people, it is still not common practice, as pointed out by my respondent, for Chinese people to discuss sex openly, especially between males and females. Hannah, 21, from Hongkong, also got a shock when she got involved in such online discussions on Tinder:

I knew this from a guy on Tinder. He was looking for casual sex, and I just asked thoughtlessly: do you have a partner? He said yes. I was like what, (then) why are you still hooking up? And he said both he and his partner look for hooking up (chances) respectively. I was like shit! This was the first time I knew someone who is in an open relationship. There was a time when I told myself that I could accept this, but when I first came across this, my immediate response was like shit, this kind of thing does exist! I can accept it, but I will not do it.

Tinder and Tantan are able to provide my participants with the kind of space to rethink about their attitudes towards sex, and in some cases, they could get this simply by looking at other users' profiles. Dan, 27, who said he did not get many matches on Tinder, said he had learned some English words on Tinder:

...You will find users with impure motives who will write many impure sentences, and there are many repeated words. On Facebook you will never learn this, some words you will never see in other places...

His statement also shows the implicit ways in which Chinese culture talks about sex. The word 'impure' in the above context is a literal translation of the Chinese word 'buchun', and in this context, it exclusively refers to 'sexual', but he used 'impure' instead, probably because he did not feel comfortable saying 'sexual' in Chinese directly in front of me. Helen, 21, who had only used Tantan, said "*all guys on Tantan are looking for sex*", and she recalled those sexual expressions she had seen on male users' profiles on Tantan:

...For example, they wrote "came here to do some meaningful stuff", "applause for sex", or "action movies" and things like that. Or directly "wanna hook up?"

7. Undermining parental authority during courtship

Parental involvement, as I have already mentioned, is a distinct part of Chinese dating due to the long history of arranged marriage. Harry, 32, who was born and grew up in Australia, felt uncomfortable about the pressure his parents put on his marriage:

...From a family point of view, Chinese, I guess, especially for female ... they would have opinion on who they should meet, and when they should get married, but Westerners have no... they don't care about it. They give their kids full freedom and they don't think I need to get married by 30 or something ... And I feel, here I personally relate to Westerners, like my mother sometimes I can feel she gave some slight pressure on me. Like say, you know, try to introduce some girls, but because I grew up here, I really push against pressure, because I'm like, you know I want to be independent...

At Harry's age, the pressure would be bigger if he were living in China. Chinese young people will face all kinds of pressures from family and friends to get married when they reach a certain age, and the anxieties about getting married are reflected in several dating shows on Chinese television, such as *If You Are the One*. Unlike *If You Are the One* — which some commentators have argued actually reinforces traditional norms around parental involvement in their children's partnership (de Seta & Zhang, 2015), the adoption of dating apps by Chinese users clearly undermines parental control over courtship, especially when sons or daughters are living in Australia, which generally means that they are physically distant from their family. Lisa, 26, who met her fiancé on Tinder and recently had her parents visit her in Australia, decided never to tell her mother the truth about how she met her fiancé: “*I never thought about using dating apps when I was in China, because I think in China you have to use them in a sneaky way, and my mother will never understand if she knows I use dating apps.*” Lisa worked out a solution that allowed her to be autonomous without offending her mother.

Ray, 26, on the other hand, who is from Beijing and found a girlfriend via Tantan in Australia, was facing a more complex situation. He said that, when it comes to dating, his family does not care so much who he dates, as long as the girl is “*not very (sexually) open (luan)*”, but in terms of marriage his family set the standards for his potential partner: “*...her family must have similar social status to us (men dang hu dui), e.g., her parents should be intellectuals, and they should be Beijing or Tianjin citizens*”. The dilemma was that his girlfriend from Tantan is not what his parents expected, and he was quite uncertain about his parents' words:

Now I think maybe this is reasonable. Before I really didn't like this, but now I am hesitating. If I marry someone with a poor family, maybe the rest of my life will be very hard ... When I was back at home, I yearned for value systems outside China (guo wai), and wanted freedom of love, getting married because of love, but when I am abroad, I think maybe material situations are important if you want a long-term relationship.

8. Reconfiguring gender relations

As a carryover from traditional Chinese patriarchal culture, Chinese men are encouraged to chase their ideal woman by all available means and are supposed to be dominant in dating (Chen, Davies & Elliott, 2002; Luo, 2008). In contrast, in Chinese culture women are expected to adopt the passive role in a relationship (Luo, 2008, 2012). Given that both Tinder and Tantan have identified themselves as dating apps targeting the heterosexual market (Wang, 2016; Duguay, 2017), it is fair to say that male and female users' practices on these apps may potentially configure or reconfigure gender dynamics. Interestingly, I located two relevant dating app studies with seemingly two contrary arguments regarding how dating apps may disrupt gender relations, be that reinforcing or disrupting the patriarchy. Firstly, out of 15 interviews with young white straight male Tinder users, Haywood (2018) found many of his informants have had the experience of groups of friends crowding together around one Tinder user and all the time discussing, joking or even humiliating female users. It was for this reason that Haywood borrowed the concept of 'girl watching' arguing in this study that this constitutes an objectification and commodification of women, thus forming and reinforcing new forms of patriarchy during Tinder use. By contrast, Chan (2018) in his study of Chinese dating apps, interviewed 19 Chinese female Tantan and/or Momo users in Guangdong, concluding that dating apps have the potential to empower participants and to disrupt patriarchy in three distinct ways: 1) increasing users' sexual agency through providing them with the medium for exploring their sexual desires 2) objectifying male users through facilitating the 'feminine gaze' and 3) protecting them from sexual harassment by offering them reporting mechanisms and opportunities on platforms.

Among my participants, all but one of them are dating app users who identify as straight, and many of them have had similar experiences to those described above. Tom, 25, whose Tantan profile was created by his male flatmates, provided an example of a 'girl watching' experience. He said they produced this Tantan account because they have a female flatmate who "*brings a new man [she has] met on Tantan back home every week*", and they wanted to find this female flatmate's

Tantan profile so that they could make fun of her. So, after they had created this Tantan account on behalf of Tom, they kept swiping as a group once their female flatmate got back home. However, they did not succeed in ever getting to see their female flatmate's profile, but Tom said they did have a lot of laughs at the expense of other female users on Tantan: by commenting on girls' 'poor taste' in using filters on their photos or by expressing various profanities. Further evidence of how males objectify female users was provided by the fact that Harry carried out his 'girl watching' even when he was not physically together with his mates by taking advantage of Tinder's affordances:

... if we find a really disgusting-looking girl (on Tinder), you know, like, (we will) send this screenshot, (I mean) share (this with each other). Because you know on Tinder there is a feature saying 'recommend to your friends'. Hahaha so I'll recommend a really ugly fat girl or if I know my friend likes black girl, I'll recommend to him.

In addition to this, I have some female participants who support the idea of the 'feminine gaze'. For example, Emma, 37, who comes from Taiwan and had only used Tinder, said she only paid attention to male users' faces (*kan lian*) when selecting potential matches. Lily, 23, who comes from Shanghai and had only used Tantan, also used the Chinese word *kan lian* to describe her main purpose on Tantan. Moreover, she said she was basically a lurker on Tantan since, for her, just viewing handsome guys was enough. Another example of the disruption of gender relations is not very relevant to dating app use. Lisa's fiancé, who she met on Tinder, is a Westerner, and Lisa said it is a very different experience compared with dating a Chinese guy when she was in China:

...Like going Dutch, in China when I have dinner or watch a movie with guys, it is not possible to go Dutch. But as I have been overseas for so long, I've got used to this (...) I have never been very materialistic, but before, if someone, like my ex-boyfriend, gave me an expensive gift, I didn't feel uncomfortable, but now I will be very offended if someone buys me expensive gifts.

This coincides with Luo's (2008) study in which his participants also used the example of 'going Dutch' as a sign of gender equality. In Lisa's case, however, technology's influence on gender equality seems to be negligible, as this transformation is based on the experience of living in Western societies and dating a Western person. It is also possible that the Westerner was not necessarily met on Tinder or on other dating platforms. Moreover, it is not fair to assume all Chinese males are patriarchal on account of such cultural expectations, given that the study supporting Tinder reinforces patriarchy was conducted in the Western context. So

here I am not considering whether dating apps reinforce or disrupt traditional gender expectations but am merely pointing out that the issue of gender dynamics in this case is really complicated and that both technological determinism and cultural determinism are too simplistic to explain these complexities. As such, it is argued that the role of dating apps, in this case, is to provide more opportunities for the (re)configuration of gender relations among users, which is a complex process of negotiation rather than a unidirectional influence.

9. Discussion and conclusion

Contextualising the adoption of dating apps as media consumption among diasporas, this paper focuses on how the Chinese diaspora in Australia engages with a particular medium or platform (Tinder) in the host country, and with Tantan as *online homeland media* (Yin, 2015). It has shown that the affordances of these apps and socio-cultural contexts in Australia are two main forces that account for the renegotiation of my participants' dating attitudes.

Tinder and Tantan have very similar digital infrastructures and they have some identical communicative affordances compared with dating apps in general, such as locatability and *swipe logic* (David & Cambre, 2016). Moreover, as part of popular culture in modern societies, both Tinder and Tantan share a similar image in the mass media, namely that they are often depicted as hook-up apps, despite the fact that Tantan has gained more popularity than Tinder in China and vice versa in the West that Tinder is more popular than Tantan. Thus, in this sense both Tinder and Tantan have shaped my participants' experiences in a similar way. For example, mobile intimacy created by Tinder and Tantan encourages my participants to think that talking about intimate topics on these apps is a normal, accepted experience, although it can be a taboo in Chinese society with its conservative-leaning sexual culture (Pei, 2008). Therefore, Tinder and Tantan offer my participants opportunities to renegotiate their attitudes towards dating and associated cultures.

Social, cultural and material contexts do matter. Previous studies have shown the influence of broader contexts on social media users' online self-presentation (Takahashi, 2010; Chan, 2016; Dhoest & Szulc, 2016). In this study, many of my participants are only willing to use dating apps while they are in Australia, due to: 1) their perception of there being greater stigma attached to dating apps in China 2) their assumption that there are more liberal values towards dating in Australia and 3) the relative dearth of opportunities for meeting new people in a new environment. Cultures on Tinder and Tantan are also shaped by sociocultural

contexts. Tinder culture, as perceived by my participants, is more localised, or more Western as many of my participants do not distinguish Australia from other Western countries. For this reason, they often associate Tinder with Western dating culture, which can be casual and authentic on the upside and overly open on the downside. Tantan culture in Australia has a strong connection to its cultural base in China, and its user base in Australia is predominantly made up of ethnic Chinese, despite the fact that it is a geo-locative app. In China, Tantan, like other dating apps such as Momo, has always been portrayed by the mass media as “*a genius tool for getting laid (Yuepao Shenqi)*”, and has been seen by scholars as being disruptive to the relatively conservative sexual culture in China (Liu, 2016; Chan, 2018). However, on the one hand, Tantan culture in Australia (as perceived by my participants) is indeed associated with ‘openness’ regarding dating and sexual culture. For instance, Tom asserted that “*Chinese girls using Tantan are overly open*” and Helen believed that “*all guys using Tantan are in it for hook-up*”. On the other hand, Tantan culture has some Chinese characteristics compared to Tinder, such as greater emphasis on the platonic and less focus on the sexual. This supports previous research on Chinese online dating (Chin, 2011), for example both Ray and Dan mentioned that, using Tantan, they had made some genuine female friends, while they viewed girls on Tinder as being “*too sexually open*”. Similarly, the main motivation for Chloe and Jade using Tantan is that they want to express their innermost feelings to strangers, as they think that by doing this, they could release pressure, but they would feel embarrassed if they vented similar intimate feelings to their close friends.

While dating apps do have a role in disrupting traditional norms, they mainly function as a means of acceleration and reinforcement. This is illustrated by Lisa’s choice of image explaining the influence of Tinder on her: “*This is a chicken and egg question. You must be relatively open, then you will use them, and if you feel good you will continue using them, so it is a question of mutual influence. It is not so much that after using this my attitudes towards dating and marriage have changed, but maybe a little bit reinforces.*” Although this paper is not representative of attitudes throughout the Australian Chinese diaspora, it has attempted to elaborate the complexities relating to the adoption of dating apps and the negotiation of dating attitudes among my participants. Characteristically Chinese attitudes and the disruption of Chinese traditions have both been revealed in this process, and thus this paper has hopefully contributed to a better understanding of diasporic social media use by showing the mutual influences between technology and culture.

References

- Anderson, T. L. (2005) 'Relationships among Internet attitudes, Internet use, romantic beliefs, and perceptions of online romantic relationships', *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 8(6): 521-31.
- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001) 'Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research', *Qualitative Research*, 1(3): 385-405. doi: 10.1177/146879410100100307.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) '3412.0 - Migration, Australia, 2016-17'. Available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3412.0MainFeatures32016-17?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3412.0&issue=2016-17&num=&view=>.
- Baker, H. D. (1979) *Chinese family and kinshi*. London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press LTD.
- Barraket, J. & Henry-Waring, M. S. (2008) 'Getting it on (line): Sociological perspectives on e-dating', *Journal of Sociology*, 44(2): 149-165.
- Blackwell, C., Birnholtz, J. & Abbott, C. (2015) 'Seeing and being seen: Co-situation and impression formation using Grindr, a location-aware gay dating app', *New Media & Society*, 17(7): 1117-1136.
- Chan, L. S. (2016) 'How sociocultural context matters in self-presentation : A comparison of U.S. and Chinese profiles on Jack ' d , a mobile dating app for men who have sex with men', *International Journal of Communication*, 10: 6040-6059.
- Chan, L. S. (2018) 'Liberating or disciplining? A technofeminist analysis of the use of dating apps among women in urban China', *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 11(2): 298-314.
- Chen, L. C. P., Davies, A. & Elliott, R. (2002) 'Gender and identity play on the Net-Raising men for fun?', in AP - Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research Volume 5, eds. Ramizwick and Tu Ping, Valdosta, GA : Association for Consumer Research, Pages: 323-328.
- Chin, Y.-L. (2011) "'Platonic relationships" in China's online social milieu: A lubricant for banal everyday life?', *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 4(4): 400-416. doi: 10.1080/17544750.2011.616286.
- Couch, D. & Liamputtong, P. (2008) 'Online dating and mating: The use of the internet to meet sexual partners', *Qualitative Health Research*, 18(2): 268-279.
- David, G. & Cambre, C. (2016) 'Screened intimacies: Tinder and the swipe logic', *Social Media + Society*, 1-20. doi: 10.1177/2056305116641976.
- Degim, I. A. & Johnson, J. (2015) 'Introduction', pp. 8-16 in Degim, I. A., Johnson, J., and Fu, T. (Eds.) *Online Courtship – Interpersonal Interactions Across Borders*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.
- de Seta, G. & Zhang, G. (2015) 'Stranger stranger or lonely lonely? Young Chinese and dating apps between the locational, the mobile and the social', pp. 167-185 in Degim, I. A., Johnson, J., and Fu, T. (Eds.) *Online Courtship: Interpersonal Interactions Across Borders*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2015. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/13895551/Stranger_Stranger_or_Lonely_Lonely_Young_Chinese_and_dating_apps_between_the_locational_the_mobile_and_the_social.

