



# 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

edition Lumière  
Bremen 2019

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



## 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 of 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 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