- Dhoest, A. & Szulc, L. (2016) 'Navigating online selves: Social, cultural, and material contexts of social media use by diasporic gay men', *Social Media + Society*, 2(4). doi: 10.1177/2056305116672485.
- Dredge, S. (2014) 'Tinder: the "painfully honest" dating app with wider social ambitions'. Downloaded on 24 February 2019 from <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/feb/24/tinder-dating-app-socialnetworks>.
- Duguay, S. (2017) 'Dressing up Cinderella: Interrogating authenticity claims on the mobile dating app Tinder', *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(3): 351-367. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2016.1168471.
- Egan, J. (2000, December 31) 'Lonely gay teen seeking same'. *The New York Times Magazine*. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/10/magazine/lonely-gay-teen-seeking-same.html>
- Enguix, B. & Gómez-Narváez, E. (2018) 'Masculine bodies, selfies, and the (re)configurations of intimacy', *Men and Masculinities*, 21(1): 112-130.
- Le Espiritu, Y. (2001) "'We don't sleep around like white girls do": Family, culture, and gender in Filipina American lives', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 26(2): 415-440.
- Farrer, J. (2014) 'Youth and sexuality in China: A century of revolutionary change', pp. 150-161 in McLelland, M. and Mackie, V. (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of sexuality studies in East Asia* (1st ed.). London: Routledge.
- Feuer, A. (2015, February 13) 'On Tinder, taking a swipe at love, or sex, or something'. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/15/nyregion/on-tinder-taking-a-swipe-at-love-or-sex-or-something-in-new-york.html>.
- Finkel, E. J., Eastwick, P. W., Karney, B. R., Reis, H. T., & Specher, S. (2012) 'Online dating: A Critical analysis from the perspective of psychological science', *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, (13)1: 3-66. doi: 10.1177/1529100612436522.
- Haywood, C. (2018) *Men, Masculinity and Contemporary Dating*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Palgrave MacMillan. doi: 10.1057/978-1-137-50683-2.
- Hjorth, L. (2013) 'The place of the emplaced mobile: A case study into gendered locative media practices', *Mobile Media & Communication*, 1(1): 110-115. doi: 10.1177/2050157912459738.
- Lang, O. (1946) *Chinese family and society*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Levy, M. J. (1949) *The family revolution in modern China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Liu, T. (2016) 'Neoliberal ethos, state censorship and sexual culture: A Chinese dating/hook-up app', *Continuum*, 30(5): 557-566. doi: 10.1080/10304312.2016.1210794.
- Luo, B. (2008) 'Striving for comfort: "Positive" construction of dating cultures among second-generation Chinese American youths', *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 25(6): 867-888. doi: 10.1177/0265407508096699.
- Luo, W. (2012) 'Packaged glamour: Constructing the modern bride in China's bridal media', *Asian Women*, 28(4): 83-115.
- Luo, W. & Sun, Z. (2015) 'Are you the one? China's TV dating shows and the Sheng Nü's predicament', *Feminist Media Studies*, 15(2): 239-256.

- Moore, R. L. (1998) 'Love and limerence with Chinese characteristics: Student romance in the PRC', pp. 251-283 in V. C. Munck (Ed.) *Romantic love and sexual behavior: Perspectives from the social sciences*. Westport: Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group.
- News.com (2014) 'The real story behind hugely successful dating app Tinder', Downloaded on 17 March 2019 from <http://www.news.com.au/finance/business/the-real-story-behind-hugely-successful-dating-app-tinder/news-story/81c7d4587ea0d7f6f7aea7e20dcd4027>.
- Pei, Y. (2008) *Born in the 70's : sexuality of young women in contemporary Shanghai*, PhD. The University of Hong Kong. Available at: <http://www.airitilibrary.com/Publication/Index/U0029-1812201200014487>.
- Ranzini, G. & Lutz, C. (2017) 'Love at first swipe? Explaining Tinder self-presentation and motives', *Mobile Media & Communication*, (5)1: 80-101. doi: 10.1177/2050157916664559.
- Rochadiat, A. M. P., Tong, S. T. & Novak, J. M. (2018) 'Online dating and courtship among Muslim American women: Negotiating technology, religious identity, and culture', *New Media & Society*, 20(4): 1618-1639. doi: 10.1177/1461444817702396.
- Sautter, J. M., Tippett, R. M. & Morgan, S. P. (2010) 'The social demography of Internet dating in the United States', *Social Science Quarterly*, 91(2): 554-575.
- Schultz, E. A. & Lavenda, R. H. (2014) *Cultural Anthropology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, A. (2016) '15% of American adults have used online dating sites or mobile dating apps', *Pew Research Center*, Washington D.C. Retrieved from: <https://www.pewinternet.org/2016/02/11/15-percent-of-american-adults-have-used-online-dating-sites-or-mobile-dating-apps>.
- St John, W. (2002) 'Young, single and dating at hyperspeed'. *The New York Times Magazine*. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/21/style/young-single-and-dating-at-hyperspeed.html>.
- Takahashi, T. (2010) 'MySpace or Mixi? Japanese engagement with SNS (social networking sites) in the global age', *New Media & Society*, 12(3), 453-475. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809343462>.
- Tang, S. & Zuo, J. (2000) 'Dating attitudes and behaviors of American and Chinese college students', *The Social Science Journal*, 37(1): 67-78. doi: 10.1016/S0362-3319(99)00066-X.
- Timmermans, E. & De Caluwé, E. (2017) 'Development and Validation of the Tinder Motives Scale (TMS)', *Computers in human behavior*, 70(5): 341-350.
- Tong, B. (2003) *The Chinese Americans (Revised Ed.)*. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.
- Trustdata (2017) 'Q3 2017 quarterly report on the development of Chinese mobile internet'. Downloaded on 1 November 2018 from <https://trustdata.oss-cn-beijing.aliyuncs.com/report/pdf/2017年Q3中国移动互联网发展分析报告.pdf>
- Wang, P. (2017) 'Inventing traditions: Television dating shows in the People's Republic of China', *Media, Culture and Society*, 39(4): 504-519. doi: 10.1177/0163443716648493.
- Wang, Y. (2016) 'CEO and Co-founder of Tantan, currently China's second largest dating app, AMA', 25 November. Available at: https://www.reddit.com/r/China/comments/3u77fc/yu_wang_ceo_and_cofounder_of_tantan_currently.

- Ward, J. (2016) 'What are you doing on Tinder? Impression management on a matchmaking mobile app', *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(11): 1644-1659. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2016.1252412.
- Whitty, M. T. & Carr, A. N. (2006) *Cyberspace romance: The psychology of online relationships*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Whyte, M. K. (1992) *From arranged marriages to love matches in urban China*. Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies: Chinese University of Hong Kong.
- Williams, R. (1974) *Television: Technology and cultural form*. London: Fontana.
- Wolf, A. P. & Huang, C. (1980) *Marriage and adoption in China, 1845-1945*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Xia, Y. & Zhou, Z. (2003) 'The transition of courtship, mate selection, and marriage in china', pp. 231-246 in R. R. Hamon and B. B. Ingoldsby (Eds.), *Mate selection across cultures*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781452204628.n13.
- Xu, A. (1997) *Sijizhijiao zhongguoren de aiqing he hunyin (The Chinese love and marriage at the turn of the century)*. Beijing, China: Chinese Social Science Press.
- Xu, X. & Whyte, M. K. (1990) 'Love matches and arranged marriages: A Chinese replication', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52(3): 709-722.
- Yan, Y. (2003) *Private life under socialism: Love, intimacy, and family change in a Chinese village, 1949-1999*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Yin, H. (2015) 'Chinese-language cyberspace, homeland media and ethnic media: A contested space for being Chinese', *New Media & Society*, 17(4): 556-572. doi: 10.1177/1461444813505363.

Biography

Xu Chen is a PhD candidate in the Digital Media Research Centre at the Queensland University of Technology. Xu's PhD project looks at how the Australian Chinese diaspora engage with dating apps Tinder and Tantan, with a focus on the interplay between digital platforms and diasporic identities.

E-mail address: c_xu@live.com

Visual matters in health communication: A systematic review

Fatma Nazlı Köksal, Fatoş Adiloğlu

Abstract

Communication in the information age calls for many skills. The importance of media literacy has taken its position long ago moving further with digital literacy. Health communication has subscribed to the subject matter with the concept of health literacy where the Internet, social media and informatics technologies are vividly dominating the field. This is also where visual literacy meets health communication. The chapter will present an inquiry to trace and track visual matters in health communication. Respectively, the *Journal of Health Communication* is taken as a benchmark with its clear-cut, interdisciplinary conceptualization reflected not only by name but also with its scientific academic credits being published every month. Preliminary research aims to extract the visual weight of these articles by depicting relevant visual aspects. Attention will be paid to articles regarding “*why*” and “*how*” visual imagery is employed in health communication. The study emphasizes the visual construct in health communication and will contribute to the fostering of further research in what is sculpted as the “visual health communication” field.

Keywords: visual health communication, visual image, public health, systematic literature review

1. Introduction: Visual construct and health communication

Today, health communication campaigns demonstrate vivid examples of communication strategy practices with objectives such as the recognition of health services in the community, dissemination of true information about public health and the development of health behaviors. According to Ratzan (1994), health communication is defined as “*the art of informing and motivating the masses about individual and social health problems through planned learning experiences and theories*” (p. 19). Thus, health communication is related to raising individuals’ awareness in society with respect to health issues. Here, the aim is to develop consciousness directed for action. Presentation of true information on health-related issues, on the other hand, entail message design which takes into account how health information is created and transmitted effectively. This ties in with visual argumentation to be used in the field of health communication where this study wants to draw attention. Visual argumentation, as a communicative action, is related with the image itself and the message production process as well as how the image is perceived by the target group. A visual image generally embodies the intended message to work in the mind of the target audience towards the creation of perception. Appropriation of a visual message calls for a formulation, thus a design, of the visual message to be delivered and processed. A visual body is constructed with aesthetic design considerations – visual composition dynamics (visual elements and principles) in material form. Thus, visual construct and the exploitation of imagery is significant.

However, message design seeks message engagement which means considering the target audience contemplation to encourage or to create the tendency to act rather than adopting pure reasoning while directing the target audience. It is as important to subscribe to the rhetorical power of the image used to arise with this contemplation. What is more visual argumentation format introduces aesthetic codes. These codes are related to the types of the design concerns from which that the visual image arises from. Therefore, the used image and the message incorporated to the image as a semantic match and is expected to be parallel and in union with the aesthetic language.

Health communication campaigns practice visual design thinking, design process and design-making:

Visual health communication is an area of theory, research and practice that involves the use of visual imagery (e.g., photographs, illustrations, maps, graphs, diagrams) to convey information about health and disease in order to improve health-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals and populations. (McWhirter & Hoffman-Goetz, 2014: 751)

Visual products, visual tools and thus visual communication are important where message design, appeal and engagement (Lazard, Bamgbade, Sontag, & Brown, 2016) need more attention impact for the protection of personal health with the trajectory of social health issues. Consumption of visual constructs are found in mass media, public health and risk management, patient education practices in medical studies, pictorial warnings, and/or information graphics, drawing a general picture and punctuating the involvement in visual encounters (McWhirter & Hoffman-Goetz, 2014).

As a result, it should be said that the powerful use of visual images in public health campaigns is quite essential.

Talking about an image and trying to decode it is not a decryption process meaning the fact that there will be nothing left to talk after decoding and that the event will be over when the ultimate meaning is casted into the words. Talking about an image is, ultimately, an attempt to associate oneself with the image and the represented meaning of it. (Leppert, 1996: 22)

This is also an endless practice as a demonstrative/interpretative practice.

Based on arguments presented earlier, authors' in the present study lies in "why" and "how" visual imagery is utilised in health communication, with the drive focused on effective communication strategies. Respectively, the *Journal of Health Communication* is taken as a benchmark with its clear notion marked with its reputable conceptualized publication policy and frequency. The study favoured popular public health topics based on visual product exploitation and took shape with visual issues apparent in the various research studies. The inquiry unfolds in two ways: 1) whether the academic articles possess visual issues central to the study or 2) whether visual material is employed instrumentally. Instrumental articles are presented in a chart covering topics of interest, study aim and research design projecting the general landscape (Table 1) tackling the "why" question. The articles with visual matter discussion central to the study are unfolded via figure 2. Thereafter, the how question of the study is to be satisfied with the main goal of the chapter in the sub-questions below.

1. What are the topics of interest?
2. What are the media communication tools used?
3. What is the nature of the visual images (i.e. print, time-based, and interactive)?
4. What is the contribution of the article with respect to visual matter in health communication?
5. Does the article provoke further studies in visual health communication?

2. Method

For the present study, the systematic review is used as a method to extract the visual matters in health communication. “A systematic review attempts to collate all relevant evidences that fits pre-specific eligibility criteria to answer a specific research question. It uses explicit, systematic methods to minimize bias in the identification, selection, synthesis, and summary of studies” (Moher, et al., 2015: 2). Moreover, it is a flow-chart where the screening criteria of articles are described. We also include the information of articles which is framed on the basis of the following criteria: *author, topic interest, study aim, research design, and employment of images* (see Table 1).

2.1. Articles' Search Approach and Selection Criteria

This systematic review was initiated with a direct search using “*visual health communication*” as a key concept to get a snapshot picture of the scene. The search of articles was conducted between 2008 and 2018, and contain visual matters in public health campaigns. The chapter focusing on the importance of visual form in health communication then, proceeding with the first cut, takes into account visual aspects in public health and risk communication topics based on expected popularity with visual encounters. Respectively:

- Publication date had to be between 1 January 2008 and 25 December 2018
- Publication had to involve a public health challenge
- Limited to cancer, smoking, alcohol and obesity
- Sources had to address communication means and visual material
- Visual matter potential as instrumental or central

The research employed search terms as: “*visual communication*”, “*visual media*”, “*visual representation*”, “*visual imagery*”, “*visualization*”, “*visual design*”, “*visual message*”, “*visual form*”, “*photography*”, “*illustration*”, “*pictograms*” and “*visual map*” in an effort to seize visual matter in this filter. The search terms called to work are from the visual communication field per the prior literature review. A total of 1,689 articles were met as reflecting the overall landscape, then, assessing the articles based on title and abstract, 118 articles remained. After applying a selection criterion based on the precise visual matter of: cancer, smoking, alcohol and obesity, the refined number of potential articles came out to be 43. The final cut consisted of 17 articles which based on full text and central use of images. Figure 1 illustrates the flow, or the search process, of the systematic literature review.

Table 1: Overview of instrumental articles

Source	Topic Interest	Study Aim	Research Design/ Method
Kim & Niederdeppe (2014)	Smoking	Television antismoking advertisements' effects on viewers' emotional response	Quantitative, Experimental Research
Cohen, Caburnay, & Rodgers (2011)	Smoking and Alcohol	Frequency of tobacco and alcohol products and control of advertising in black versus general audience newspaper-Comparison-	Quantitative, Content Analysis
Paek, Kim, Hove, & Huh (2013)	Smoking	Message, source, and health information characteristics of e-cigarette videos on YouTube	Quantitative, Content Analysis
Yang, Sangalang, & Rooney (2018)	Smoking	Vaping marijuana - emerging risky health behavior- on YouTube. The content and features' influence on their popularity and retransmission	Quantitative, Content Analysis
Romer, Jamieson, Jamieson, Jones, & Sheer (2017)	Smoking	Health messages to reduce the social acceptability of peer smoking on YouTube despite enhancing its perceived prevalence	Quantitative, Online Survey
Muturi (2016)	Alcohol	Community perspectives on alcohol abuse prevention strategies in rural Kenya	Focus Group Discussions In-depth Interviews
Russell, Russell, Grube, & McQuairre (2017)	Alcohol	Alcohol television storylines impact on young drinking attitudes and intentions Corrective epilogues potential role to moderate the impact	Quantitative, Experimental Research
Stern & Morr (2013)	Smoking and Alcohol	Portrayal of teen smoking, drinking and drug use in recent popular movies	Quantitative, Content Analysis
Tickle, Beach, Dalton (2009)	Alcohol	Risk behavior content quantification in a large sample of popular contemporary films	Quantitative, Content Analysis
Kassan, Williams, Kelly, et al. (2012)	Prostate Cancer Screening	Mechanism by which decision-aids affect decisions	Quantitative Content Analysis
Borders, Suarez-Almazor, Volk, et al. (2017)	Bone Health for Cancer Survivors	Enhancing and clarifying content for an educational website towards decision management	Experimental Study
Mazor, Calvi, Cowan, et al. (2010)	Cancer Screening	Design and interaction strategy for educational tools	Qualitative Analysis
Kenerson, Fadeyi, Liu, et al. (2017)	Cancer Prevention Trials	Pre-testing an educational tool	Experimental
Nan, Briones, Shen, et al. (2013)	Obesity	To report how magazine advertisements use health-nutrition claims	Content Analysis
Choi & Kim (2011)	Obesity	Reviews the landmark studies on ads & analyzes health claims for food products in TV ads	Content Analysis
Turner, Skubisz, et al. (2014)	Obesity	Explores the degree to which people pay visual attention to the information contained in food nutrition labels and front-of-package nutrition symbols	Eye-tracking Research
Choi, & Reid (2018)	Obesity	To examine how perceived brand healthiness, commitment and health consciousness influence responses to print ads for healthy foods	Experimental Research Design

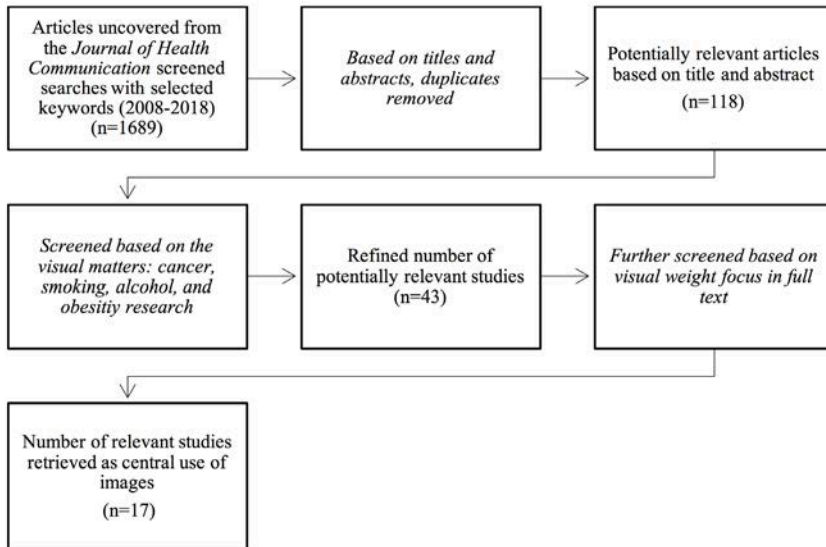


Figure 1: Flowchart for the search and selection process

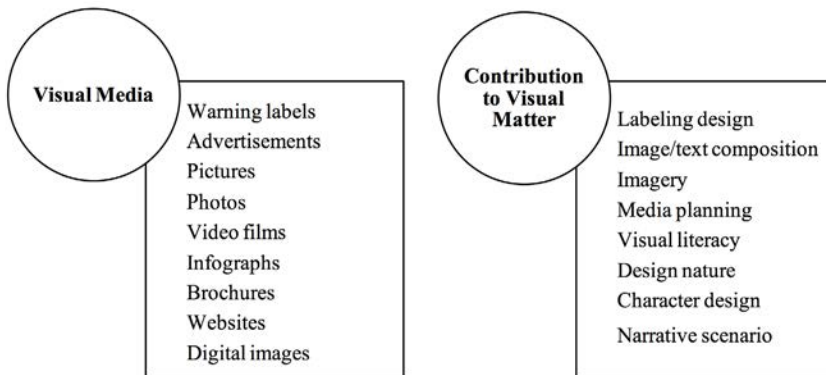


Figure 2: Overview of Central Articles (Smoking, Alcohol, Cancer & Obesity)

The diagram shown in Figure 2 unfolds visual matter which we addressed to play a central role in the discussion of articles. The overview of central articles on smoking draw attention to the importance of alternative interpretations to warnings such as labeling design to motivate quit activity (McQueen, et al. 2016). Key findings on smoking ads also reveal how communication strategies with words and visuals play a role in smoking fear (Kang, et al. 2015). What is more interesting is how pacing of images of products in prevention may work the opposite (Lang et al. 2011). Interpretations cannot be assumed to work per intended spirit (Morris et

al 2011). It is a surprise to find out that exposure to magazine ads might support smoking habits and increased intention to smoke (Burton et al. 2010). Varying responses to pictures of alcoholic drinks between heavy and light users are noteworthy. Research can be furthered with images of nonalcoholic beverages (Lang, et al. 2014). Films have been found to be engaging to impact knowledge as in the case of Haitian women in South Florida regarding cervical cancer development (Frett, et al. 2016). What is more messages can be more positive on awareness and narrative space can influence attitude and intention on cancer (Occa, et al. 2016). The construction and perception of visual messages are matters to attend in cancer studies (McWhirter, et al 2016). Unintended effects could arise from certain visual messages (King, et al. 2016). Imagery and text discontinuity might affect the cognitive processing to reflect cancer diagnosis (Phillips, et al. 2011). Attention is called for obesity with communication strategies that are capturing for children (Cheyne, at al. 2013). Portrayal of characters with various physical features might attract target markets (Buller, et al. 2018). On the other hand it is important to understand how negative photographs can yield attitudes toward obese people (McClure, et al. 2011). On line news photographs and news videos on obese individuals and children can be stigmatizing (Heuer, et al. 2011; Puhl, et al. 2013).

This systematic review of public health research yielded two classifications, namely instrumental and central, and is gathered in table 1 and figure 2 according to the employment of visual imagery. “Topic of interest”, “study aim”, and “research design” were addressed listing approaches and attitudes in the first table. Visual matters issue in the articles as we have address as central is presented in Figure 2. Research methods and approaches for visual studies call for interdisciplinary teamwork. Research relating to smoking and drinking (alcohol) generally considered visual imagery instrumental and are found to exercise quantitative and experimental research, practicing content analyses, surveys and focus groups. Articles on breast, skin, prostate and cervical cancer follow a variety of research approaches such as quantitative, experimental ones besides qualitative content analyses, focus groups and surveys. Here, the visual matter practice is central, revealing visual tracks and traces.

Imagery employed in print, digital print, time-based and interactive media can be regarded as communication design products. Instrumental visual imagery coming to surface in web sites, videos and films are notable for engaging content and interaction strategy. It is remarkable to see the development of educational tools towards cancer screening, cancer surviving, decision aids, and prevention trials. Visual products such as magazine ads, newspaper ads, online imagery, visual texts, and labels are utilized in motivating attempts to quit, emerging risky health behavior, communication of health risks, interventions and health activism. Visual

constructs involve graphic design products that can be designed. Therefore, a viewer's emotional response, message design, message source, content, and features are important considerations. Encounters include television advertising or control advertising in newspapers, websites, popular movies or via popularity and re-transmission of videos on YouTube. Graphic warning labels, online ads, newspaper ads, photographs, info-graphics, magazine ads, video and film, and brochures are visual materials that circulate and can be developed, tailored, formulated and/or designed. Thus, visual communication design dynamics can contribute to effective public health communication via the employment of imagery. Labeling takes into account alternative interpretations. Communication strategies call for the composition of image and text, exercising harmony, correlation and resonance. Media planning, exposure and the nature of design are related to visual literacy and multiple interpretations. Imagery design involves image appropriation, including the void between text and image. Time-based design practices with character design, narrative space, and scenario. Image and text discontinuity, character design, mise-en-scene are all communication design issues with visual matters.

3. Discussion and implications

In general, health communication campaigns attempt to reach individuals who are expected to acquire and modify a health behavior or practice to influence large audiences while exploiting multiple channels. It is not surprising that the main aim to ensure that the consumers accept the aimed behaviors through affection is achieved through visual communication. Nowadays, communication strategies are faced with the pressing challenge of social media dynamics, visual pollution and post-truth issues, which require visual communication effectiveness and have become crucial for health communication. The literature review carried out for the preliminary research in this chapter showed that print and/or digital magazines, digital media-Internet-web-YouTube, videos, and films are utilized to communicate health messages, absorbing visual matter, or better yet, taking the "visual design" matter for granted. The closest approach to design-thinking is found in the "tailoring" of visual material in film regarding scriptwriting, storytelling (didactic or narrative in nature), whether it be viral or professional production. The practice of design-thinking, design process and design making call for arts and design professionals and researchers. None of the articles have included visual material analysis in the body of its research. Visual evidence depiction is recorded only in one article. However, all authors acknowledged visual matter (without documentation) and advocate for further studies in social and health-related problems in cancer, smoking, and alcohol use. The review, in all, has portrayed different meth-

odological approaches. Visual analysis and methodology should be called to work and asserted as complementary, if not central. Visual construct and visual material should be composed, exercised, improved or developed to serve the specificity of health topics. Therefore, the interdisciplinary nature of health communication should bring visual arts and design, visual analysis and researchers together around health topics for effective communication strategies.

References

- Borders, J. K. A., Suarez-Almazor, M. E., Volk, R. J., Lu, H., Edwards, B., & Lopez-Olivio, M. A. (2017) 'Online educational tool to promote bone health in cancer survivors', *Journal of Health Communication*, 22(10): 808-817.
- Buller, M. K., Andersen, P. A., Bettinghouse, E. P., Liu, X., Slater, M. D., Henry, K., Fluharty, L., Fullmer, S., & Buller, D. B. (2018) 'Randomized trial evaluating targeted photographic communication messages in three stigmatized populations: Physically-disabled, senior, and overweight/ obese individuals', *Journal of Health Communication*, 23(10): 886-898.
- Burton, D., Graham, J., Anderson Johnson, C., Uutela, A., Vartiainen, E., & Palmer, R. (2010) 'Perception of smoking prevalence by youth in countries with and without a tobacco advertising ban', *Journal of Health Communication*, 15(6): 656-664.
- Cheyne, A. D., Dorfman, L., Bukofzer, E., & Harris, J. L. (2013) 'Marketing sugary cereals to children in the digital age: A content analysis of 17 child-targeted websites', *Journal of Health Communication*, 18(5): 563-582.
- Choi, W. J. & Kim, H. K. (2011) 'Health claims for food products advertised on Korean television and their regulation: A content analysis', *Journal of Health Communication*, 16(9): 925- 940.
- Cohen, E. L., Caburnay, C. A., & Rodgers, S. (2011) 'Alcohol and tobacco advertising in black and general audience newspapers: Targeting with message cues?', *Journal of Health Communication*, 16(6): 566-582.
- Frett, B., Aquino, M., Fatil, M., Seay, J., Trevil, D., & Kobetz, E. (2017) 'Get vaccinated! get tested!: Developing primary and secondary cervical cancer prevention videos for a Haitian Kreyol-speaking audience', *Journal of Health Communication*, 21(5): 512-516.
- Heuer, C. A., McClure, K. J., & Puhl, R. M. (2011) 'Obesity stigma in online news: A visual content analysis', *Journal of Health Communication*, 16(9): 976-987.
- Kang, J. & Carolyn, A. (2015) 'Effects of message framing and visual-fear appeals on smoker responses to antismoking ads', *Journal of Health Communication*, 20: 647-655.
- Kassan, E. C., Williams, R. M., Kelly, S. P., Penek, S., Fishman, M. B., Cole, C. A., Miller, E. M., & Taylor, K. L. (2012) 'Men's use of an internet-based decision aid for prostate cancer screening', *Journal of Health Communication*, 17(6): 677-697.
- Kenerson, D., Fadeyi, S., Liu, J., Weriwoh, M., Beard, K. & Hargreaves, M. K. (2017) 'Processes in increasing participation of African American women in cancer prevention trials: Development and pretesting of an audio-card', *Journal of Health Communication*, 22(12): 933-941.

- Kim, S. J. & Niederdeppe, J. (2014) 'Emotional expressions in antismoking television advertisements: Consequences of anger and sadness framing on pathways to persuasion', *Journal of Health Communication*, 19(6): 692-709.
- King, A. J., Jensen, J. D., Davis, L. A., & Carcioppo, N. (2014) 'Perceived visual informativeness (PVI): Construct and scale development to assess visual information in printed materials', *Journal of Health Communication*, 19(10): 1099-1115.
- King, A. (2016) 'Visual exemplification and skin cancer: The utility of exemplars in promoting skin self-exams and atypical nevi identification', *Journal of Health Communication*, 21(7): 826-836.
- Lang, A. & Yegiyen, N. (2011) 'Individual differences in motivational activation influence responses to pictures of taboo products', *Journal of Health Communication*, 16(10): 1072-1087.
- Lang, A. & Yegiyen, N. (2014) 'Mediated substance cues: Motivational reactivity and use influence responses to pictures of alcohol', *Journal of Health Communication*, 19: 1216-1231.
- Lazard, A. J., Bamgbade, B. A., Sontag, J. M., & Brown, C. (2016) 'Using visual metaphors in health messages: A strategy to increase effectiveness for mental illness communication', *Journal of Health Communication*, 21(12):1260-1268.
- Leppert, R. (1996) *Art and the committed eye: The cultural functions of imagery*. United States: Westview Press.
- Levin-Zamir, D. & Bertschi, I. (2018) 'Media health literacy, eHealth literacy, and the role of the social environment in context', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(8): 1-12.
- Mazor, K. M., Calvi, J., Cowan, R., Costanza, M. E., Han, P. K., Greene, S. M., Saccoccio, L., Cove, E., Roblin, E., & Williams, A. (2010) 'Media messages about cancer: What do people understand?', *Journal of Health Communication*, 15: 126-145.
- McClure, K. J., Puhl, R. M., & Heuer, C. A. (2011) 'Obesity in the news: Do photographic images of obese persons influence anti-fat attitudes?', *Journal of Health Communication*, 16(4): 359-371.
- McQueen, A., Waters, E. A., Kaphingst, K. A., Caburnay, C. A., Sanders Thompson, V. L., Boyum, S., & Kreuter, M. W. (2016) 'Examining interpretations of graphic cigarette warning labels among U.S. youth and adults', *Journal of Health Communication*, 21(8): 855-867.
- McWhirter, J. E. & Hoffmann-Goetz, L. (2014) 'A systematic review of visual image theory, assessment, and use in skin cancer and tanning research', *Journal of Health Communication*, 19(6): 738-757.
- McWhirter, J. E. & Hoffmann-Goetz, L. (2016) 'Application of the health belief model to U.S. magazine text and image coverage of skin cancer and recreational tanning (2000-2012)', *Journal of Health Communication*, 21(4): 424-438.
- Moher, D., Shamseer, L., Clarke, M., Chersi, D., Liberati, A., Petticrew, M., Shekelle, P., Swart, L. A., & PRISMA-P Group (2015) 'Preferred reporting items for systematic review and meta-analysis protocols (PRISMA-P) 2015 statement', *Systematic Reviews*, 4(1): 1-9.

- Morris, N., Gilpin, D. R., Lenos, M., & Hobbs, R. (2011) 'Interpretations of cigarette advertisement warning labels by Philadelphia Puerto Ricans', *Journal of Health Communication*, 16(8): 908-922.
- Muturi, N. (2016) 'Community perspectives on communication strategies for alcohol abuse prevention in rural central Kenya', *Journal of Health Communication*, 2(3): 309-317.
- Nan, X., Briones, R., Shen, H., Jiang, H., & Zhang, A. (2013) 'A current appraisal of health -and nutrition- related claims in magazine food advertisements', *Journal of Health Communication*, 18(3): 263-277.
- Occa, A. & Suggs, L. S. (2016) 'Communicating breast cancer screening with young women: An experimental test of didactic and narrative messages using video and infographics', *Journal of Health Communication*, 21(1): 1-11.
- Paek, H. J., Kim, S. H., Hove, T., & Huh, J. Y. (2014) 'Reduced harm or another gateway to smoking? Source, message, and information characteristics of e-cigarette videos on YouTube', *Journal of Health Communication*, 19(5): 545-560.
- Parrot, R., Hopfer, S., Ghetian, C., & Lengerich, E. (2007) 'Mapping as a visual health communication tool: Promises and dilemmas', *Journal of Health Communication*, 22(1): 13-24.
- Phillips, S., Della, L., & Sohn, S. (2011) 'What does cancer treatment look like in consumer cancer magazines? An exploratory analysis of photographic content', *Journal of Health Communication*, 16(4): 416-430.
- Puhl, M. R., Peterson, J. L., DePierre, J. A., & Luedicke, J. (2013) 'Headless, hungry, and unhealthy: A video content analysis of obese persons portrayed in online news', *Journal of Health Communication*, 18(6): 686-702.
- Ratzan, S. C. (1994) 'Health communication as negotiation: The healthy America act', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 38(2): 224-247.
- Romer, D., Jamieson, P. E., Jamieson, K. H., Jones, C., & Sheer, S. (2017) 'Counteracting the influence of peer smoking on YouTube', *Journal of Health Communication*, 22(4): 337-345.
- Rose, G. (2016) *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Russel, C. A., Russel, D.W., Grube, J. W., & McQuarrie, E. (2017) 'Alcohol storylines in television episodes: The preventive effect of countering epilogues', *Journal of Health Communication*, 22(8): 657-665.
- Schiavo, R. (2007) *Health communication: From theory to practice*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Stern, S. & Morr, L. (2013) 'Portrayals of teen smoking, drinking, and drug use in recent popular movies', *Journal of Health Communication*, 18(2): 179-191.
- Tickle, J. J., Beach, M. L., & Dalton, M. A. (2009) 'Tobacco, alcohol, and other risk behaviors in film: How well do MPAA ratings distinguish content?', *Journal of Health Communication*, 14(8): 756-767.
- Turner, M. M., Skubisz, C., Pandya, S. P., Silverman, M., & Austin, L. L. (2014) 'Predicting visual attention to nutrition information of food products: The influence of motivation and ability', *Journal of Health Communication*, 19: 1017-1029.

Yang, Q., Sangalang, A., Rooney, M., Maloney, E., Emery, S., & Cappella, J. N. (2018) 'How is marijuana vaping portrayed on YouTube? Content, features, popularity and retransmission of vaping marijuana YouTube videos', *Journal of Health Communication*, 23(4): 360-369.

Biographies

Fatma Nazlı Köksal is a PhD candidate and research assistant in the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies at the Eastern Mediterranean University, North Cyprus. Her research interest centers on visual communication, representation and visual rhetoric. Her dissertation focuses on visual arts in communication based on visual representation and aesthetics; and is supervised by Artist, Prof. Dr. Ümit İnatçı. She has been teaching several courses on visual representation and advertising at the same university. Title of the doctoral research project: "*Mythical Approaches and Image Construction in Advertising*".

Email: nazzkoksal@gmail.com

Fatoş Adilođlu is a professor at the Department of Visual Arts and Communication Design of Eastern Mediterranean University, North Cyprus. In addition, she serves in the New Media and Journalism Department. Her research interest range from visual communication design, creative communication to design education. She has published articles in various international journals and books on design thinking and architectural encounters in cinema in Turkey. She is an executive board member of the Turkish Press Council in Turkey.

Email: fatos.adil@gmail.com

Power to the patient? Studying the balance of power between patient and GP in relation to Web health information

Edgard Eeckman

Abstract

Web health information is stated as converting the asymmetric power balance between patient and medical doctor. Is it? Or is the influence of health information retrieved on the Web on the power balance overestimated? To analyse the patient-GP (general practitioner) relationship, this study applies the *resource dependency theory* (Emerson, 1962). It defines social power over actor B by actor A as the dependence of actor B on the resources of actor A. The dependence on a resource is directly influenced by the value and the availability of the resource for actor B and by the concepts of perceived risk, uncertainty, perceived severity and trust, and in an indirect way, by the charisma and legitimate authority of actor A. A social relationship is mostly a matter of mutual dependence. Each actor has ways to resist his dependence and the exertion of “resource power” can come with a cost. Resources of dependence and resistance on the macro-, meso- and micro-level are considered. A mixed research method is applied consisting of different quantitative and qualitative methods. The results show that the Web has the potential to narrow but not to bridge the information and knowledge gap between patient and GP and thus the patient-GP power balance remains asymmetric. Moreover, the patient remains dependent on important resources other than information. Health information through the Web mainly influences the communication between patient and GP. Patient empowerment is a valuable concept but health information through the Web is not a silver bullet to achieve this.

Keywords: power, interpersonal communication, dependence, autonomy, patient empowerment

1. Introduction

The concept of the Web as a lever for patient empowerment is nourished almost continuously by a wide variety of scientific and non-scientific sources (Mittman & Cain, 2001: 47; 2015; Johnson & Case, 2012: 4). Parker et al. citing Christensen et al. state that “*patients who are willing to invest sufficient time and energy may come to know as much (and even more) about a condition than do their providers*” (Parker, Woelfel, Hart, & Brown, 2009: 19). Weed and Weed even state “*the culture of dependence on medical experts is now beginning to break down. The Web is lessening patient dependence on physicians for information and judgement*” (2013: 222).

Not all scholars share the same positive discourse about the Internet as a lever of empowerment. Some state that the Internet and the Web enhance “*as much the capacity to dominate as the capacity to resist*” (Caygill, 2013: 204) and that “*the contribution of the Internet to empowering patients by abolishing the inequality of knowledge between doctor and patient has been greatly exaggerated [...]*” (Tallis, 2005: 98).

So the question is raised: can we talk about an “*equalization tendency*” between experts and lay people today (Beck, 2010: 165) (in this case, patients) thanks to information (Wriston, 1992: 153) through the Web? Is the Web a “*knowledge leveller*” (Snelders & Meijman, 2009: 13; Hardey, 2003: 214)? Hence the central problem statement of this study: “Power to the patient? Studying the balance of power between patient and general practitioner (GP) in relation to Web health information”. The problem statement has been split up into three research questions:

1. What is the *power base* of the patient-GP relationship?
2. What role does (*health*) *information* fulfil in the power relationship between patient and GP? Does health information change the power balance and in what way?
3. What role does *health information through the Web* fulfil in the power relationship between patient and GP? Does health information through the Web empower the patient in his relationship with his GP?

The central problem statement is relevant. If patient empowerment is an objective, which it is for Belgian Government (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, 2017: 6) and for many other Western European governments and patient advocates (Health Consumer Powerhouse, 2009; McAllister, Dunn, Payne, Davies, & Todd,

2012)¹²³, it is important to analyse and understand the complexity of the power relationship between patient and medical doctor to ensure that the focus rightly lies on technology (the Web) as a lever for that empowerment. Since the information potential of the Web is generally recognised, this study investigates if there is indeed a link between Web health information and patient empowerment in the patient-GP relationship. And if not, where should the focus lie to achieve the desired patient empowerment.

2. Delineating the subject

The analysis has set some limitations in term of scope. First, the study focusses on Dutch-speaking adult patients who hold Belgian nationality and live on their own. While the analysis transcends the health situation in Belgium, it is for sure influenced by characteristics specific to the Belgian healthcare system. Second, the possible influence of health information through the Web on the power balance between the adult patient and a specific type of physician is studied, namely the general practitioner (GP). By standing in the front line, GPs play a central role in healthcare, among other things by “*defining patients’ complaints*” (Davis, 1988: 14). Moreover, for many people, the patient-GP encounter is the “*access point*” to the “*abstract system*” (Giddens, 1990: 83). Moreover, for many people, the patient-GP encounter is the “*access point*” to the “*abstract system*” (Giddens 1990: 83) of healthcare. Third, the focus lies on health information offered through the Web and less on information gathered by the numerous apps allowing patients to collect information about their body and health. The notion of the “*quantified self*” (Bhargava & Johnmar 2013: 24) is not the focus of the research. This study started in December 2009 when the quantified-self movement was not flying as high as it is today. Nevertheless, apps able to allow someone to quantify his or her physical condition have a certain informational and diagnostic quality, and may therefore offer health-related data. The conclusions of the dissertation may also give insights related to these apps, but their possible influence on the power balance between patient and GP is a subject for future research.

1 Site of the “Vlaams Patiëntenplatform” <http://www.vlaamspatiëntenplatform.be/nieuws-brieven/item/denktag-patient-empowerment> consulted on January 3, 2018

2 Site of the European Patients Forum <http://www.eu-patient.eu/Events/past-events/conference-on-patient-empowerment/> consulted on January 3, 2018

3 Site of the Patient Empowerment Network <https://powerfulpatients.org/> consulted on January 3, 2018

3. The theoretical framework

The patient-doctor relationship is generally considered to be a power relationship with a power balance tilting in the direction of the doctor. The classic Weberian definitions of social power interpret power as *power over*, as *domination* and as *intentional*: actor A can oblige actor B to do something against his will even if that actor B resists. Actor A then has *control over* actor B. However, in most cases a GP does not have control over a patient. Except for rare situations, a doctor cannot oblige a patient to do something he does not want to do. Therefore, this study turned to the “*resource dependency theory*” (Emerson, 1962), which is part of “*social exchange theory*” as its theoretical framework. Within the theory, power arises when actor B is or becomes dependent on one or more resources of actor A that are valuable to him that are rare and for which he has no alternative outside the dyadic relationship between A and B. It is the dependence of actor B on one or more resources of which actor A disposes that creates the power relationship and not the actor A, himself. The simple fact of dependence presupposes the existence of “resource power”.

Foa and Foa define a resource as “*anything that can be transmitted from one person to another*” and they distinguish six classes exchanged in interpersonal encounters. “*Information*” is one of them besides “*love*”, “*status*”, “*money*”, “*goods*”, and “*service*” (2012: 16).

Some factors may further strengthen the dependence on a resource. Six factors are identified: uncertainty, perceived risk, perceived severity, trust, legitimate authority and charisma. The first four are increasing the dependence on the resource in a direct way. Legitimate authority and charisma are *strengthening factors* increasing the dependence on a resource in an indirect way, namely through the perception a patient has of his GP.

While the focus of the dissertation lies on the interpersonal relationship between a patient and a GP, on the micro-level, this study also examines the dependencies of patient and GP on resources situated on a meso- (healthcare) and macro-level (society) and their resistance against these dependencies. Bureaucracy for example, a resource situated on the macro level, can totally disempower a patient.

Control is not something any actor pursues, yet, in most cases, an actor in a situation of dependence and thus, of power asymmetry, will try to stabilise the relationship. Why is that? While perceived control seems to be associated with confidence and optimism, perceived or real loss of control may lead to anxiety and depression (Walker, 2001: 194). A person’s “*experience with uncontrollable*

aversive events may lead to poor health and early death" (Peterson, Maier, & Seligman, 1993: 267). Powerlessness seems to be related, among other things, to poor health, adverse living conditions, the experience of being underrepresented and the power abuse of more powerful people (Keltner, 2016: 137). It is said that "*people threatened with loss of control will make efforts to regain it [...]*" (Walker, 2001: 10). Loss of control raises "*reactance*", "*the motivation to restore control once it has been removed*", which may be "*accompanied by feelings of arousal and anger*" and of "*helplessness*" after the "*expectations of control*" (Wortman and Brehm in Walker, 2001: 107). The reactance to loss of control may help to explain why certain patients complain, get angry or demanding; it could be considered a request for participation (Taylor, 1979). It underlines the importance of what is called *patient empowerment*. Empowerment is defined as "*The mechanism by which people, organisations, and communities gain mastery over their lives*" (Rappaport, 1984: 3). Simply stated: by getting sick, a person can become dependent and lose autonomy and control over his life which can make him even more sick and feed resistance. In this study, patient empowerment is considered a process whereby a patient regains, as much as possible, control or a feeling of control over his healthcare and health.

The patient will try to stabilise the relationship and he does that by "*balancing operations*" (Emerson, 1962: 35). Two concepts have the potential characteristic of weakening the dependence: the concepts of "*resistance*" and "*cost*" (Emerson, 1962: 34). If there is power, there is resistance (Foucault, 1984: 96), so is said. Being dependent, and even being or feeling powerless, does not equal being passive and undergoing oppression without batting an eyelid (Barbalet, 1985: 531). Resistance is not just a matter of open conflict, but it can have many faces. It can be *real* resistance, for example changing GPs, or *symbolic* resistance, for example publishing a bad review on a Facebook page. Resistance is one way to react to dependence. An actor does not accept dependence at all costs. He may continue an activity only as long as the reward outweighs the cost (Homans, 1973: 60). Social exchange can be rewarding for actors but it is always a matter of weighing the rewards and the costs, for actor A possessing a resource as well as for actor B being dependent on the resource of actor A. A patient can decide not to return to an extremely arrogant surgeon anymore even if the surgeon is the only one capable of performing the operation. The exertion of power can come with a cost, also for the actor exerting the power.

The whole theoretical concept is illustrated in Figure 1 in next page.



Figure 1: Conceptual model of “resource power” in the patient-GP relationship

Up to now, the word “power” and not “influence” has been used. While these concepts are very often used interchangeably (Bierstedt, 1970: 12), in this study they are considered different concepts. Influence is of importance, also in the patient-doctor relationship, but it is important to distinguish it from power. How is influence defined? Bierstedt states that “*influence is persuasive while power is coercive*” (1970: 13). There are no sanctions related to influence (Willer, Lovaglia, & Markovsky, 1997: 573). Influencing an actor means changing his preferences (Etzioni, 1970: 26) by “*some form of communication*” (Tedeschi, Schlenker, & Bonoma 1973: 32). Influence does not change the situation, but it changes the perception of the situation (MacMillan in Naim, 2013: 27). Both actors use arguments to influence each other, and influencing, and thus, *argumentation*, can go both ways.

4. The research methodology

A wide qualitative and quantitative study was carried out between October 2012 and January 2014. The research was conducted with Dutch-speaking GPs on the

one hand and Dutch-speaking adult Belgian patients on the other. The methodology consisted of:

- An extensive and in-depth literature review
- A Web survey in which 3,053 patients and individuals who consider themselves healthy participated
- The analysis of 24 patient-GP consultations recorded on video
- The analysis of ethnographic follow-up interviews with the 24 patients who participated in the consultations
- The analysis of ethnographic follow-up interviews with the 7 GPs who participated in the consultations
- The analysis of 3 focus groups comprising patients and people who consider themselves healthy
- The analysis of 2 discussion groups comprising general practitioners

While one method did not outweigh the other, the qualitative part (consisting of 5 methods) took precedence over the quantitative method. Both *observed* and *self-reported behaviour* were analysed. The conclusions of the literature research, the Web survey and the observations formed the basis of the other methods. The ethnographic follow-up interviews gave context to the observations. The focus groups with patients and people who considered themselves healthy and the discussion groups with GPs deepened the essential insights from the preceding methods. It was therefore a *mixed* research approach where the qualitative part was developed to interpret, on the one hand, the extensive theoretical framework distilled from the literature research and, on the other, the quantitative results of the Web survey. The research approach enabled “*triangulation*”, i.e. “*a way to answer the same research question with both qualitative and quantitative data in order to maximise its validity*” (Roose & Meuleman, 2014).

5. Main conclusions

The *resource dependency theory* has proven to be a useful theoretical canvas to analyse the power relationship between patient and GP, and better suited to the patient-GP relationship than traditional definitions describing power as consciously exercised domination or coercion. The research confirms the existence of a yet underexposed power base: power resulting from dependence on the resources that someone possesses. This study coined it as *resource power*. The doctor’s resources on which a patient is dependent, to a greater or lesser degree, are information, knowledge, time, skills, affection, attachment and the legal power to label something as a disease and to prescribe medicines and sick leave. Doctors too are dependent on

the resources of their patients. The patient's resources on which the GP is dependent, to a greater or lesser degree, are information, time, affection and economic reliance. Without the patient's information, it is more difficult for the doctor to make a correct diagnosis and prescribe the most appropriate treatment. The patient-GP relationship is a matter of mutual dependence, but the research shows that the patient is more dependent on the doctor's resources than vice versa. In addition, a patient often starts the consultation in a situation of need and thus dependence.

Bringing about patient empowerment, which means that a patient has control or a feeling of control over his health and healthcare, has proven to be a complex process in which many resources of dependence on different levels play a role. Indeed, the patient also remains dependent on resources situated on the meso (healthcare) and macro level (society).

Focussing on only one of the patient's resources of dependence—as for example, health information—in itself may influence the power balance and contribute to patient empowerment, but it does not accomplish it fully on its own. To obtain a balanced power relationship between patient and GP the other resources of dependence of both actors on the three levels have to be considered too.

Moreover, an informed patient does not equal a patient having control or having a feeling of control. The observations analysed in this study showed GP's informing their patients on the diagnosis and the treatment while concurrently maintaining control over the direction of and the communication during the consultation and, more importantly, over the decision-making process. An informed patient thus can feel/be disempowered by a lack of “*shared decision-making*” (Elwyn, Edwards, & Thompson, 2016). The results of the survey also make clear that chronic patients show more initiative to take and keep control. Of course, the degree of dependence on a resource is highly dynamic: it can vary from patient to patient and from situation to situation.

Despite health information through the Web, the traditional identified imbalance of power between patient and doctor remains. But the Web has made the resource (*health information*) exceedingly available and thereby increased the patients' capabilities of influence during the consultation. It tends to make the information exchange and thus, the influence, more mutual instead of the one-way communication with the doctor as the only one disposing of the informational basis. Access to health information through the Web may support a patient in being more vocal. It makes it easier to *enforce* a dialogue during the consultation. It could therefore be stated that indeed an “*equalization tendency*” (Beck, 2010: 165) can

be established but mainly related to the resource of dependence “information”. The Web may even induce a kind of *driving effect* on some doctors: it makes it easier for patients to check the doctor’s information.

However, the usage of the Web to contribute to empowerment is conditional. A patient who consults the Web must have the skills and knowledge necessary to search, select and assess health information properly. It requires ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and media literacy and critical thinking in general. Furthermore, “*digital exclusion*” (Mariën, 2016: 351) has to be overcome.

In addition, the Web mainly offers data and information. Knowledge is a resource with different characteristics. The participants of the focus groups also recognised the difference between their *expertise* and the knowledge of the GP. Patients taking part in the study recognised their dependence on their GP’s knowledge. Moreover, this dependence also remains because people doubt the correctness of the Web health information or have difficulties in finding the requested information.

The start of patient empowerment lies on the interpersonal level. In the first place, it lies with the GP who has to realise that he indeed has *resource power* through the patient’s dependence on his resources and that he must be prepared to share the control with his patient. Since he has the power overweight it is up to him to make the first move towards patient empowerment. Indeed, having the most power is an opportunity to do good. But of course, the secondary initiative also lies with a patient having the will to take control and be empowered. Patient empowerment cannot be imposed, and for some, being dependent represents comfort. Other patients may want to be empowered but lack the skills; they should be supported to develop these skills.

The study confirms that communication, as an important means to give the patient a sense of control and autonomy in the interpersonal relationship, has 3 objectives to achieve patient empowerment. They are illustrated in Figure 2 below. 1 and 2 are essential conditions for empowerment, but do not achieve empowerment on their own, because 4 is also necessary for that purpose. Indeed, empowering is about sharing the doctor’s control with the patient and about strengthening the trust that a patient has in his/her own ability (self-efficacy), and thereby strengthening the patient’s intrinsic motivation to adhere to a treatment. Objective 3—the exertion of power—is undesirable. The exertion of power should not be the characteristic of the patient-GP relationship. Both actors and the patient in the first place are better off with a trustful, egalitarian relationship based on mutual respect.

Communication as means	Communication approaches
1. To inform and create knowledge	Sharing information, knowledge & experience
2. To influence	Creating intrinsic motivation by sharing arguments
3. To exercise power	
4. To empower	Shared decision-making + Supporting & strengthening the patient's self-efficacy

Figure 2: Conceptual model of use of communication and linked communication approach to achieve patient empowerment

This study confirmed that there are at least four reasons why analysing the patient-GP relationship from the point of view of dependence is relevant and why it is important that patients have a feeling of control and why healthcare should avoid creating a feeling of disempowerment. First, a feeling of control and loss of autonomy and increased dependence may be unhealthy and provoke resistance. Second, a patient feeling in control may be more intrinsically motivated to carry out/adhere to his treatment since he more consciously chose a specific treatment. Thirdly, patient empowerment also means taking responsibility for one's health and thus prevent getting sick by developing healthy behaviour. Therefore, people need to have the feeling of being able to do that and avail of the necessary self-efficacy. Finally, a better understanding of the patient and of the power balance in the patient-GP relationship should be an opportunity to humanise care and to develop a real humanitarian approach towards the patient. As stated by Mishler: "*Humane care is effective care and to be effective care must be humane*" (1984: 191). Empowering patients is therefore much more than just an option.

References

- Barbalet, J. M. (1985) 'Power and resistance', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 36(4): 531-48.
- Beck, U. (2010) *Risk society: Towards a new modernity*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bhargava, R. & Johnmar, F. (2013) *ePatient 2015: 15 surprising trends changing health care*. Ideapress Publishing.
- Bierstedt, R. (1970) 'An analysis of social power', pp. 11-17 in Marvin E. Olsen (Ed.), *Power in Societies*. London: The Macmillan Company.
- Caygill, H. (2013) *On resistance: A philosophy of defiance*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Davis, K. (1988) *Power under the microscope*. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.

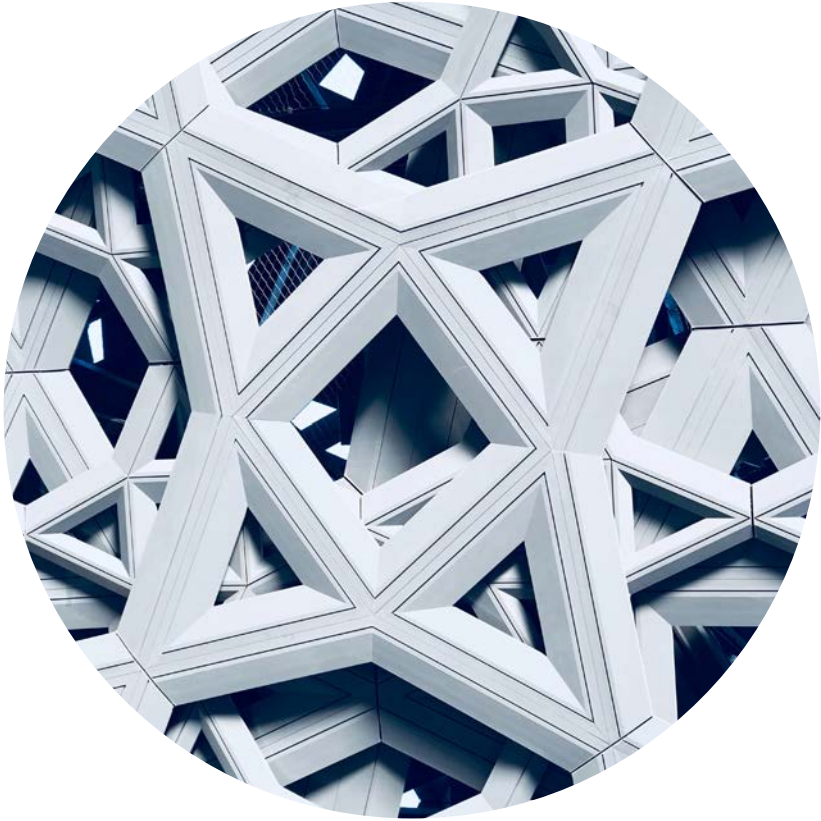
- Elwyn, G., Edwards, A., & Thompson, R. (2016) 'Preface' in G. Elwyn, A. Edwards and R. Thompson (Eds.) *Shared decision making in health care: Achieving evidence-based patient choice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Emerson, R. M. (1962) 'Power-Dependence relations', *American Sociological Review*, 27(10): 31-41.
- Health Consumer Powerhouse (2009) 'The empowerment of the European patient: Options and implications' (Ref. 405008). Retrieved from Base documentaire BDSP - Banque de données en santé publique. (BDSP/EHESP: 175306)
- Etzioni, A. (1970) 'Power as a societal force', pp.18-27 in Marvin E. Olsen (Ed.) *Power in societies*. London: The Macmillan Company.
- Foa, E. B. & Foa, U. G. (2012) 'Resource theory of social exchange', pp. 15-32 in K. Törnblom and A. Kazemi (Eds.) *Handbook of social resource theory: Theoretical extensions, empirical insights, and social applications*. New York: Springer Publishing.
- Foucault, M. (1984) *Geschiedenis van de seksualiteit 1. De wil tot weten*. Nijmegen: SUN.
- Giddens, A. (1990) *The consequences of modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hardey, M. (2003) 'Consumers, the Internet and the reconfiguration of expertise', pp. 199-222 in Elizabeth Harlow and Stephen A. Webb (Eds.) *Information and Communication Technologies in the Welfare Services*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Homans, G. C. (1973) *Social behaviour: Its elementary forms*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Johnson, J. D. & Case, D. O. (2012) *Health information seeking*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Keltner, D. (2016) *The power paradox: How we gain and lose influence*. London: Allen Lane.
- Mariën, I. (2016) 'De dichotomie van de digitale kloof doorprikt: Een onderzoek naar de oorzaken van digitale uitsluiting en naar strategieën voor een duurzaam e-Inclusiebeleid', PhD, VUB/Free University of Brussels.
- McAllister, M., Dunn, G., Payne, K., Davies, L., & Todd, C. (2012) 'Patient empowerment: The need to consider it as a measurable patient-reported outcome for chronic conditions', *BMC Health Services Research*, 12: 157.
- Ministerie van Volksgezondheid (2017) 'Algemene Beleidsnota: Gezondheidsbeleid' (Doc 54 3293/002), pp. 1-41 in Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers (Ed.) *Officiële Publicaties*. Brussels.
- Mishler, E. G. (1984) *The discourse of medicine: Dialectics of medical interviews*. Norwood: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Mittman, R. & Cain, M. (2001) 'The future of the internet in health care: A five-year forecast', pp. 47-74 in Ronald E. Rice and James E. Katz (Eds.) *The internet and health communication: Experiences and expectations*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Naim, M. (2013) *The end of power*. New York: Basic Books.
- Parker, J. C., Woelfel, R. L., Hart, E. S., & Brown, G. (2009) 'The challenge of health care and disability', pp. 3-22 in Jerry C. Parker and Esther Thorson (Eds.) *Health communication in the new media landscape*. New York: Springer.
- Peterson, C., Maier, S. F., & Seligman, M. E. P. (1993) *Learned helplessness: A theory for the age of personal control*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Rappaport, J. (1984) 'Studies in empowerment: Introduction to the issue', pp. 1-8 in Julian Rappaport, Carolyn Swift and Robert Hess (Eds.) *Studies in empowerment: Steps toward understanding and action*. New York: The Haworth Press.
- Roose, H., & Meuleman, B. (2014) *Methodologie van de sociale wetenschappen: Een inleiding*. Ghent: Academia Press.
- Snelders, S. & Meijman, F., J. (2009) *De mondige patiënt, Historische kijk op een mythe*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker.
- Tallis, R. (2005) *Hippocratic oaths: Medicine and its discontents*. London: Atlantic.
- Taylor, S. E. (1979) 'Hospital Patient Behavior: Reactance, Helplessness, or Control?', *Journal of Social Issues*, 35: 156-84.
- Tedeschi, J. T., Schlenker, B. R., & Bonoma, T. V. (1973) *Conflict, power and games*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Walker, J. (2001) *Control and the psychology of health: Theory, measurement and applications*. Ballmoor: Open University.
- Weed, L. L. & Weed, L. (2013) *Medicine in denial*. Createspace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Willer, D., Lovaglia, M. J., & Markovsky, B. (1997) 'Power and influence: A theoretical bridge', *Social Forces*, 76(2): 571-603.
- Wriston, W. B. (1992) *The twilight of sovereignty: How the information revolution is transforming our world*. New York: Charles Scribner's Son.
- Zuallaert, J. (2015) "Het Ziekenhuis van de toekomst - Medische zorg in 2050: de patient is de baas." In *Knack*, 30-37. Roeselare: Roularta Media Group.

Biography

Edgard Eeckman is the communication manager and spokesperson of the University Hospital of Brussels (UZ Brussel), the academic hospital of the Free University of Brussels (Vrije Universiteit Brussel/VUB). He is a scientific collaborator of the research group CEMESO (Research Center for Culture, Emancipation, Media and Society) of the Communication Sciences of that same university. He became Doctor in the Media and Communication Studies in October 2018. His is a regular speaker and publishes on power in the patient-caregiver relationship and on patient empowerment. Information on his study can also be found here: <https://www.patientempowerment.be>.

Email: edgard.eeckman@proximus.be



ABSTRACTS

Spanish TV fiction and social networks: Tweeting about *Cuéntame como pasó*

Alba Mendoza Camps
albamendozacamps@gmail.com

This project aims to discover synergies between social networks and classic television series in the context of home-produced fiction. It is true that audiences have always found means of expressing their opinions about a show, but the arrival of smartphones and social media has brought a whole new world of possibilities. The audience can now interact with their favorite TV show and relay their opinions minute by minute. These days, television has become that much more of a social event, so it is thus of considerable interest to discover more about how contemporary audiences behave and respond. This phenomenon makes us understand why social media platforms are becoming increasingly relevant when analyzing television.

Furthermore, this research will analyze the conversations that take place between the social audience and the broadcasters. What topics does the social audience talk about? Does the script of the shows have any impact on the dialogue of the social audience? Can we say that social media and TV have, finally, succeeded in creating a conversational exchange?

The methodological approach used to answer these questions combines two techniques: the first being the filmic analysis of a sample of home-produced TV fiction in Spain broadcasted on prime-time public television; and, the second comprising the capture of tweets monitoring hashtags used by the broadcasters in their Twitter accounts. Specifically, we have selected the TV fiction show with the highest audience ratings broadcast by TDT public general-interest television channels in Spain: “Cuéntame cómo pasó” (TVE).

Repressed identity: Negotiating normality in the Balkan cinemas

Zerina Čatović

zerina.catovic@gcsc.uni-giessen.de

This work is based on a premise that externalized cultural frustrations within the Balkanist discourse have strongly affected some communities in the past, so that traumatic memory of the periphery imprints even on contemporary cinematic style. The victimization memories and exotic narratives in the so-called Balkans cinematography are allegedly past. After decades of conflicts and traumatization from the neo-colonial gaze, epitomized in self-stigmatization; regional cinema is trying to demonstrate stability and reach the status of “*normal*” (Pavičić, 2010: 188). Nevertheless, it has to be examined if this image of mental geography is being completely deconstructed or only reshaped by the new circumstances. Through analysis of the most successful movies of the region in the last decade, the thesis brings to bear if cinematic memory of the marginalized cultures can ever be changed. I hypothesize that in a political attempt to create a “*normal Balkans and avoid all the clichés*”, new stereotypes emerged showing the importance of cultural trauma. If depiction of the cultural identity was exaggerated and exotic and now is being Westernized and normalized, my aim is to discover if the artistic expression of the “periphery” is always condemned to malleability. Underpinned by theory of cultural marginality, this article explores how traumatic experience, embodied in variety of *self-deprecating* expressions, evolved even in the new socio-political context.

Reference

Pavičić, J. (2010) *Postjugoslovenski film: Stil i ideologija*. Zagreb: Hrvatski filmski savez

Place of communication in territorial construction of “metropolitan public space”

Marie Lyne Mangilli Doucé

marie-lyne.mangilli@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr

The cities growing in power (Kada, 2015) are traversed by different tensions (Auteur & Grafmeyer, 2015). These new territorial spaces are faced with the need to “make common territory”, which would pave way for their political construction (Gora-Gobin, 2015). This requires acceptance of ‘metropolitan phenomenon’ by institutional partners and citizens. Its acceptance will be based on a ‘communicational shaping’ of these public spaces.

Firstly we believe that the mobilization of identity referents allows the building of different forms of metropolitan legitimacy. Secondly, the expert data conveyed by, what we would call “technical mediation devices of governance” such as maps or reports, legitimizes (by preceding them) future metropolitan political orientations. Furthermore, we think that the development of experiential actions makes it possible to develop a sense of ownership. Finally, we also believe that the consequence of this rise in metropolitan power leads to the reinforcement of narrative setting within the superimposed communes.

Our method of research will focus on the communicative construction of the metropolitan territory of Grenoble Alpes Métropole, compared to other metropolitan territories. We will carry out, for this purpose, interviews with elected officials and institutional actors as well as a study of institutional documents. Our attention will focus on the period from 2003 to 2018, marked by the transition from a functionally strengthened inter-municipal entity in France. Enrolled in the field of information communication science, our research will be particularly based on the concepts of “power instituting of territoriality” (Pailliant, Raoul, & Noyer, 2013), “figures of totems” (Le Bart, 2000), and the concept of “waiting horizon” (Caune, 2015; Jauss, 1972).

Losing the critical edge: Why journalism has been unable to challenge the austerity hegemony

Timo Harjuniemi
timo.harjuniemi@helsinki.fi

This paper focuses on the relationship between journalism and economic ideas. As a case study, I will look at how journalism addressed the idea of austerity (i.e. cuts in public spending and wages) in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008-9 amid the European debt crisis. The starting point for the paper is the following: Scholars interested in the role of ideas in policy-making have emphasized that such volatile periods as financial crises can lead to shifts in economic policy paradigms. However, the response to the latest crisis has shown that hegemonic ideas emphasizing fiscal discipline and neoliberal structural reforms as keys to economic prosperity have remained intact. I argue that this has been due to the fact the crisis did not see dominant institutions or elites re-interpreting the foundations of economic policy-making. Therefore, I argue that journalism has, due to its internal logics and professional practices, echoed the elite austerity narrative and worked to strengthen the post-democratic tendencies of the neoliberal era. I argue that the popular disillusionment with journalism is hardly to be wondered at. To reclaim the legitimacy of journalism in the age of “post-truth” and “fake news”, a critical assessment of journalistic practices is in order.

Professional and personal performances: Case studies of how selected photojournalists use conflict-related images on Instagram

Sini Kaipainen
sini.kaipainen@aalto.fi

While social media attention-economy expects the publicly repeated commitment of broadcasting intimacy, the journalistic images of traumatic conflicts and their aftermath have also been shifted from traditional print media to identity technologies such as Instagram. Instagram provides an intimate public sphere for identity formation(s) for professional conflict-photographers to perform their profession and practice. Yet, at the same time, the platform confuses the ideological role of photojournalist as a witness-outsider, or at least challenges its objectivity/neutrality-driven public positions when photography, photojournalistic, commercial, and autobiographic discourses meet in a material, (audio)visual, and textual manner online.

For this reason, my PhD project investigates 1) what is happening to ideological but highly debatable ideals of photojournalism, its views of objectivity or neutrality, or so-called photorealism of conflict-related images inside the visual self-promotion culture of Instagram. By combining the perspectives of media studies, comparative literature, and photojournalism research, this project explores 2) how a professional photojournalist performs herself, for example, as a brand on and by Instagram.

I argue that conflict-related images are not only a journalistic form of representation or used as illustration material but also a performative part of Instagram attention politics. Thus, the PhD project raises questions and problems of photojournalism as a profession and practice on and because of Instagram, while keeping in mind the possibilities of intertextual hybridization of performative and testimonial strategies for the future of the industry to stage publicly professional identity and the genre of conflict-related photojournalism in the era of visual social media.

Live, here and now: Experiences of *liveness* in everyday engagements with connective media

Ludmila Lupinacci

L.Lupinacci-Amaral@lse.ac.uk

This doctoral research was spurred by the belief that the development and adoption of technologies of communication have, as a driving force, the challenge of fulfilling the widespread expectation of connectedness with others and with the world beyond the limits of time and space. In this regard, liveness—the state or condition of being ‘live’—has been for decades a topic of interest in media and communications research, and the observation that it continues to be the object of debate signals, not only the term’s increasing complexity, but also how crucial it has become to our traditionally interdisciplinary and constantly-evolving field.

In spite of this ongoing scholarly interest, what we currently have is an evident shortage of experience-based studies on the topic. Consequently, and mostly due to methodological decisions, the available conceptualizations of *the live* tend to be widely based on assumptions about what people sense, feel, and notice when in contact with media technologies. In order to address this gap, this doctoral project adopts an audience-centred and experience-focused approach to the study of *the live*.

Bearing this in mind, the research questions are: (1) How is *liveness* experienced in a context of pervasive digital technologies of communication and connective media platforms? (2) How are the possibilities for experiencing immediate connection through media framed by connective platforms? (3) How is *liveness* perceived and articulated by people in everyday engagements with connective media platforms? (4) What are the social significances and consequences for peoples’ interpersonal relations and for their possibilities of accessing (and existing in) the world?

The suggested empirical design involves the thematic and discourse analysis of semi-structured interviews and qualitative diaries provided by ordinary users of connective media platforms.

Audience experiences of interactivity in contemporary Lithuanian theatre: Production and evaluation

Monika Meilutytė
mo.meilu@gmail.com

People value experiences more than goods and services (Pine II & Gilmore, 1999). Though theatre performances have always suggested experiences (not goods or services), many contemporary shows tend to explore the opportunities to enrich audience experiences in non-traditional ways. Although during the last decade the debates on interactivity in theatre were active, theatre researchers mainly explored this phenomenon from the performance analysis perspective—they build their approaches on audience experience relying mainly on their own experiences in shows. Therefore, little is known about the actual audience experiences of interactivity in theatre performances. The aim of the thesis is to explore what audience experiences of interactivity in theatre consist of, how such experiences are being created (production) and how audiences value them (evaluation). The field of media and communication science is valuable for the thesis in two aspects: it suggests different approaches on interactivity and shows proficiency in conducting audience research. In the thesis, interactivity is approached following a user-based perspective. The findings of the thesis are based on empirical audience research conducted in Lithuania in 2018. Firstly, the process and challenges of the creation of contemporary interactive performance have been explored: the in-depth interviews with Lithuanian theatre directors and a focus group with the actors have been conducted. Secondly, the audience experiences of interactivity, and its evaluation, have been explored: the survey and focus groups with Lithuanian audience members have been conducted.

Reference

Pine II, B. & Gilmore, J. (1999) *The experience economy: Work is theatre & every business a stage*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

The telling of femicide in the voice of the Mexican press 2017

Metzeri Sanchez Meza
metzeri.sanchez@upf.edu

Femicide should not be understood only as an exhibition of violence that only involves women as victims and places men as murderers, but as an integral problem, affecting people in all sectors. But it is the political space, the absence of a rule of law and impunity to which the most important burden of responsibility is attributed. For this reason, it is sought to emphasize the political elements of what is femicide in Mexico, because in the face of any violation of human rights, it is unacceptable to think about the “neutrality” of information.

This research focuses on Mexican journalism, recognizing its symbolic function, its forms of knowledge, its social practices and its cultural and social actions. This thesis has the main objective of analyzing the representation of femicide in the Mexican press based on the history of feminicide in the voice of journalism in Mexico during 2017, presented as main topics and secondary subjects associated with other topics.

The methodological development of the research is of mixed quantitative-qualitative type; the scope of the research is descriptive with analytical and interpretative depth, focused on the use of three research methods: for the analysis of news, it uses agenda-setting analysis, frame analysis and semi-structured interviews to deepen journalistic routines and frame analysis. The sample is represented by the 7 most widely read general information newspapers in the country: El Universal, Reforma, El Financiero, Milenio Diario, El Economista, Excélsior and La Jornada, including a total number of 796 pieces of analysis followed by 6 semi-structured interviews with journalists who wrote about femicide in this period.

The evolution of the terms referring to people on the move: A discursive analysis of media discourse in French and Dutch

Valériane Mistiaen
vmistiae@ulb.ac.be

Until now, many analyses of the *refugee crisis* in European mainstream media focused on how news items are framed or its effects on the public (d'Haenens, Heinderyckx, & Joris, 2019). Nevertheless, very few studies have shed light on lexical issues (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008) and we would like to fill the gap by studying the specific discursive processes that underlie the representation of people on the move. The aim of this PhD project is to analyse the terms referring to people on the move (i.e. *refugee*, *migrant*, *illegal*, *asylum-seeker*, *displaced person*, *immigrant*) in regard to media events related to the European *refugee crisis*. Therefore, we will conduct a lexical discourse analysis on a corpus of daily national newspapers and evening TV news programmes in French and Dutch-speaking Belgium, from March 2015 to July 2017. This bilingual and multi-genre corpus will help us test whether the migration problem is constructed similarly or differently in each linguistic community. The analysis of the corpus includes frequencies, 'keyness' and referential-semantic meaning of words used to name people on the move. This research wants to show to what extent words contribute to constructing both the public issue and the image of the social actors involved.

References

- d'Haenens, L., Heinderyckx, F., & Joris, W. (2019) *Image of immigrants and refugees: Public debate, media and policy agenda*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Gabrielatos, C. & Baker, P. (2008) 'Fleeing, sneaking, flooding. A corpus analysis of discursive constructions of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press, 1996-2005', *Journal of English Linguistics* 36(1): 5-38.

The politics of participation in WhatsApp communities in rural Kenya: Discursive-material analysis

Gloria Anyango Ooko

Gloria.ooko@students.wits.ac.za

The advent of WhatsApp, a smart phone instant messaging application has popularised mass messaging by citizens, a model that has potential to reinvigorate participatory democracy in Africa. The purpose of WhatsApp, as declared by its developer, is to replace the existing SMS system with a free-of-charge and ad-free space for transmitting information to individuals or groups. This means WhatsApp has created a virtual community, not only similar to communities created by conventional participatory media, but one that is also availing more space for individuals to participate. The purpose of my study is to use *Discursive-Material Analysis* to analyse how affordances availed by WhatsApp contribute to power struggles in political discourses in Africa. Given that in any social interaction lies power struggles, this study attempts to analyse how WhatsApp as a ‘free’ space is providing both participation spaces and technologies of governmentality. Specifically the study seeks to explore governmentalities and ‘counter conduct’ strategies in two WhatsApp groups in rural Kenya. The influence of the material WhatsApp software affordances and government policies on the said material will also be considered as they are seen as part of the assemblage of a WhatsApp community. Community membership in this study is operationalized as right to participation, identity and sense of belonging. Data will be collected through background listening, interviews and content selection of government policies. The multimodal data will be analysed through “*Discursive-Material Analysis*” (see Carpentier, 2017). The findings of this study will contribute to the understanding of new subaltern modes of participating in politics and governance in the Global South, especially the unique ways in which smartphone applications are appropriated in Africa.

Reference

Carpentier, N. (2017) *The Discursive-Material Knot: Cyprus in Conflict and Community Media Participation*. New York: Peter Lang.

Czech media and the refugee crisis: Media populism and journalistic culture in mainstream and alternative news outlets

Ondrej Pekacek

ondrej.pekacek@fsv.cuni.cz

Czech media landscape has experienced profound transformation in the past decade through the increased domestic media-concentration on one hand and the rapid emergence of the alternative news outlets on the other. The function and role of this new hybrid media system during the European refugee crisis has served as a basis for fierce public and academic debates, and several key areas are not well understood. For instance, how did this change influence journalistic perceptions and legitimizing strategies in the context of the European refugee crisis reporting? How have these developments impacted the framing and mediated populism in the immigration coverage? While some studies of media coverage regarding the refugee crisis have been conducted in the Czech environment, their scope has been, so far, limited to a few media outlets devoid of closer qualitative examination.

This research aims to examine the impact of this transformation on the news coverage of the refugee crisis using the quantitative content analysis of 21 mainstream and alternative news outlets and semi-structured interviews with journalists. The findings will contribute to the empirical literature in media sociology and political communication on the divergence in journalistic cultures, role perceptions and mediated populism in the alternative and mainstream media.

A digital public space: Just a theory? Or how social network sites are perceived by their Norwegian users?

Hilde Sakariassen
hilde.sakariassen@uib

Social network sites (SNS) have, by some researchers, been theorized as the latest generations of public spheres; platforms that the users or citizens can utilize for public deliberation (Neuman, Bimber, & Hindman, 2011). However, this does not mean that the full potential for civic or political participation on these platforms is being utilized, and others remaining sceptical of these spaces can transcend these doubts to become a part of the wider public sphere (Papacharissi, 2002). Little focus has thus far been placed on ordinary users and how they understand and relate to social network sites with this democratic image in mind. This project aims to address this gap by investigating if and how SNS are perceived as digital public spaces by its users, and how they in turn understand civic participation in these spaces. Both quantitative and qualitative data are utilized. The quantitative data originate from a survey conducted in the fall and winter of 2017, using an online panel that resulted in a dataset with 2,064 participants. These data give an overview of the way SNS generally are perceived as public spaces. This is also seen in conjunction with a broader democratic perspective that includes social-economic background, trust in the contemporary political landscape, internal political efficacy and political leaning. The qualitative data comes from in-depth interviews, providing a more explorative understanding of what lies behind the quantitative findings. Combining the two approaches, then, allows for both a birds-eye and close-up view of how users of social network sites understand these spaces as public spaces.

References

- Neuman, W.R., Bimber, B. & Hindman, M. (2011) *The Internet and Four Dimensions of Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2002) 'The virtual sphere', *New Media & Society* 4: 9-27.

Mnemonic resistance to instant history: Polish contemporary feminist movement and its practices of historical visibility

Karolina Szpyrko
k.szpyrko@sussex.ac.uk

The Polish women's relationship with feminism since 1989 has been complicated and heavily marked by social and political struggles of the transition period when Polish society, national identity and politics were developing in between Western, liberal, influences and conservative reactionism to the communist period. Starting in 2016 and still on-going, feminist protests in Poland put a new light on the place of feminism in Polish history and, most importantly, practices of negotiating such visibility.

Memory scholarship has a long tradition of exploring memory 'on the move', undergoing contact changes (e.g. Abercrombie, 1999; Erll, 2011; Keightley & Reading, 2014), and most of the research projects focus on the topic of circulation of mediatized activist content.

On the other hand, locally and internationally shared feminist media and their circulation (both online and offline) open up a question of activist and feminist ownership over protests' memories articulated through material props. These activist, historical artefacts are usually turned into romanticised stories of spontaneous mass uprisings, examined as instances of personal herodotom further confirming the heteronormative vision of nationality, or they become 'stolen', 'rebranded' and 're-channelled' by neoliberal and national discourses.

In this project, I urge that each cultural memory, a sign or a symbol has at some point been a personal, privately cherished, memory of activist dissent, which in the course of political, historical discourse became publicly shared and owned. Hence, the aim of my paper is to interrogate practices of mnemonic resistance which activists employ to save and protect their activist experiences and memories of personal and political change. I argue that so-called mnemonic resistance is in fact an act of anti-circulative digital disobedience to confront a passage of time, and as such it is an attempt to create a self-contained feminist archive.

The concept of ‘virtual residency’ and digitally enabled translocality: The case of Estonian e-residency

Piia Tammpuu
piia.tammpuu@gmail.com

New forms of translocal communication supported by digital infrastructures are seen to extend personal spaces of interaction but also to intensify the complexity of spatial relations and create new types of spatial inequality. Using the case of Estonian e-residency, this doctoral project investigates the concept of ‘virtual residency’ as a particular mode of digitally enabled translocality and its socio-cultural and spatial implications. Estonian e-residency is a government-supported transnational digital identity scheme which gives non-residents of the country remote access to the state’s digital infrastructure and e-services via means of digital authentication without the requirement of (nor with the right to) physical residency in the country. Through a series of interconnected studies and by combining different data and methodological approaches, the project aims to answer the following research questions. Firstly, which meanings and implications are attributed to e-residency by different actors and how do these meanings and implications challenge the traditional concepts of the nation-state, residency and citizenship? Secondly, how does the global adoption of e-residency indicate the reproduction or alteration of existing geographies and inequalities of digital access and enablement? And thirdly, which self-identities and affiliations are accentuated in relation to one’s status as an e-resident and what kinds of digital subjectivities emerge around the concept of e-residency? The theoretical framework of the project is developed around *mediatisation* as a systematic concept for researching socio-cultural and spatial transformations in relation to changes in media and communication. The project seeks to shift disciplinary boundaries of existing research on government-supported digital identity systems, mainly limited to disciplines of law, public administration and information management, and to expand the present research scope beyond the national frame by focusing on transnational and translocal perspectives.

Digitizing our sense of touch: The social construction of haptic technologies

Valentina Turrini
valentina.turrini@unicatt.it

We seem to find ourselves in the midst of a “haptic moment”, as noted by some media scholars observing the proliferation of haptic technologies in everyday devices (Parisi, Paterson, & Archer, 2017). These technologies, which provide tactile feedbacks to the skin, have undergone a quiet domestication in our daily life through touchscreen phones, tablets, and videogame controllers. In recent years, more advanced instantiations of haptics have become niche components used in medical simulations, robotic telesurgery, military training, and entertainment products. Virtual and augmented reality prompted new flows of capital into research on wearable haptics, fulfilling fantasies of bodily immersion in virtual environments.

It has become clear that, analogous to what happened in the last century for images and sounds, tactile sensations can now be stored, edited and transmitted: in other words, mediatized. This dissertation aims to problematize the sense of touch as a discursively constructed and continually renegotiated category, analyzing the cultural status of a sense traditionally taken for granted. Moreover, the study of the production of these technologies allows us to observe how the ability to shape emerging technologies appears as an increasingly important form of power in our contemporary society.

The SCOT (Social Construction of Technology) approach, one of the most prominent traditions within Science and Technology Studies (STS), is adopted to analyze the networks of actors, the types of relationships between relevant social groups, and the discourses on innovation that take part in the construction of these technologies. The investigation covers the definition of prototyping processes and standards, as well as disputes over the nature of the sense of touch.

Reference

Parisi, D., Paterson, M., & Archer, J. E. (2017) ‘Haptic Media Studies’, *New Media & Society*, 19(10): 1513-1522.

Revisiting media repertoires: The media use of the Flemish population

Ruben Vandenplas
Ruben.Vandenplas@vub.be

Today's highly convergent media landscape is increasingly pushing audience researchers towards a conceptualization of media usage as a holistic whole or “*repertoire*” (Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012) of different media practices, rather than studying each encounter with media in isolation. This argument has perhaps featured most prominently in research adopting related theoretical perspectives such as media repertoires, polymedia, crossmedia, and media ecology.

The PhD project focuses on the concept of media repertoires, featured prominently in the works of Hasebrink and Popp (2006) and Hasebrink and Domeyer (2012). The current study seeks to carve out its own niche within this debate by applying itself specifically to the mixed-methods approach that underpins media repertoire research. Exploring the possible role of quantitative survey analysis within holistic perspectives on media users, as well as reacquainting the qualitative explorations of repertoires with more classical media ethnography, the PhD project will consist of two complementary methodological halves.

The PhD project will investigate the external (1) and internal (2) dynamics of media repertoires. (1) Through quantitative survey analysis, it draws on both mediatization and repertoire research to construct repertoires, and relate these to cultural participation practices. (2) Secondly, the project will draw from ethnographical methods in order to further explore the internal dynamics of media repertoires. By combining both pillars, the PhD project explores media repertoires as a concept to describe macrosociological processes of mediatization, as well as the internal dynamics of media usage in a convergent media landscape.

References

- Hasebrink, U. & Popp, J. (2006) ‘Media repertoires as a result of selective media use. A conceptual approach to the analysis of patterns of exposure’, *Communications*, 31(3): 369-387.
- Hasebrink, U. & Domeyer, H. (2012) ‘Media repertoires as patterns of behaviour and as meaningful practices: A multimethod approach to media use in converging media environments’, *Participations*, 9(2): 757-779.

Young adults' learning about sustainable consumption in informal 'situations'

Konstanze Wegmann
kwegmann@uni-bremen.de

Sustainable consumption is a highly relevant – sometimes controversially discussed – topic of debates in and between, for example, politics, science, and economy. In some countries, it is conceptualised as a goal of formal learning, but hard to implement successfully, as the step from knowing what is normatively seen as right behaviour (in this educational-political discourse about sustainable consumption) and changing one's own everyday behaviour is huge. This raises the question, of how young people who actually engage in aspects of sustainable consumption (e.g. consumption of organic products, avoidance of plastic, sharing of food) learn/have learned about it? How do they negotiate their positions in discourse?

As is known from different studies of Mediatization Theory (e.g. Wolf & Wudarski, 2018), *mediatization* can have an enormous potential for supporting learning in informal settings. Does *mediatization* also play a role in supporting, or averting, learning about sustainable consumption in informal settings? If so, which role does it play?

For the aim of this dissertation project, narrative interviews with 'sustainable consumers' (20 to 30 years old) are held and evaluated using Situational Analysis by Adele Clarke (2005). The informal learning 'situations'¹ are taken as empirical starting points for visualising and analysing all 'elements' (e.g. individual and collective actors, like politicians, friends, and/or organisations; and non-human actants, like media and/or discourses) relevant for the young adults' learning processes, their negotiation of positions in discourse, as well as the (power) relations between all of these elements.

For the cited sources, please see article by K.D. Wolf and K. Wegmann in this book.

1 'Situations' are defined as "no fixed, i.e. locally-temporally defined entities, but relational structures which include everything made relevant through the interactions taking place" (Strübing, 2018: 687; own translation from German).

The rise and fall of a critical paradigm in media research and communication: analysis elite western periodical publications 1935-2015

Boris Mance

boris.mance@fdv.uni-lj.si

Fundamental functions of disciplinary periodical literature is to serve as a field of scholarly debate, to serve as a mean of socialisation of new scholars, but it also reflects power relations in the scientific community, where editorial boards of scientific journals act as gatekeepers and decide upon which research problems are legitimate and which are not, which authors, institutions, countries are important enough to deserve the attention of a wider scientific community and which not.

The intention of doctoral thesis is to analyse the intervention(s) of representatives of the critical paradigm in the central area of disciplinary debates on media and mass communication. Critical paradigm is understood as a system of beliefs, values and techniques, which contain emancipatory imperative in the study of social communication and its orientation towards the transformation of the dominant structures of instrumental knowledge. Its political involvement in the social environment and problematisation of ideologically neutral research and apolitical science of mass communication and media, place it in a dialectical relationship with the dominant, administrative paradigm within the discipline, which is manifested through approach of behavioural empiricism. This kind of research on mass communication and media tries to avoid political and follows the principles of science, which through methodological procedures of quantification and individualisation separate research problem from its social and political environment, and thereby largely administers the existing structures of power and consequently strengthens the existing social order.

Michael Moore and documentary as persuasion

Ilari Kellokoski
ilari.kellokoski@uta.fi

Recently, there has been ample public discussion concerning “the post-truth era”. The epitomes of the phenomenon are Donald Trump’s presidential campaign and the ‘Brexit’ campaign in Great Britain in 2016. Documentary film enters the realm of (campaign) politics through the films of Michael Moore. His Documentary Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004) can be seen as an attack against the president of the US just months before the presidential election. His latest film Michael Moore in Trump-Land (2016) was released just weeks before the 2016 US presidential election. In the film Moore urges people to vote for Hilary Clinton.

This research focuses on the persuasive nature of the new American political documentary exploring the documentaries of perhaps the most prominent figure in the modern documentary film industry; Michael Moore. He is commercially the most successful documentary director and his documentaries have been central in the development of modern political documentary. In addition, his films have been a topic of both critical discussion and appraisal. I examine how arguments are presented and structured and what kind of techniques Moore’s films use to persuade spectators. Furthermore, I investigate how documentary film is constructed and perceived as something that I call the truth discourse.

Dating apps and cultural contexts: Investigating how Australia-based Chinese users engage with Tinder and Tantan

Xu Chen

x74.chen@hdr.qut.edu.au

This PhD project will situate user engagement with dating applications (apps) in the context of diasporic media use, highlighting the complexities that arise in cross-cultural contexts of use. Bringing together perspectives from app and platform studies, online dating, and digital diaspora research, this project will investigate how Australia-based Chinese users manage their self-presentation on Tinder and Tantan, two dating apps that are embedded in different cultural contexts. The research will take the form of a twin ethnography of these two case study platforms. Tantan is a popular dating app in mainland China, and was designed to mimic Tinder, which is blocked in Mainland China like other Western social media platforms. Accordingly, engagement with these platforms by Chinese users in Australia provides a good opportunity to compare and contrast the ways that cultural understandings of interpersonal relationships are integrated into these platforms, and the various cultures and practices associated with them. Taking a cross-cultural perspective, this project will analyse similarities and differences between Tinder and Tantan by theorising these two apps as cultural artefacts. Situated within the context of diasporic media use, this project will investigate Chinese users' engagement with Tinder as mainstream media in Australia and Tantan as homeland media, focusing in particular on users' motivations for use and non-use, impression management strategies and how they perceive cultural differences across these two apps. This research will help to expand our understandings of dating apps usage in non-western contexts and will also expand the scope of studies about media use among Chinese visitors and immigrants in Australia. In this research, I will employ mixed research methods, including the walkthrough method for app analysis and interviews with Australian-based Chinese users of dating apps. The chief objective of this project will be to compare Chinese users' engagement with Tinder and Tantan in Australia in order to foster a better understanding of the role of cultural contexts in digital dating culture.

Individual values a basis for selective media exposure

Alyona Khaptsova
khaptsova@bigsss-bremen.de

The project elaborates on values as a motivational force of selective exposure to media contents with its focus on methodological issues of the field. The project consists of three studies:

Study 1 introduces a concept of actual (belonging to individuals) and reflected (expressed in the media) beliefs and argues that their fit/misfit at the conceptual level affects the precision of selective exposure estimations in empirical research. The study runs a meta-analysis in order to test hypothesis.

Study 2 proposes to view selective media exposure as a degree of fit between one's individual values and those reflected in media contents one reads. In order to estimate that fit both individual and reflected values should be measured and matched. Although instruments measuring individual values are diverse, there are few measures of values reflected in the media contents. This study designs a measure of reflected values based on the qualitative content analysis. Using that measure we conduct an empirical study to test whether individual values predict selection of media contents.

Study 3 elaborates on the operationalization of echo-chambers in empirical research. The study proposes to differentiate two approaches to echo chambers' investigation: information-focused (i.e. echo chambers consist of information pieces similar in content) and belief-focused (i.e. echo chambers consist of information pieces that have the same relevance to a belief which motivated the exposure). The study runs an experiment to illustrate how thematically similar information pieces may fall into conceptually different echo chambers if different beliefs (we test values) guide interest in those pieces.

The #Girlbosses of YouTube: Manifestations of feminism in the era of social media and entrepreneurial femininity

Ida Roivainen

Roivainen.Ida.S@student.uta.fi

My dissertation is about young female youtubers and the way they manifest feminism on their lifestyle channels. The aim is to get to the core of entrepreneurial femininity, or “girlbossness”. My research question is: How feminism is perceived in the era of social media and in what ways YouTube’s lifestyle channels shape this perception?

To answer this question, I take a closer look at YouTube’s lifestyle channels. In four different articles, I shed light on what really motivates young women to put their lives on the market. I explain how lifestyle channels shape both individual and social identities, and what their relation to feminism and entrepreneurship is. I do this by analyzing lifestyle channels, videos, their comment sections and youtubers themselves. My qualitative, multi-sited research methods include non-participant observation, multimodal analysis and in-depth interviewing. The theoretical framework is set in the intersection of media-, gender- and cultural studies as well as political economics. Social media, interaction, identity, feminism and post-feminism, entrepreneurial femininity and brand culture are my key concepts.

How the blockchain technologies may impact the digital media content creation and consumption

Sebastian Cochinescu
sebastian.cochinescu@gmail.com

In this project, I would like to investigate the role blockchain technologies may play in the digital media landscape by comparing the impact three blockchain solutions and platforms may have on the digital media content creation and consumption: Ujo Music, Po.et and SingularDTV.

The flow of content from the creator to the consumer is impacted by various intermediaries and a distributed ledger for intellectual property management or a decentralised micro payments solution may provide an upgrade to the existing business models. The content creator may thus establish a wider connection to its audience and get rewarded on a timely manner for its products. The automation required for these models may be found in the Ethereum smart contracts or on other blockchain based solutions that may provide decentralised trust, distributed micropayment systems, tracking of ownership or immutable meta data storage on decentralised platforms.

The role of the media content creator is established in the collective conscience as a unidirectional giver that provides consumers with a product that may exist in the form of music, text, video or other media formats that serve the purpose of entertaining or providing value for its audiences.

The role of cultural mind-mapping in intercultural business communication between European and Chinese associates

Jinxixi Lyu
jinxlyu@vub.ac.be

Research Purpose: Following 5th China-EU High-Level Economic and Trade Dialogue, and China-EU 2020 strategic agenda, business investment cooperation between Europe and China has been strengthened. There is no doubt that more in-depth and multi-level business exchange proceed in the sense of a wave between contemporary enterprises of both sides. Yet, there are indications that the Belgian and Chinese commercial dialogue is an obstacle course. The bilateral trade cooperation could be a failure due to misunderstanding, bias, suspicion and distrust.

To provide a theoretical framework of overcoming cultural periphery to communicate smoothly, this research aims to explore a mind-mapping of Chinese candidates on cultural dimension. On practical implications, this mind-mapping could be a handbook for building up bilateral trade cooperation between EU and China. Misunderstanding and distrusting could be reduced when business people from another culture contact and communicate with Chinese partners. Meanwhile this research bridges a gap for academics to conduct culture difference and communication research.

The Ideology of Enjoyment: Images of enjoyment on Instagram

Kemal Güleç
guleckemal@gmail.com

My PhD project attempts to examine the relationship between ideology and enjoyment by focusing images people post on Instagram. Unlike the other popular social media applications such as Facebook and Twitter, Instagram allows only sharing photos or videos, and this makes it the most suitable medium for this research. Images shared by people (or even companies) on Instagram can show us the points at which ideology places enjoyment, and we can map the ideology of enjoyment by using them. Mapping the enjoyment offers us an alternative way to understand how ideology functions, because even if enjoyment is not in itself ideological, the way it is positioned is.

From the psychoanalytic perspective, there is a fundamental difference between capitalist society and the one prior to it, and this difference lies in how they deal with enjoyment. While traditional social order prohibits enjoyment, capitalist society promotes precisely the opposite direction: Enjoy! Because capitalist society does not function through prohibitions, public displays of enjoyment occur more often today than the past. But there is a trap in this capitalist imperative, according to psychoanalytic thought. Capitalism identifies enjoyment with obtaining and thus removes the traumatic dimension of it, but this is deceptive. It actually blinds us to our own enjoyment by convincing us that enjoying without trouble is possible.

This book consists of the intellectual work of the 2018 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 a variety of research topics, that are highly relevant to the study of media and communication in the 21st century. While having a close connection with our summer school, this book is simultaneously an independent platform for reflection, supported by a proper peer review process and careful editorial policies.

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 and non-European countries. The main target of the 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. It 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.



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore