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CULTURAL COUP D'ÉTAT

THE CHANGING ROLES
OF UNESCO AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENT ON CULTURAL
SOVEREIGNTY

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Abstract

The article clarifies the cause of the changes of the Korean cultural policy with a special focus on the screen quota system. As a starting point of the discussion, it documents the way in which the screen quota system has been maintained or developed under neoliberal globalisation. Korea has been one of few countries that have resisted Hollywood's hegemony over the decades with some success. The article then examines how the UNESCO has reaffirmed the right of sovereign states to maintain and implement polices that protect and promote cultural expression in order to investigate whether the UNESCO convention has provided legal protections to local culture and cultural sovereignty. Finally, the paper discusses why the Korean government has initiated the rapid policy change in the screen quota in relation to the U.S. pressure. The key question will be the role of the nation-state in the process of the changing cultural politics in the UNESCO convention era.

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Introduction

The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions reaffirms the sovereign rights of States to maintain, adopt, and implement polices and measures that they deem appropriate for the protection of the diversity of cultural expressions on their territory (UNESCO 2005, 6).

The Korean screen quota system was an example of a cultural policy which maintained cultural sovereignty and diversity over the past several decades. Under this system, Korean films were shown in movie theatres for a determined period of time, giving Koreans the opportunity to see films rooted in their own culture and experience, and enabling Korean cinema to rapidly grow. In the face of neoliberal globalisation, which emphasises market liberalisation and deregulation throughout the world, Korea has maintained the fundamental structure of the screen quota system, which substantially contributed to the development of the Korean film industry. Korea has been one of few countries to resist Hollywood's hegemony over the decades with some success (Min et al 2003, 149).

However, the Korean government, which up until recently was a strong supporter of the screen quota system, unexpectedly changed its fundamental cultural policy. Since July 2006, the Korean government has reduced the screen quota duration from 146 days to 73 days a year, despite fierce opposition from filmmakers and activists. This policy change supposedly came about as a result of outside pressure, specifically in relation to bilateral trade negotiations with the United States, who made cutting the quota a precondition for starting talks towards a U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which came into being in April 2007. While many countries have ratified the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions on a priority basis, which recognises the distinctive nature of cultural goods and services and affirms the sovereign right of countries to apply policies in support of cultural diversity, the Korean government made a bold move in the opposite direction. This unexpected policy change raises the fundamental question as to whether Korea, as a nation-state, has given up its critical role in protecting cultural sovereignty and identity (such as national traditions and nationalism in the film sector) as well as its role as a regulator and supporter of the Korean cultural industry amid expansive globalisation.

This paper examines the set of social relations and the interplay of power between Hollywood and the nation-state, in relation to the commercial interests of Hollywood and critical political ideology and between the economics and the politics in relation to cultural diversity with the case of the screen quota system (Fung 2006). As a starting point for discussion, this article documents the way in which the screen quota system has been maintained or developed under neoliberal globalisation in Korea. It then examines how UNESCO has reaffirmed the right of sovereign states to maintain and implement polices that protect and promote cultural expression, in order to investigate whether the convention has provided legal protects to local culture and cultural sovereignty. The key question will be to assess the role of the nation-state in the process of the changing cultural politics in the UNESCO convention era. Finally, the paper discusses why the Korean government bowed to American pressures to undertake such a substantive policy change in the screen quota system.

The Role of the Nation-state amid Neoliberal Globalisation

The rapid change in Korean cultural policy regarding the screen quota system is closely related to the development of neoliberal globalisation. Since the Kim Young Sam government (1993-1998) began to adapt the country's globalisation trend to better survive in a new world of infinite global competition in late 1994, Korea has been in the midst of a process of globalisation, wherein the world's economy, polity, and culture are becoming a connected and interactive whole (Giddens 1991; Shome and Hegde 2002).

The focal point of this paper in terms of the globalisation process is to deal with the way in which the process of globalisation has influenced the role of the nation-state and culture. Both cultural products, such as film, music and television programs and cultural processes, specifically capital investment and production in developing countries, one of the most significant discourses in the globalisation theory, will be looked at. As is well known, several theorists argue that globalisation brings about the weakening of state power as a meaningful unit in the participation in the global economy of today's borderless world (Featherstone 1990; Morley and Robins 1995; Ohmae 1995). Stig Hjarvard (2003) and Anthony Giddens (1999) also argue that economic and political globalisation has resulted in the decreasing role of domestic culture and cultural identity in non-Western countries.

A globalisation of culture, however, is a more complex connectivity. Several media scholars (Sánchez Ruiz 2001; Sreberny et al 1997) point out that the nation-state and domestic media in many countries have sustained their roles in national culture. While not all local companies and nation-states are well equipped for this task, many countries and local capitals have the potential to challenge transnational corporations (TNCs) and compete in the global market (Wu and Chan 2007). For them, globalisation is a contradictory phenomenon, made up of both the process of globalisation, such as the persistence of the nation-state, multi-culturality, and localism, as national culture includes national outlook, which can not be easily dominated by foreign forces (Chan 2005). In other words, domestic forces such as national governments and corporations still play significant roles in the formation of cultural policy to protect cultural sovereignty, even when the nation-state is overshadowed by neoliberal transnational phenomena (Maxwell 1995, xxviii). This article aims to contribute to the ongoing debate of the changing role of the nation-state in domestic culture and cultural sovereignty amid globalisation by looking at the case of the Korean screen quota system.

This study uses a political economy approach to map out the relationship between the United States and Korean cinemas. This perspective seeks to explicate how culture, symbol and ideology are closely connected to the strategies of transnational media corporations within the framework of globalisation (Fung 2006, 3). Furthermore, this contextualisation is very useful as it provides a process for connecting the text to the social and historical conditions from which it originated. In other words, this paper emphasises contextualisation, focusing on the mode of production and the relationship between the film industry and government cultural policies in relation to the screen quota system.

Historical Overview of the Screen Quota System

The screen quota system is seen as an integral feature of the domestic film industry, and is considered a safety net for the recent growth in the Korean film industry. While it is not easy to assess exactly how the screen quota system has affected the recent revival and growth of Korean cinema, one cannot possibly understand Korea's film businesses without taking into account the impact of this system.

In 1966, the Korean government revised Motion Picture Law enacted 1962 to include a screen quota system in order to industrialise the Korean cinema, both systematically and legally. When this quota was first introduced, it dictated that local theatres had to screen domestic movies on 90 of the total number of days that they were open for business (Kim 1999). Furthermore, this system was designed to prevent theatres from only showing well-received foreign movies and squeezing out domestic films (Motion Picture Law, Article 28). However, during the golden age of the Korean films in the 1960s and 1970s there was no need to compel local theatres because they were screening more national films anyway. During this period, the number of annual film productions increased from 15 in 1955 to 108 in 1959 and to 229 in 1969, and local films attracted both domestic and foreign audiences. The screen quota turned out to be a non-issue (Jin 2008).

By the end of the 1970s, the screen quota needed intensifying, due to the recession in the Korean film industry, which was caused in part by the rapid rise of the TV era as well as growing American demand for market liberalisation. In 1985, the government revised the quota system again, and domestic films were to be screened146 days per year (Kim 1999). This quota became vulnerable to attack beginning in the-mid 1980s when the Korean cinema was targeted by the U.S., which wanted to dominate the market. The American government and major Hollywood studios demanded that Korea open its up film market. Since 1983, the U.S. Trade Representatives (USTR) has used Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, which is antidumping charges against the Korean exports, to open Korean markets of insurance, tobacco, wine, and film, and to protect the U.S. intellectual property rights in Korea (Sakong 1993, 130-31*).

To delay U.S. pressures on the manufacturing sector while resolving the trade disputes, the Roh Tae Woo regime (1988-1993) allowed for direct distribution of foreign films in 1988 as part of its market liberalisation plan to appease foreign players (Jin 2006). In their typical business style, Hollywood took advantage of its economically superior position to push for the opening of Korea's movie markets, leaving it completely exposed to the tide of indiscriminate and infinite competition (Kim 2006, 17).

Hollywood has achieved an astonishing growth in penetration of films and capital in Korea as in many other countries due to direct distribution right of Hollywood films beginning in 1988. Since Hollywood movies have come to dominate the Korean exhibition and video markets, the market share of domestic films recorded its lowest level of 15.9% in 1993 (Korean Film Council: KOFIC 2003). Due to its geographically limited language and culture, a nation like Korea would inevitably be sensitive to external forces, regardless of whether these are desirable (Søndergaard 2003). The domestic cinema was extremely dependent on, and influenced by, the Hollywood majors. Up until the 1990s there had not been substantial capital to produce quality movies comparable to Hollywood, and the domestic

market was vulnerable to foreign capital and films. Against this backdrop, the screen quota was imperative to promote the Korean cinema and protect it from Hollywood dominance. Indeed, in the midst of Hollywood's increasing control, the screen quota system worked as a fortress to sustain the Korean cinema in the late 1990s and early twenty-first century. The Korean film industry believed that it could protect domestic films from Hollywood with a strong screen quota system. While not an ultimate method of preserving the film market, the quota worked as a protective means to keep the market from foreign major film producers and distributors (Lee and Bae 2004).

Since the late 1990s, the structure of the screen quota changed amid the Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) talks between the Korean and United States governments, as the U.S. demanded that Korea reduce or delete the system. This strong U.S. influence manifested itself in June 1996, when the Korean government established the Motion Picture Promotion Ordinance, which allowed local governments to have up to 40 days leeway to use at their discretion. The Ordinance states that the local governments can reduce the number of mandatory screening days for Korean films to 126 in large cities and 106 in small cities, down from the fixed 146 (Motion Picture Promotion Ordinance, Article 13). This has fundamentally changed the screen quota system as it led to the increase in foreign films on national screens. The Korean government has stated that it revised the quota system to promote the film industry as one of the strategic industries in the twenty-first century. However, it was obvious that the government made changes mainly in order to comply with the World Trade Organization (WTO) system, which emphasises free trade across the board, including cultural sectors (Lee 1996). The government believed that quota regulation should be removed in order to make Korean films more competitive (globally and locally) and appease foreign pressure for opening up the market. With this fundamental change of the screen quota system in 1996, Korea then imported 483 foreign films, making it the largest film importing country in the world at that year (Hwang 1998).

There were massive demonstrations organised by film directors, actors, college students, and several civil organisations, all of whom considered these changes to be a sign of the abolition of the screen quota. The main issue was how to maintain cultural diversity and sovereignty, as there was the fear that the abandonment of the quota system would eventually lead to a total loss of domestic film and its cultural uniqueness (*Joong-Ang Ilbo* 2002).

Maenwhile, the United States government and major Hollywood studios further tried to completely abolish the screen quota system over the past several years. According to the Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministry of Korea, the U.S. government insisted at a working-level investment meeting held in Washington D.C. June 21-22, 1998 that Korea's screen quota violates the bilateral investment treaty between the two countries (Hwang 1998). The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) has also campaigned to end the screen quota. Between 1998 and 1999, the Korean government attempted to reduce the maximum days a Korean theatre must run local movies to 92 days per year, down from 146 (without discretion), but later backed down in the face of strong opposition from the local business. The U.S. had reportedly demanded a reduction of the screen quota to 60 days (Kang 1999). The Kim Dae Jung government (1998-2003) at first seemed to listen to the U.S. demand, but had to make a pledge to keep the protective measure, because it could

not ignore the pressures from civil social movements and organisations as well as film directors, actors, and critics (Jin 2008).

However, concerns surrounding the screen quota have changed greatly due to the swift growth of the Korean cinema since the late 1990s. After ten consecutive year of growth, the Korean theatrical market ended 2006 with 163 million admissions and $1.04 billion in receipts (Kim and Do 2007). The annual market share of domestic films also climbed to as high as 63.8% in 2006, which is a major growth for the national cinema in the face of the Hollywood's growing global control. This positive news for the Korean film industry is not very comforting to Hollywood or the American government, who are attempting to reverse this trend by again attacking the Korean quota system (which will be discussed in detail later). Their efforts benefit from the fact that the formerly near-unanimous support for the quota among the Korean populace had begun to wane with the phenomenal growth in the domestic movie industry (Frater and Paquet 2006).

Under these circumstances, in March 2006 the Korean government passed a bill to halve the screen quota for domestic movies from 146 days to 73 days effective in July in the same year, meaning that only 20% of local theatres' schedule would be set aside for homemade films. The government very much wanted to resolve this issue, as Washington had since 2003 urged Korea to reduce the quota before the two sides met at the negotiation table for the BIT signing. Christopher Hill, the U.S. Ambassador to Korea, warned that Korea could not have the screen quota and a free trade agreement at the same time (Lee 2005). At the FTA in early 2007, the U.S.'s biggest BIT since the North American Tree Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Korea failed to get concessions from the U.S. and therefore the reduced screen quota for Korean movies cannot be restored even if the domestic movie industry faces difficulties (Choe 2007; Kim 2007). The United States told Korean FTA negotiators that Hollywood has major concerns about Seoul's strategy to gain concessions for the screen quota, and the Korean government accepted this without hesitation (Kim 2006).

First implemented in 1966, the 40-years of screen quotas have been given much credit for the current Korean film boom, which began in 1998. However, it could no longer protect and preserve the domestic film industry anymore from foreign competition, particularly Hollywood. These new developments are likely to boost the fortunes of American movies in Korea, the world's fifth biggest box office market, behind the U.S., Japan, the U.K., and France (Frater and Paquet 2006). Korean cinema must now find its own way to boost and/or maintain the current boon of the Korean film industry, as the new screen quota no longer offers the same sense of security.

UNESCO's Cultural Coup d'état against Neoliberal Globalisation

Korea's unexpected change in cultural policy towards screen quotas has generated international concern as it happened during the UNESCO convention. Since Korea is one of few countries that have successfully resisted Hollywood's hegemony, the reduction of the screen quota has been a shock to many countries and cultural policy makers who support the UNESCO convention. In order to investigate the interplay of power between the commercial interests of Hollywood and critical

political ideology, as well as between economics and politics in relation to cultural diversity, it is critical to understand the context of the UNESCO convention.

A short history of the 2005 UNESCO convention begins in 2001. Just before the opening of the World Trade Organization (WTO) talks at Doha in November of 2001 (and shortly after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City that September), the General Conference of UNESCO gave unanimous approval to a new universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO 2001). As a precursor to the 2005 UNESCO convention, the Declaration signalled a new way of thinking about the role of culture and cultural diversity, as it requires a commitment to "human rights and fundamental freedoms" (Article 4 and 5). With this, cultural expression and support for cultural diversity could no longer be considered merely optional extras in rich societies and expanded beyond existing definitions of set forth by art and entertainment. Rather, culture now involves "an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity" (Article 4). Early in 2003, ministers of culture and their representatives from several countries, including Argentina, Belgium, Canada, France, Italy, Sweden, and Switzerland, met in Paris to discuss the creation of a legally binding Convention that would ensure the world a diversity of cultural expression (International Network on Cultural Policy: INCP 2003; Magder 2004). UNESCO finally reached its agreement in 2005.

Since the replacement of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT) by the WTO in 1995 and the increasing tensions around the WTO's actions, there has been a tendency for countries to enter into bi-lateral (one-to-one) and not multilateral talks. For small countries, this has been a difficult process and UNESCO wanted to offer the promise of legal protection for national cultural initiatives that might otherwise be seen to contravene the principles of unrestricted trade (Harvey and Tongue 2006, 224-25). In 2005, UNESCO initiated a full implementation of cultural rights, which meant that as vectors of identity, values, and meaning, cultural goods and services must not be treated as mere commodities or consumer goods (Klaussmann 2005). Member states of UNESCO voted to protect their film industries against creeping globalisation, or more succinctly, Hollywood. The vote, a Franco-Canadian initiative, was passed by 149 states: Only Israel and the United States, which had recently joined UNESCO after a 19-year absence, opposed it. This UNESCO convention gives member states the right to act against what they view as encroachment on their cultural diversity in the reality of an increasingly interconnected world (Harvey and Tongue 2006).

What member states wanted was to be able to shield their cultures from the free-trade rules of the WTO. A majority of countries around the world have backed the convention as it gives them the right to subsidise domestic film industries and restrict foreign music and content on their radio and television stations in the name of preserving and promoting cultural diversity. They also acknowledge that WTO and international trade agreements, such as the BIT and free trade agreements, have threatened the idea of screen quotas. At the WTO's Doha Round of negotiations, some developed countries were demanding that the screen quota be repealed (Yang 2005). France and Canada, as initiators of the convention, clearly indicate the Americanisation of culture as homogenisation. They argue that "the eight leading Hollywood studios share 85% of the world market – the homogenisation of culture; thereafter America's popular culture is a threat to the human rights of

non-Americans" (Post 2005, 17). In this regard, Liza Frulla, Minister of Canadian Heritage, claims "in affecting cultural diversity, globalization is changing our traditional concepts of national identity and sovereignty" (Post 2005).

This measure passed at a time of growing fear in many countries that the world's increasing economic interdependence, known as globalisation, would bring a surge of foreign products across their borders that could wipe out local cultural heritage (Moore 2005). The UNESCO convention on cultural diversity intended to allow sovereign countries to protect, promote or subsidise their cultural productions despite rulings by international trade tribunals (Fraser 2005b). This makes culture an exception, which is to say that it is not regulated by market forces, but rather artists are promoted and supported by the state (Klaussmann 2005).

Interestingly enough, UNESCO is the same organisation that former U.S. president Ronald Reagan pulled his country out of in 1984, citing its anti-Americanism, politicisation of cultural issues, and bureaucratic money-wasting activities. At the time, the United States opposed the McBride Commission Report, which intended to legitimise the movement towards the establishment of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), arguing that it sought to give control of mass media to Southern governments (Thussu 2006). With the retreat of the U.S. from UNESCO, the global communication system began to deteriorate as the Third World unity, including UNESCO and NWICO, rapidly lost their place in the global media system (Jin 2008). However, in recent years there has been a rapprochement between UNESCO and the United States; as several countries began to discuss the convention, President George W. Bush announced the American return to UNESCO. On September 12, 2002, in a speech in the UN General Assembly, President Bush said, "as a symbol of our commitment to human dignity, the U.S. will return to UNESCO" (Murphy 2003).

While the U.S. expressed its intention to come back to the agency "as a spirit of reconciliation," it is obvious what that government wanted was to hinder the UNCESCO convention from the inside. American officials have stated that measures arranged by UNESCO member countries could be used to unfairly obstruct the flow of ideas, goods and services across borders (Moore 2005). Given that films and music are among the U.S.'s largest exports—the foreign box-office take for American movies was $16 billion in 2004, they could not support UNESCO. The United States has consistently fought any guarantees for films that might put any restrictions on Hollywood, as well as opposing any subsidies for film production, arguing that UNESCO does not have the authority to enact the convention, and that it would interfere with the free flow of ideas (Williams 2005).

Furthermore, the American government has conducted an international diplomatic campaign against the convention, with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, sending letters to foreign ministers, and U.S. ambassadors in an attempt to undermine its validity (Fraser 2005a). Secretary Rice expressed deep concern about the UNESCO convention, calling for postponement of its adoption and warning that it "will only undermine UNESCO's image and sow confusion and conflict rather than cooperation" (Riding 2005a). In fact, one of the central themes of American foreign policy since World War II has been to expand a network of global trade. As the core of a liberalised trade regime, the U.S. can press its capital advantages to maximum effect (Jihong and Kraus 2000, 423). In recent years, this strategy has emphasised

the importance of information-based products, making the State Department an active agent on behalf of such industries as computer software, insurance, banking and entertainment. The film industry had long been important to this strategy, but has gained even more importance of late (Miller et al 2001).

Nevertheless, the United States effort as a nation-state to hinder the UNESCO convention has failed. Due to the heavy pressure from the U.S. government, many people were doubtful of a successful adoption of the convention. However, in this case nation-states under UNESCO obtain a surprising victory against the U.S. As Vincent Mosco points out,

> it is interesting to observe that the Canadian and [French] cultural nationalist lobby won an important victory by leading an international coalition that resisted strong corporate and U.S. government pressure and passed the UNESCO convention. This demonstrates that while neoliberalism continues to drive policy, it is by no means inevitable that it will win on every case (Mosco 2006, 16).

UNESCO as an international cultural agency supported by individual nation-states against neoliberal globalisation has succeeded in a coup d'état.

After losing its grip to deter the UNESCO convention, the U.S. government has focused on FTA with individual countries, and Korea became the first target. Forced bilateral pressure on behalf of augmented corporate freedom to invest in and use [telecommunications] networks began to be exerted by the U.S. Trade Representative and the Department of Commerce, as well as by private trade associations and individual transnational companies beginning in the 1980s (Schiller 2007). Through the FTA, the United States was attempting to nullify the UNESCO convention. By emphasising its neoliberal economic and cultural policies, the U.S. wanted to not only lower the trade barrier but also to loosen the international links among countries through individual FTA. As Gary Neil, the International Network for Cultural Diversity (INCD)'s part-time director, claims;

> it is obvious that the Korean government's decision to slash the screen quota was made under pressure from the U.S. as a pre-condition for starting negotiations with them. This decision comes only three months after the international community signed the new UNCESCO convention (Kim and Jeon 2006).

The U.S. has targeted Korea in order to utilise this agreement not only to expand its role in Korea but also to weaken European countries' cultural industries, including France. With president Roh's political future looking shaky, the Korean government very much wanted a strong finish in their FTA with the United States, and was willing to sacrifice cultural sovereignty in return for its economic imperatives in the midst of the new UNESCO convention era.

Korea's Anti-cultural Coup d'état and Crisis in National Sovereignty

The screen quota system is in operation in dozens of countries around the world, including France, Hungary, Italy, Brazil, Mexico, Spain, and Korea. It is regarded as a cultural exception in various international trade agreements even though it goes against the principle of national treatment, which prohibits discrimination

between locally produced and imported goods (Terra Media 2007; Cajueiro 2007). This reasoning is based on the assumption that films are both cultural products and content products that differ from many other goods or products (Lee and Bae 2004). Since the dominance of the American films in the international film trade may threaten a countries' cultural identity and domestic film industry, Korean cinema, along with several other countries have argued that the film sector should be an exception in terms of free trade to product local films. The Coalition for Cultural Diversity in Moving Images (CDMI), a local group seeking to enforce the screen quota system, points out that the screen quota has functioned as an appropriate institutional mechanism to protect the Korean film industry from the U.S. film distribution since 1993 (CDMI 2000).

However, the screen quota system has been one of the most controversial issues in the BIT talks between the Korean and U.S. governments as the U.S. has made attempts to abolish it beginning in the late 1990s. During the process, American and Korean governments have come up against severe protests from several parts of the society, flaring up in the late 1990s and again between 2004 and 2007. As noted, the Korean government was moving to reduce the maximum number of days Korean film must be shown in theatres in the late 1990s. A campaign by the MPAA to end the quota in the late 1990s as part of the Korean-American BIT talks inspired rallies, protests and a nationwide petition drive from several sectors of society, including college students, film actors and directors, as well as the National Assembly. Indication by the Korean government that it is willing to reform the system as a means of moving negotiations forward was denounced by quota defenders, who stand firm against any compromise (Jin 2008). The Emergency Committee to Protect the Screen Quota System, which was organised by Korean producers and performers, issued a statement in October 1999 at the Pusan International Film Festival proclaiming: "The Korean film industry cannot be a bargaining scapegoat" (Schilling 1999).

Political parties also made strong statements to support the screen quota, and thereafter cultural sovereignty. The National Assembly adopted a resolution urging the government to keep the screen quota system in December 1998 and December 2000, respectively. The Committee of Culture-Tourism in the National Assembly adopted a resolution in December 1998 that stated that upon the government's move to limit or remove the screen quota under U.S. pressure, the Assembly urges the government to maintain the existing formula until local films secure 40% of market (Kim 1998). This second resolution was passed unanimously by The National Assembly in December 2000 who emphasised the exceptional treatment of the audio-visual industry, including the film sector, in trade negotiations with the U.S. Even the ruling National Congress for New Politics (NCNP) urged the government not to negotiate or compromise on the screen quota in its ongoing dealings with the U.S. in relation to the Korea-U.S. Investment Agreement in 1998 (*Korea Times* 1998).

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has consistently expressed the opinion that the screen quota is essential to maintaining cultural sovereignty (*Dong-A Ilbo* 2002). That is to say that the Ministry did not want to change the screen quota system as films should be excluded from the free trade principle. They believe that protecting the Korean film industry is tantamount to maintaining Korea's cultural identity. In the neoliberal era, characterised by shrinkage of the role of the government, Korea has one of the most protectionist film policies in the world, as

exemplified by its screen quota. Partly due to the massive rally from several parts of the society along with the national congress, the Korean government has had no choice but to maintain the current screen quota. The rallies along with political decisions made in the late 1990s became one of the most successful civic movements in sustaining cultural sovereignty amid rampant neoliberal globalisation.

During the Roh Moo-Hyun government (2003-2008), however, the situation has dramatically changed, and the U.S. dictated reduction in screen quotas has finally come to fruition. When the Korean government announced its decision to reduce the screen quota to 73 days in 2006, there were once again huge demonstrations; however, this did nothing to sustain the screen quota. This was not only due to severe pressure from the U.S. government, but also due to severe demand from domestic capitals, including auto makers (Hyundai and Kia) and semi-conductor producers (Samsung), emphasising the WTO-driven free market economy. As noted, the U.S. government, backed by Hollywood, has strongly demanded that Korea should delete or reduce the screen quota as a prerequisite of FTA. In the midst of Hollywood's current spate of Box Office blues due to declining revenues in recent years (6.4% down in the first half of 2005 compared to 2004) Hollywood, through the U.S. government, wanted to expand its penetration into the Korean film industry (CBS news 2005). In a massive rally held in early 2006, however, film directors and actors claimed,

> *the screen quota cuts will lead to a flood of Hollywood pictures into the domestic movie market, denouncing the government for trying to accelerate negotiations with the U.S. on a bilateral trade agreement at the expense of the local film industry's interests* (Kim, Y. 2006).

Filmmakers were convinced that a smaller quota would eventually lead to a self-destruction of the Korean cinema, as had happened in Mexico, which neared meltdown after government support was withdrawn as part of NAFTA (Lee and Bae 2004). In addition to the massive rallies, top movie actors, and directors were continued their series of one-man demonstrations against the government decision to cut back the screen quota in 2006. As part of the rally, actor Choi Min-Sik visited the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to return the Okgwan medal, a prize he received for his outstanding performance in Chan-wook Park's *Oldboy* (2003), a film that earned the runner-up Grand Prize of the July at the Cannes Film Festival in 2004. After returning his medal, Choi claimed, "I strongly denounce the government for its decision to give up its sovereign cultural right… It is absolutely a betrayal and self-destroying action" (Kim, Y. 2006). Yang Ki-hwan of the CDMI also stresses that despite WTO standards, cultural products should not be negotiated on the same level as other industrial items (*Korea Herald* 2006). They point out that the Korean film industry is still unable to stand on its own feet, as is still in the process of fixing a number of structural problems.

Of course, there were some proponents for the decrease in the screen quota. In particular, domestic-based transnational corporations such as Samsung, Hyundai, and LG tenaciously demanded that the government resolve the screen quota issue in order to facilitate the FTA. The nation's five leading business organisations, including the Federation of Koran Industries (FKI), backed by these big conglomerates asked their call on the government to cut the screen quota in 2004 in order to remove the deadlock on the BIT between the two countries. They argued that "the

global competitiveness of the local film industry could be improved through full-scale competition with foreign films" (Seo 2004). As such, some parts of the Korean society, including the exhibition sector (which is in part owned by big corporations such as CJ and Lotte), the screen quota was one of the main obstacles impeding the trade talks with the U.S., thus local government has increasingly voiced stronger support for a reduction. In 2005, Finance-Economy Minister Han Duck-soo as an advocate of free trade argued:

> *We support this choice [to halve the screen quota] for a myriad of reasons with the foremost being that Korean films are now equally competitive as foreign ones. Another is the pressing need to embrace the global trade liberalization trend* (Lee 2005).

The Finance Ministry opposed the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and made clear in a statement that the foreign movie distributors have not been able to establish a dominant position in the domestic movie market thanks to the rapid growth of the Korean cinema. They argue that the local movie industry is now strong enough to compete with foreign movies without the protective system, and that it is time to reduce the screen quota. In addition, many experts expect the UNESCO convention to have little impact on what is already a globalised market for cultural products, such as India's Bollywood, Japanese animation movies, and Brazilian and Mexican television soap operas, have a place alongside Hollywood blockbusters (Riding 2005a).

Of course, the most significant decision came from President Roh Moo-Hyun himself. Due to his left-oriented political philosophy, many Korean people expected that he would protect the Korean cinema from the U.S. pressure. However, his cultural policy emphasising neoliberal globalisation has been very different from previous presidents, who protected cultural sovereignty partially by maintaining the screen quota system. His original idea for the screen quota system was similar to previous governments. For instance, in 2003, in a meeting with filmmakers and actors, President Roh stated, "if the Korean cinema insist on the current form of the screen quota system, the government will not enforce the revision of the screen quota" (Baek 2003). However, a year later, in his meeting with Korean-U.S. corporations, he clearly mentioned that the government was willing to resolve the screen quota system to attract foreign investment in other businesses (*Seoul Shinmun* 2004). This fundamental change in his cultural policy proves that his emphasis on the neoliberal reform of the Korean economy and society, and his intention to sacrifice the screen quota in return for FTA.

The Roh government has consistently pursued an American-Korean BIT contract as he considered the FTA as one of the most significant political achievements in his term. As a strong supporter of neoliberal globalisation, the FTA was imperative for his government because he believed that the FTA would resolve several political and social issues, including high youth unemployment and rising housing cost thanks to the increase in the exports of manufacturing goods to the U.S. President Roh considered the protest by college students, movie makers and actors, and film critics trying to maintain the screen quota system as a barrier to the deal. His political attitude towards the FTA has been expressed in his address to the Nation after the FTA on April 2, 2007:

there are no other sectors that will deteriorate any further than now, basically, an FTA is not a matter of politics or ideology. It is a matter of survival. It should not be handled with nationalistic emotions or political calculations (Roh 2007).

Regardless of strong pressure from the United States, previous governments had protected cultural identity and sovereignty as essential parts of competitiveness of the state within a global society. Although the Kim Young Sam government set the globalisation policy in 1994 and reshaped its cultural policy towards enhancement of international cultural exchange (Yim 2002), the Kim government did not sacrifice the Korean cinema. The Kim Dae Jung government even supported the film industry with its financial resources while maintaining the screen quota. The Kim Dae Jung government funded $125 million for promoting Korean cinema between 1999 and 2003 (*Dong-A Ilb*o 2002). However, the Roh government has finally given up on Korea's unique cultural policy and almost fully liberalised the Korean film industry in return for the FTA.

Like the case of NAFTA, this agreement is backed by large corporations such as Samsung, Hyundai, and LG, whose major concerns are their exports of autos, semi-conductors, TV screens, and telecommunications equipment, and was opposed by millions of workers and unions, small business owners, environmentalists, and human rights advocates in both countries. There is no doubt that the government has removed the fundamental measure for protecting cultural sovereignty due to its economic imperative, and cultural identity is not a major priority for cultural policy makers in the Roh government. Increasing pressure from the U.S. government, rising demand from domestic-based TNCs, and domestic political considerations worked together to make the Korean cinema as a scapegoat The Korean government has deemed films to be commodities, which goes greatly against what the UNESCO convention emphasised. A few filmmakers therefore called government decision as (anti)cultural coup d'état, because the Korean government has acted contrary to what the UNESCO convention reaffirmed.

In sum, the UNESCO convention has seemed to offer the promise of legal protection for national cultural initiatives for small countries (Harvey and Tongue 2006). About ten countries after the UNESCO convention were also reportedly discussing the possibility of implementing their own screen quota systems all the while the Korean government has sacrificed its screen quota amid BIT with the U.S. (Hendrix 2006). People believe that American dominance faces some new political challenges, as the general endorsement of a UNESCO convention in favor of protecting cultural diversity constitutes one counter-thrust by the international community (Schiller 2007, 135). However, the Korean government was not able to protect its cultural diversity mainly due to the powerful U.S. pressure along with the Roh's non-philosophical cultural policy. The Roh government has abandoned the most successful cultural policy in protecting national cinema in a very undemocratic way – no public forum, no debates in the national congress, nor discussion with the film world – which is called anti-cultural coup d'état by Korean civic groups as well as global civic activists.

Conclusions

With the wave of liberalisation and unfettered market access gaining greater momentum under neoliberal globalisation, there is increasing pressure to treat cultural assets as general commodities under the framework of free trade. In the midst of massive pressure from the U.S., UNESCO has adopted the convention in order to prevent the tragic loss of cultures and to open the way to coexistence and mutual exchange of culture. However, the Korean government has given up its unique cultural policy due to its integration into the global market as part of its neoliberal globalisation orientation.

This changing policy has rapidly influenced Korean cinema. In June 2007, just one year after the government reduced the quota, CGV, one of the largest exhibition companies with 378 screens, showed only 2 Korean films (*Mirang* and *Hwangjiny*) while screening 8 foreign films, including *Shrek the Third*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and *Ocean's 13* (all 2007) on the majority of its screens. The market share of domestic films was recorded at only 21.6% for April 2007. In addition, taking advantage of the reduced screen quota, *Transformers*, an action adventure movie, had its junket in Seoul, Korea in June 2007. It is the first time a major Hollywood film held its opening press event in Korea because "Korea is a huge emerging world market in cinema," as Director Michael Bay put it (Lee 2007).

It is premature to predict the long-term effects of the new screen quota as only a year has passed. However, as these examples above clearly prove, Korean cinema now confirms that a smaller quota will eventually lead to the downfall of the Korean film industry. Indeed, some precedents have demonstrated the negative impact of neoliberal cultural policies on domestic film industries in several countries, including Mexico and Canada. The screen quota of Mexico was mostly discontinued starting in January 1993 (CDMI 2000), in accordance with NAFTA. As part of that agreement, Mexico reduced its numbers, dropping from a level of a 50% quota for Mexican films in 1993, down to 10% by 2003. As a result of this new cultural policy, Mexican cinema almost collapsed. The number of movies produced in Mexico annually plummeted from 100 in 1992, down to only 14 in 2003 (Park 2003). Since the abolition of the screen quota in 1993, when the Mexican government signed the BIT with the U.S. following the peso crisis, the film industry in Mexico proceeded to collapse over the next three years (Kim 2000).

Canada, another victim of NAFTA, also suffered from neoliberal globalisation. Due to the massive influence of Hollywood, the market share for domestic films was recorded at only 1.4% in 2002 (Oh 2003). In June 2007, the New York-based investment house Goldman Sachs attempted to buy one of the largest Canadian film companies, Motion Picture Distribution (MPD), a deal which would be one of the largest in the history of Canadian entertainment. In response to these events, Atom Egoyan, Canadian director of such films as *Exotica* (1994) and *The Sweet Hereafter* (1997) said,

> *We'll end up with a bunch of new America companies who do nothing but distribute and send money back home, who don't get involved with Canadian films, or do so rarely…the whole infrastructure will be damaged. And actually speaking, we'll become another [U.S.] state, because there is no incentive to continue to develop a domestic industry or a distinct alternative to the American system* (Macdonald 2007).

In contrast to this dour outlook is France, Europe's only thriving movie industry, due largely to the screen quota: Hollywood accounts for about 65% of the French box office, compares with 90% elsewhere in Europe (Riding 2005b). As such, with the new screen quota, the present status of Korean films would not be possible to sustain its market, never mind cultural sovereignty. In this regard, it is worth documenting one report for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in Canada,

> *Culture is the heart of a nation. As countries become more economically integrated, nations need strong domestic cultures and cultural expression to maintain their sovereignty and sense of identity…. Cultural industries shape our society, develop our understanding of one another and give us a sense of pride in who we are as a nation* (SAGIT 1999, 1).

Whether one is a globalist or not, one must concede that the Korean cinema has changed and developed, influenced by not only the U.S. government and TNCs but also the Korean government and local activists. The national and regional processes emphasising cultural sovereignty have substantially influenced cultural policies in the case of the screen quota system. Regardless of its support or reduction of the screen quota, the role of the nation-state is implemented as it is witnessed in Korea. As Dan Schiller claims (1999, 2) "national governments played a key role in the media sector because unremitting political intervention was paradoxically necessary to actualize something approaching a free-market regime in the media sector." Ellen Wood also points out (2002), nation-states remain crucial to the project of commodification, within the unfolding context, of capitalist transnationalisation. Globalisation has extended capital's purely economic powers far beyond the range of any single nation state. This means that global capital requires many nation-states to perform the administrative and coercive functions to sustain the system of property and provide the kind of day-to-day regularity, predictability, and legal order that capitalism needs more than any other social form. Therefore, the global political economy is administered by a global system of multiple states and local sovereignties, structured in a complex relationship of domination and subordination (Wood 2002; Schiller 2007, 136-37).

Even so, the American government as a nation-state backed by Hollywood has underwritten a vital role in the reduction of the screen quota. The U.S. government also tried to block the UNESCO convention, although it failed. As such, the nation-state has played a key role even in the liberalisation process, as a major feature of the emergence of modern society has been the central role played by the nation-state in the 1970s and the early 1980s. As Sánchez-Ruiz (2001, 86) clearly argued, "globalization has not completely substituted or overridden national states and regions," although it appears to be an overpowering, inexorable process to the one global unit.

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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY
OF CONVERGENCE

THE JANUS-FACES OF
KOREAN CONVERGENCE

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Abstract

Drawing upon qualitative data from stakeholders in convergence in Korea, this study traces the process of convergence in terms of politics, regulation, and policy, and examines how the stakeholders' interests are aligned and coordinated in the process of convergence in Korea. Using actor network theory, the study relates the socio-technological construction of Korea's strategy for convergence reform. Key research questions are: (1) What strategy has Korea adopted, (2) What social and political factors have influenced strategy formulation, and (3) How different interests have stabilised ideologies in which actors formulate their strategies based on their interests. Despite the dynamics of interactions, the actor-network around convergence has not been effectively stabilised yet, as the politics of convergence is complex and marked by paradoxical features.

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Introduction

Convergence is a key agenda in contemporary discourses about the media. While convergence affects many industries, the most noticeable convergence is between telecommunications and broadcasting. Accelerating convergence between these two industries is changing the traditional market structure. Such transformations in the media environment affect not only media structures, content production procedures, and format, but also the way content is distributed and consumed.

In terms of convergence, Korea is one of the most dynamic countries where the world's first DMB (Digital Multimedia Broadcasting) and wireless broadband were introduced. Driven by a convergence of interests among consumer demand, operator ambitions, cutting-edge network and device capabilities and government policy, the Korean communications market will be led by a new convergence infrastructure based on the integration of wire and wireless markets and the integration of telecommunications and broadcasting. Recent convergence technologies continue to collapse the traditional barriers between sectors that have been disparate up till now, like telecom and broadcasting as well as fixed-line and wireless.

Unlike the pace of advanced technological development, however, regulation and policy-making for convergence are slow and still to have a long way to go. It has been said that policy always lags behind technology (that is, functional convergence normally occurs prior to formal convergence), and the situation in Korea clearly bears this out. Technologies are changing at lightning speed in Korea, but government policies seem unable to keep up with the pace of change. Government authorities appear to be having a difficult time forming a unified regulatory authority and creating an integrated policy centred on digital convergence. Although actors involved are agreed on the need for a unified authority and a coherent policy, divergent views prevail on the approaches and methods required to forge consensus.

Currently, there are four actors in the convergence development: the Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC), the Korea Broadcasting Commission (KBC), the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT), and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Energy (MCIE). This multi-jurisdictional overlap has called for a pressing need for a change by both industries and regulators. While these four agencies are claiming their fair share in the envisioned regulatory body, the jurisdiction disputes between the MIC and the KBC have had the most negative impact on the process of convergence. As the collapse of telecom-broadcasting boundaries accelerates, a grey area of digital convergence between the two fields, which does not fit into existing regulatory frameworks, is precipitating stiff turf wars between the MIC and the KBC. Claiming that the digital convergence should properly fall within their jurisdictions, these two agencies are embroiled in conflict with each other over the establishment of a new body to govern the convergence industry. The all-out jurisdictional wrangling victimizes domestic industries as squanders public resources.

This study deploys actor network theory (ANT) as a theoretical lens to examine the socio-technical means through which agreements are reached during standards making and adoption. It examines how strategies and actions of actors are mediated and coordinated through standards as they pursue their own strategies in the process of transitioning to a new era. While ANT is a good tool for describing the

processes of technical and social mechanisms that go into the negotiations preceding agreements (Sarker et al. 2006), not many studies in ANT literature on strategies address the actual process and consequences of creation of strategies in a systematic way. Many studies in ANT explore technical implementation in organisational settings, but ANT has not been extensively used in exploring socio-technological change in such a large-scale, macro-level, and global setting. This study attempts to fill this gap by focusing on how actors formulate diverse standardisation strategies to pursue their own interests, and on how they relate to other actors to make that possible. It examines these ongoing translations in the context of Korean convergence facing shift-to-convergence era. This paper investigates the process involved in the development of a coherent and forward-looking convergence policy for Korea and postulates possible consequences. It sheds light on the overall Korean government's policy mechanism and suggests a better model for future policy for the convergence era. Two research questions guide this study:

RQ1: How do strategies of *translation* play out in the development of policies to regulate convergence and adoption, as well as in the transformation of relevant industries and services?

RQ2: How do actors build relationships with other industry actors and, with artefacts to shape the development of convergence policies? What roles do the actors play in the emergence of convergence?

The RQs seek to explain why the national strategy of convergence has been posited as important, and how to interpret the nature of convergence in the context of the Korean telecom and broadcasting sector. How actors interpret the nature of convergence is crucial for understanding the meaning of convergence because of its multifarious nature. The process of convergence leads us to see the envisaging of a point towards which actors are involved with what motivations, which actors are excluded why and with what outcomes, and how they are pressured to act certain ways. Therefore, this study focuses on the focal actors crafting a common understanding of convergence principles around the actor-network. From this view, convergence must be seen as a political practice in which a particular type of convergence is promoted (Wigger 2005). Policing convergence is not a neutral regulatory field in which governments perceive problems and solutions in similar ways and elucidate the best institutional and regulatory solution. Just like previous studies in innovation and strategy formulation (Gao 2005), the innovations of convergence policy and the involvement of authorities in Korea have been driven by complex socio-technical-political processes by the actors involved.

Theoretical Framework: Actor-Network Theory

ANT adopts a socio-technical perspective into the design and analysis of technological systems viewing the world as networks of technical and social actors. *Actor-network* refers to heterogeneous network of aligned interests, including people, organisations, and standards. Latour (1987) argues that the actor network-based view of the spread of innovation applies to anything from goods and artefacts to claims and ideas.

The conceptual strategy of the ANT approach focuses on linkages, connections, or relations between actors, and performances or other analytical entities. It does not seek to focus on a technical artefact's intrinsic essence. Rather, actors and net-

works of actors have an ontology that is contingent, extrinsic, and is constituted dynamically in the interactions of relations.

The core of ANT analysis is to examine the process of *translation* (Callon 1986), where actors align the interests of others with their own. Translation follows three phases. During the first phase, *problematisation*, a focal actor frames the problem and defines the identities and interests of other actors that are consistent with its own interests. The focal actor renders itself indispensable by defining a process under its control that must occur for all actors to achieve their interests. Callon (1986) calls this process an *obligatory passage point* (OPP). The OPP is typically in the direct path of the focal actor in the pursuit of its interests. Other actors may have to overcome some obstacles to pass through the OPP (Callon 1986). During the second phase, the focal actor executes these strategies to convince other actors to accept its definition of their interests (*interessement*). The final phase of translation, *enrolment*, is the moment when another actor accepts the interests defined by the focal actor. *Enrolment* also includes the definition of the roles of each actor in the newly created actor-network. *Inscription* occurs with enrolment when actors in a network embed scripts for future action and behaviour in the network. *Mobilisation* is about stabilising the actor-network by making durable relations (Mähring 2004)

Convergence as a Socio-political Process

In this section, convergence is described with the framework of actor-network components. The relationship within each component is explained from a socio-technical ensemble perspective.

Actors in Convergence

The actors in the development of convergence can be broadly categorised into four regulatory actors and each corresponding industry: the MIC, the KBC, the MCT, the MCIE, and each associated industries – telecommunications, broadcasting, cultural industries, and equipment manufacturers. Among them, the MIC and the KBC can be seen as focal actors, and a set of policies of convergence can be the OPP, the point through which other actors should pass to pursue their interests. Convergence as a national strategy is established by a consensus from all parties involved (in particular with the leadership of central government), but the goal (convergence) is viewed from different points of view by these actors. The actor-network becomes complicated to the extent that each focal actor attempts to establish their own OPP replacing the OPPs defined by others. Telecom and broadcasting industry respectively are aligned with their regulators, supporting each OPP set by their regulators. This relation of business-government collusion was an underlying theme, influencing overall the actor-network of convergence.

The KBC, a statutory independent body of the government, is in charge of overall broadcasting policies except technology and facilities (regulating programming management and advertising, recommending broadcasting licensees, deliberating broadcasting contents, and administering broadcasting development funds). Under the new Broadcasting Act, effective since March 13, 2000, the KBC is in charge of broadcasting policies (terrestrial, cable, and satellite). The Broadcasting Laws of 1997 and 2000 gave the KBC the authority to regulate the Internet services of broadcasters, but not other companies' Internet services.

MIC governs telecom markets with the Framework Act on Telecommunications, which was first introduced in 1983. The Act has undergone numerous subsequent amendments via ministerial and presidential decrees, and the most recent version is Law No. 7210, which was passed in 2004. While the MIC is in charge of telecomm policy, it is also in charge of allocating broadcasting channels and managing the broadcasting spectrum, which overlaps with the KBC's jurisdiction. Convergence requires a re-evaluation of the fundamental basis of regulation across broadcasting and telecommunications. There is a fundamental difference in the objectives of broadcasting versus telecommunications regulation.

In face of strong criticism that the two agencies have drawn back on the development of lucrative convergence services, they started negotiations to set up a new framework to govern the services in the grey area in the mid-1990s. However, talks have been futile over the past 10 years as they have yet to strike a tangible agreement on the new regulatory format to meet the challenges of convergence. The two agencies have repeatedly clashed over the regulation of convergence services, much as involved industries do (Shin 2006). The regulation of such convergence services is something of a grey area, and the government is currently consulting all parties on a new regulatory framework for the emerging development of converged services. While they were wasting time in the pork-barrel case of jurisdiction, the convergence services has failed to take up.

Obligatory Passage Point

The OPP broadly refers to a situation that has to occur in order for all the actors to satisfy the interests that have been attributed to them by the focal actor. The focal actor defines the OPP through which the other actors must pass, and by which the focal actor becomes indispensable (Callon 1986). Traditionally, the dual OPPs have been taken for granted in Korea and these dual OPP lead to a twofold move by each focal actor and its associated industry. There are different regulatory defaults for one medium (for example, broadcasting as a public resource, or telecom as an economic resource) that might not be available as easily on a converged medium.

The government (administration), one of the focal actors, is pushing for convergence between communications and broadcasting in Korea, but is facing stiff opposition due to competition between the two industries of broadcasting and telecommunications and the feud among regulatory bodies. Along with industries, both the MIC and the KBC became powerful agencies under the strong government' protection, as is exemplified by business-politics collusions and Korean's unique Chaebol structure (associations of many firms clustered around a parent company). The key authoritative powers of the MIC and the KBC come from service "licensing," which has been the greatest barrier to market entry in industries. The ultimate regulatory power granted by the government elevates the two actors' positions by setting up a high entry barrier with a walled garden approach. The complicated licensing procedures have reinforced the monopolistic position of Korea's three major terrestrial broadcasters, which are already in the walled garden: KBS, MBC, and SBS. Although these broadcasters are institutionally independent, the government is in a position to exert extremely strong influences over them, mostly by exercising authority over personnel management (recruitment and appointment). While the government's regulatory powers are now stronger than ever, the pow-

ers of legislative and judiciary bodies have been weak or minimal in the areas of broadcasting and telecommunications.

The KBC was established in 1998 as an effort to root out the legacy of state-controlled broadcasting. However, because of this short-term abrupt innovation and the resulting patchwork in the process of restructuring, redundant and overlapping functions among government agencies was a significant problem, which became the seeds of trouble in ushering in convergence.

The problems in the restructuring in 1998 led to dual OPPs in convergence. The dichotomous OPPs run by the MIC and the KBC separately regulate telecom and broadcasting, with some overlapping areas. The initial OPP (having a unified regulatory authority) set by central government made the two focal actors to create their own OPPs, because the initial OPP was a zero-sum game: It was designed to create a winner and a loser in the process of convergence. Those who lose their benefits strongly oppose the change and thus the transitional period is full of conflict in Korea.

The KBC, as a focal actor of broadcasting and also a mediator between OPP and broadcasters, not only regulates the industry and the public/commercial broadcasters, but also supports certain activities related to the broadcasting system. The KBC is composed of different board members elected by the President and the Congress. This commission has every right to support and regulate the broadcasting system, e.g., Korea Broadcasting System Board members are appointed by the KBC, as well as the board members of the Korean Broadcasting Foundation, which owns MBC. The KBC gives financial support for the independent producers that cover production costs on the open channel, a public-access slot in KBS. KBS spends money on their programs, but this slot is financed by the KBC through a huge allotment of money, called the Korean Broadcasting Development Fund, which spends about 100 million dollars every year. This money comes from a certain percentage of the revenues from commercial broadcasters. Satellite channel providers are granted licenses that privilege them to use the public facilities, pubic frequencies and public access.

The MIC, as a focal actor of telecommunications and also a mediator between OPP and telcos, is responsible for regulating the telecommunications market and industry and for implementing telecommunications standards for Korea. The MIC is funding most of the R&D in Korea through the Electronic Technology Research Institute. In addition, the MIC has authority over broadcasting frequency allocation (Article 9 and Article 10 of the Frequency Law), broadcasting standards (Article 37 of the Frequency Law), and broadcasting facilities and technologies (Article 27 of the Broadcasting Law). To make matters worse, in addition to the current situation, which shows signs of two forms of legal hegemony because of competition between the MIC and the KBC, the politics of convergence are even more complex and marked by a range of paradoxical features.

Conflicting Problematisation

A focal actor identifies potential strategies during a *problematisation* stage (Callon 1986). Preliminary decisions concerning what strategy will be adopted, as well as how it should be enforced, are made at this stage. *Translations* refer to a variety of ways by which actors seek to persuade others and enrol them into an irreversible

alignment with an existing or prospective social network. Through *translations*, actors attempt to create a forum, a central partnership of network, which all the actors agree is worth building (Callon 1986).

As expected, interviews with the officials of the MIC and the KBC reveal that their interpretations of convergence are not unambiguous and unidirectional, rendering the convergence laws and practice multidimensional phenomena. Thus, activities employed under the catchword *convergence* leave wide scopes in disseminating a particular *problematisation* of convergence laws and practices in Korea. Each vision on how the governance of convergence should be organised is ingrained in a particular industry-structure and serves particular socio-economic goals. Postulating the appropriate scope and content of convergence control is by its very nature a politically contested issue.

The regulatory role of the MIC has been strengthened in the interest of preserving fair competition in the telecommunications sector (Shin 2007). The MIC's concerted effort to deregulate and upgrade the telecom market has benefited the country's Internet and wireless market immensely. The MIC wants to problematise this competition momentum in the convergence area by promoting cut-throat competition.

As a part of "Strategies for Convergence IT Korea," the MIC is pursuing an "IT839 strategy" roadmap to lead Korea into the convergence era. This involves introducing eight new technology services investing in three major network infrastructures (such as their Broadband convergence Network [BcN]), and kick-starting nine new engines of growth. Through IT839, the MIC attempts to revitalise the existing telecommunications market. Beefing up the current IT system infrastructure to bring new investors into the market will be the key link to growth in IT industry. In particular, the BcN is notable as it is problematised by the MIC as a keyword against the KBC. The BcN was perceived as the major vehicle to advance the convergence process. The BcN is also called a "neutral" network, a national high-speed backbone, a platform to converge wired and wireless communications and broadcasting, and voice and data. Thus, the network is a window of opportunity for the MIC as well as the telecom industry. Officials at MIC said, "The driving force of technology convergence can be seen in competition, where the need for new, convergence-based solutions is arising in parallel to the evolution of enabling technologies." They believed a neutral network like the BcN would induce a market pull towards convergence, in parallel to the technology push.

In opposition to the MIC, the KBC problematises democratic media as the creators of a public sphere, arguing that any broadcasting services, regardless of transmission methods, should be regarded as broadcasting, and should thus fall under its purviews and rules. This argument is based on a classical understanding of public broadcasting service, the notion that broadcasting is a public utility. According to the Article 19 in the Broadcasting Act, public broadcasters are editorially independent, publicly accountable and adequately funded. The Act is based on international standards on freedom of expression, under which public broadcasters must be protected against political or commercial interference, and be obligated to serve the public interest by providing balanced and impartial coverage. Under this public-sanctioned view, the KBC holds that independence and public interest in broadcasting are fundamental values, even in convergence

media: Convergence media are supposed to serve the public interest, convenience, and necessity, and commercial activities should be controlled and regulated in the interests of democracy and freedom from the excess of intrusion, manipulation, and wasteful expenditure. The KBC, which will be reconfigured drastically if and when the convergence law goes into effect, is posing a sticking point. The KBC contended that a unified regulatory body would pose a threat to the independence of broadcasting networks.

Mobilisation: Making Industry Allies to Support Each Own Problematisation

In the *mobilisation* stage, the focal actors find allies and build alliances to enhance their own *problematisations*. The KBC and the MIC find their allies in the broadcasting and telecommunications sector respectively. The KBC and the MIC mobilise each corresponding industry to take their sides to enhance their arguments. Both sectors voluntarily participate in the convergence brawl because the interests of both telecom and broadcasting sector are aligned with those of regulators and because the outcome of convergence will significantly affect their respective businesses.

In order to join the responsibilities for the management and authorisation of broadcasting that are currently handled separately by the MIC and the KBC, a program should be considered to establish an appropriate regulatory framework for integrating broadcasting and telecommunications services. A consensus has been reached that the government needs to wrap up long-time turf wars and to streamline regulations for the convergence era.

This consensus, however, has embedded a significant dilemma in its realisation: A long history of conflict between the MIC and the KBC presaged the convergence battle. While both realised the need for a unified body and integrated regulation, they failed to agree on how to forge a new system, since the discussions highlight their conflicting interests on who will have jurisdiction over the lucrative convergence services. The MIC and the KBC have each put up a rearguard action to keep convergence services within its jurisdiction. In particular, the two have crossed swords over the convergence of telecom and broadcasting, and it has been observed that their turf wars are a bigger problem than technology and product development. Under the conventional regulatory definitions and frameworks, it is difficult to decide which agency should govern convergence services.

For example, the MIC and the KBC contest over which one should regulate IPTV services. Telecom service providers are ready to launch IPTV services, but have to wait for the regulatory issues to be resolved before proceeding. The problem occurs on the definition of broadcasting. Under the current law, "broadcasting" refers to a specific sender "transmitting" scheduled information to the public at large, while "telecommunication" means that information is transmitted and received in both directions by electronic means. It is difficult to categorise convergence services under these current categories. On IPTV, the positions of the MIC and the KBC largely differ on four points: (1) what the characteristics of services are, (2) what rules apply, (3) how to divide the market when telecom giants such as KT enter, and (4) what the service's area of business should be.

In early 2006, the government set up a task force with the aim of establishing a coordination committee to complete a new regulatory framework for the grey area. In the meantime, the MIC proposed two bills as a way of enhancing their *problematisation*: one is at the content layer – the Broadband Audio-Visual Service

Law – and the other is at the network layer – the Broadband Convergence Network Act. The MIC hoped to enact this new law, the Broadband Audio-Visual Service, because the MIC saw IPTV service as a convergence service combining real-time broadcasting and value-added telecom services. As with Korea's broadband success, the structural separation of infrastructure ownership and service provision allowed new points of entry into the broadband service market via the cable network (Wu 2004). The law is designed to lower barriers for those who want to enter the IPTV or a similar service market, but it maintains the existing regulatory framework for real-time broadcasting in regards to composition, content, and advertising.

The broadcasting sector is strongly against the Act, which abolishes area limits and eases entry for broadcasting convergence services such as IPTV. The KBC regarded the IPTV service as a kind of multimedia service ranging from TV to audio/data broadcasting. It shared the opinion of cable operators, who view IPTV as an extension of cable TV. On the other hand, the MIC hoped to launch the service by slightly revising the existing broadcasting law, but has yet to present its final draft.

In fact, the *problematisation* and subsequent *mobilisation* of each focal actor faced problems from the beginning. The real problem from the beginning of the discussion of convergence has been that the regulatory structure in Korea is widely dispersed, comprising many regulators within the state bureaucracy and several mediatory regulators, each of which has different areas of jurisdiction (Kwak 1999). The discussions on forging a new regulatory system were primarily related to their conflicting interests on who would have jurisdiction over convergence services, instead of on how to create a unified body and how to forge new regulation. While the MIC is focusing on tangible digital convergence technologies, the KBC is focusing on intangible convergence principles. The MIC tends to see convergence from a substantive standpoint, where different jurisdictions adopt similar regulatory devices in terms of scope and content and therefore converge under a unified agency, whereas the KBC tends to see it from a procedural viewpoint, which implies the adoption of similar regulatory principles and practices in the regulation of convergence. In the beginning, different stances toward convergence also contributed to the problem. The MIC's approach to convergence is more or less a pro-market-oriented industrial policy, whereas the KBC's approach is a public interest-oriented policy (Table 1).

What has made matters worse is the complicated web of regulation: The licensing of the broadcasting operator follows a dual path in that the operator should be recommended by the director of the Broadcasting Board, but the license must be granted by the minister of the MIC. This web of complicated regulation renders the *mobilisation* ineffective, because providers themselves keep aligning with and also parting with almost every issue depending on their particular interests.

Table 1: Differing Philosophies in Regulating Telecom and Broadcasting

MIC (telecom)	KBC (broadcasting)
Universal access	Universal availability
Control over interface	Impact on public/society/public interest
Strong competition and less regulation	Less competition and high regulation
Control over network	Control over content

Interessement: Vertical vs. Horizontal Regulation Model

During the *interessement* phase, the focal actors strive to convince other actors to accept their *problematisation* by enacting their strategy. Interestingly, the *interessement* of convergence is similar to the discussion of vertical and horizontal model. The vertical, top-down model involves media-specific regulation, whereas the horizontal regulation model separates content from conduit and subjects the horizontal layer to regulation only when market distortions occur, or when they threaten to occur due to market power exercised by one or more stakeholders (Frieden 2003). By and large, the MIC argued for the horizontal model, while the KBC favoured the vertical model.

The MIC argued that convergence technology business is tilting horizontally. In the horizontal model, smaller competitors are sustaining themselves on discrete pieces of the business. Some companies offer the core technology, some specialise in design, some offer services, and some produce content. The MIC claims IPTV needs to be seen in a horizontal model, and thus IPTV should be under its control because IPTV originated from telecom networks. In the opposing camp is the KBC, which counters that it should be the supervisor, arguing that the IPTV applications should be offered as one integrated service. The KBC initially argued that convergence fell under the category of broadcasting. However, as the KBC's responsibility is to regulate Webcasting content, it was stymied over how to handle broadcasters' Internet content. Facing fierce resistance from public and civil associations, the KBC later changed its view, introducing the concept of "special category broadcasting service" into the Broadcasting Act, which enabled regulation of a convergence service provider such as a broadcasting company.

In mid-2006, the government set up a coordination committee with the task of creating a new regulatory framework for convergence services. One suggestion put forward by the MIC was to change the rules of the game. Instead of dividing services into broadcasting and telecom, the nation should classify them into "networks" and "content": creating a horizontal regulatory system based on the reclassification of the existing telecommunication and broadcasting businesses into transmission and content businesses, under which IPTV service providers would be classified as transmission operators and subject to an advance registration system. This proposal by the MIC is similar to the horizontal model that delineates the horizontal characteristics of Internet Protocol communication. In interview, a MIC official said, "A demarcation line should bisect network and content with the MIC governing the network while the KBC regulates content. The idea represents a revamp from vertical regulations to horizontal regulations."

Arguing that current regulations are no longer appropriate for convergence services, the MIC has proposed a regulatory system that classifies technologies based on their common layered characteristics, instead of regulating each communication technology with a disparate set of rules. Horizontal policy advocates argue that this modular approach to regulation promotes competition by forcing all telecommunication services to adhere to a uniform set of characteristic-based rules, thereby enhancing the competitive characteristics of an open marketplace. This horizontal model, which treats hardware and software in parallel, faces severe opposition from major broadcasters because horizontal structure places the major broadcast carriers in severe competition with entering broadcast carriers, as well

as with telecommunication service providers. Along with the KBC, the national and cable broadcasters stand together in firm opposition to the horizontal policy, in the name of broadcasting facilities as public resources, given the magnitude of its impact on the public, claiming broadcasting facilities are public resources.

Enrolment: The Government's Inscription

In the *enrolment* phase, actors pursue their own strategies and reach an agreement on the scope and content of the convergence plan. In the process the different interests of a range of actors have been translated into the agreement. *Inscription* refers to the way technical artefacts embody patterns of use.

In this stage, the government administration started to enforce strategies, as the discussion was not progressing at all. In fact, there was concern that the preparation and the discussions were counter-productive, deepening gaps among the actors. After several failed negotiations, the government established an independent committee, the Telecommunication and Broadcasting Convergence Promotion Committee in late 2006. Comprising 20 members from government and private sectors, the Committee worked on legislation to create a unified regulatory body by the end of 2007.

In early 2007, despite opposition from broadcasting sector, the government endorsed a resolution establishing an agency – Convergence Committee – to regulate both the broadcasting and telecom fields. Telecom companies welcomed the long-awaited progress. They hope the new committee will accelerate the introduction of convergence services. On the other hand, some civic groups and unionised journalists opposed the plan, fearing that it could threaten the cherished value of independence of broadcasting.

With the establishment of the Convergence Committee, convergence media are defined as convergence technologies itself, not telecom and not broadcasting. This is the government's inscription that forces the definition, embodying future pattern of use.

Political Economy in the Development of DMB: Interests and Ideology of the Stakeholders

In order to better illustrate the dynamics among actors, this study uses the DMB development as an example for such political economy of tangled interests and contrasting ideology among the actors. This additional analysis includes the interactions of industry actors, thus it gives further insights how the interactions among regulatory actors influenced and were influenced by each other. Mahring et al (2004) argue that the ANT theory could be deepened with the addition of the political economy viewpoint. The political economy-inspired analysis of DMB focuses on the complex relations of the stakeholders of DMB, which include contents, services, standards, distribution networks, equipments, and infrastructure.

DMB is a mobile TV service that allows cell phone and personal digital assistant users to watch terrestrial digital television on their portable communications devices. Driven by a convergence of interests between consumer demand, operator ambitions, leading-edge network and device capabilities and government policy, the DMB market in Korea has emerged in late 2005 for the first time in the world as a global test-bed. The MIC and KBC had a difference of opinion about their

jurisdictions with respect to DMB, with the MIC positioning DMB as an extension of telecommunications services. Not only is the situation uncertain, but the introduction of newer services is being hindered.

In the analysis using the political economy framework, two relations are analyzed: (1) broadcasters vs. telcos and (2) MIC vs. KBC. The political economy analysis shows that the potential and challenges of DMB are largely misunderstood – and not just by the regulators, but by many within the communications industry as well. The analysis also shows that content providers hold the keys to the success of the whole value chain in providing DMB service. Telecom carriers are trying to have access to content in order to maximise the potential of DMB.

On the industrial supply side, DMB has three products and service groups – content, transport, and processing. Several stakeholders are grouped in this category. First, telecom carriers are aggressively pursuing full-fledged DMB services as a new cash cow. Telcos see TV as a potential extra application for the local networks, which they intend to build and unbundle. Second, satellite TV service operators are fiercely opposed to DMB, whose survival will be threatened when full-blown DMB services start up. The third set of stakeholders is the terrestrial broadcasters who will offer the over-the-air content to the DMB carriers. Broadcasters in general did not favour the convergence services as they would lose their exclusive control over the management of TV programming.

The three national broadcasters are opposing telecom carriers providing DMB. In regards to content, the fundamental question in the DMB has been the retransmission of over-the-air content via DMB. Three national broadcasters are opposed to sharing their content with the DMB providers. The national broadcasters intend to maximise their power, leveraging the content retransmission issue. Their argument opposing use of their content in DMB is that broadcasting content cannot be commercialised in the name of public interest. Yet, the more compelling motivation can be that they do not want to lose their hegemony in the market where they had been protected under public broadcasting rule systems (Shin 2006).

The broadcasters argue that broadcasting content should not be commercialised in the name of public interest. Telecom carriers counter-argue that subscription-based content is the only way to operate DMB in a sustainable business model. These discrepant views imply a significant disjunction in the socio-technical perspective. KBC has been unable to issue a business license needed for the DMB in the face of strong protest from some of its member broadcasters. The protesters' argument is that retransmission would tarnish the public interest of broadcasting and threaten broadcasting as public resources. The nation's main broadcasters refuse to air their programs through the DMB services.

Telecom industries have been seeking a way to retransmit over-the-air broadcasting content to DMB. Mobile telecom industries have been suffering from stagnant revenue in the saturated wireless market. Mobile providers are now turning their strategic attention to the new cash cow of DMB. The thorny issue around content retransmission reveals the implication of a layered approach in DMB (Shin 2006). The broadcasters still have a vertical model of communication-- that is, that broadcasting infrastructure offers broadcasting content, whereas telecom infrastructure is provisioned to provide telecom content, and Internet infrastructure offers Internet content.

Since the introduction of DMB, the MIC and the KBC have each been attempting to take the initiative on DMB, which has created a challenging political environment. Amongst such confusion, the current classification of satellite DMB service has not been decided yet. S-DMB is so far regarded as neither telecommunications nor broadcasting. Under the scheme, S-DMB service requires both of the amendments of current laws and establishment of new and more laws to appropriate laws, because it has had difficulty regarding the number of channels that can fit on the whole telecom spectrum due to frequency limitations. The current Broadcasting Law has provisioned maximum share limitations in S-DMB and has limited participation in terrestrial DMB service in order to protect the telecommunication operators from the broadcasting industry. Along with such regulatory provisions, the current regulatory structure in Korea seems to limit the wide possibility of convergence. The underlying question is about ontological and semantic distinction: Does DMB belong to the telecommunication industry or is it a functional extension of broadcasting? The current practice of the KBC is to define DMB as an extension of traditional broadcasting, based on the emerging medium's functionality. This places it within the framework of traditional broadcasting and, according to this framework, the KBC requires DMB carriers to observe key broadcasting principles and public interest such as universal service. This KBC expectation imposes a double burden on the telecom carriers who provide DMB service because they must obtain a broadcasting license from KBC and must acquire content from their potential competitors before they can offer DMB service. Along with the KBC, the incumbent broadcasters stand in firm opposition to retransmit their content over DMB in the name of broadcasting facilities as public resources and given the magnitude of its impact on the public. It appears that the broadcasters are concerned that their exclusive control over the broadcasting system would be significantly loosened. The current battle between the broadcasting and the telecommunications sector will no doubt continue, and this battle promises to significantly undermine the development of convergence services.

Figure 1: DMB Layers

Layers	Players
Layer 5 (Mobile-specific content development)	Program & content providers (Broadcasters: KBS, MBC, SBS & YTN)
Layer 4 (Service providers)	ASP, game providers
Layer 3 (Platform operation, content acquisition & commissioning, accessibility expansion of content to customers)	TU Media Corp.
Layer 2 (Mobile phone, PDA, PMP, in-value device, other equipment such as Gap Fillers)	Device Manufactures (Samsung Electronics and LG Electronics)
Layer 1 (Transmission network, satellite operation, infrastructure & technology)	SK Telecom

The political economy of DMB shows different aspects of DMB and their dynamic interactions – technology, service, market, regulation, and users. The overall

development of DMB shows that its technologies are relatively well developed, whereas other aspects of markets, users, and regulations are not. It also clearly exemplifies that convergence is not only a technical question but also an economic, social, and political issue. From a technological perspective, convergence makes it more and more important not to rigidly separate different media as almost all media content is now produced, edited, distributed and stored digitally. On the economic level, convergence in Korea shows the increasingly horizontal concentration of media ownership, with the merging of different media sectors as part of the same huge media conglomerates and markets. From the market and users' point of view, it seems that the demand from market and users are not strong enough to pull the new emerging technology of DMB. This developmental process leaves much to consider in terms of the political economy perspective. The market and user side especially have been neglected in the development of DMB. The main reason for DMB development by telecom companies has been the new revenue source for the telecom companies. Thus, the needs of the prospective market and users tend to be predicted in a too positive way. Instead of a solid framework, a provisional case by case approach is used as the regulation on DMB has not been established yet. Regulation does not reflect the turbulent change of technology and industry interactions. This might cause a waste of resources and over-regulation of the technology.

Divergent views among players operating at different layers also deter the development of DMB. On the one hand, there are those who see the technical changes producing of necessity a social transformation of revolutionary proportions. On the other hand, there are those who emphasise the gradual nature of the changes, and the extent to which the realisation of the potential of technological innovation depends upon social and economic decisions. While there are a range of different views, one view has elicited consensus from different players: content will be the key factor in the success of DMB. The discrepant views in the content sharing imply the significant disjunction in the socio-technical perspective. DMB performs in Janus-faced ways that are ironic, intricate and paradoxical, and it is argued that these traits are essential to understand the phenomenology of convergence in Korea.

Conclusions

This study makes a contribution to ANT literature. As Gao (2005) indicates, ANT has been used mainly in analyzing the process of technology/system implementation and design in organisations. The current study shows that ANT can be broadly used and extended to investigate the formulation of policy, regulatory regimes, and strategy. In addition, the findings of this study show the benefit of ANT by incorporating contextual analysis. Many ANT studies tend to depoliticise actor-network issues by positing a taken-for-granted problem-solving political process. The contextual analysis used in this study is valuable as it highlights the interests of actors and their power to influence an inscription, for example, the willingness of interest translation and the capability to resist a translation. Especially noteworthy contribution is that the critical observation of the interplay of players and how these could determine the success or failure of such a significant technological development. What is significant some of the findings on what is leading to Korean government's failure to cope with the changes could also be relevant for

many other countries which are also on the throes of a technology revolution. The observation on the changing role of the government *vis ŕ vis* media is also noteworthy and could unravel many interesting topics for future researchers. Also the web of complexities around policy on IT and media, which is carefully scrutinized in the paper, can be the future topics.

As the digital media technologies are continually evolving, there is no such thing as a perfect state of convergence. While convergence is a reality that needs urgent regulatory attention, it is important to recognise that there is no single ideal response to convergence. Thus, whether it is desirable or possible to have a national strategy concerning convergence is debatable. The objective of this research is to highlight the process and consequences of the convergence strategies held by different focal actors. The focus is to examine the *problematisation* that the focal actors in convergence developed to *enrol* the other actors, how focal actors promoted their knowledge claims, and how these claims were received by the marketplace. It tracks the overall convergence process by arguing that convergence is a political practice carried out in parallel by the two focal forces of telecom and broadcasting. This study shows how networks of aligned interests are created through the enrolment of players and the translation of their interests, so that they are willing to participate in particular ways of thinking and acting that maintain the network.

The investigation of the dynamics of convergence with the actor-network framework reveals that, while industry and market convergence have evolved smoothly, regulatory convergence has been rocky. Convergence challenges existing institutional arrangements. The concept of dual focal actors possessing an OPP that allows each to translate the interests of other actors (Callon 1986) is an ineffective process due to fierce resistance. By setting convergence policy with their own indigenous OPP, the MIC and the KBC became powerful focal actors, and every actor had to go through it, but the *translation* process of these two actors has not been successful. The *translation* could have been effected through mutual *interessement* and democratic social pact. However, these actors are now challenged by their self-centred convergence policy, and criticism is growing that each is trying to become an influential regulatory agency at the expense of the public interest. The *problematisations* of the both actors were prompted by the concern over decreasing or even losing their powers in the convergence era. Such concerns bring powerful actors onto their sides, the telecom industry versus broadcasters, both of which act as *de-facto* focal-actors. Historically protected and privileged, the growing powers of the two sectors are now seriously challenged by the emerging convergence issues. The politics of convergence reveal that neither the MIC nor the KBC has proposed feasible convergence regulation.

Despite the successes achieved thus far through the government-led strategy, this paternalism will not be tolerated for much longer by players at the forefront of convergence. The Korean history of telecom/broadcasting is full of examples of government that tried and failed to successfully lead a country's economic growth. Korea's economy is outgrowing this old mentality of the government dictating to the market. Government paternalism has been questioned and resisted by actors who want to extend their privileges beyond the pre-convergence era by translating their walled garden monopoly into newly forged terms of politics – disguised names of competition and public interest.

In closing, this study concludes that both focal actors in this case lacked a socio-technical understanding of the policy formulation process: the focal actors' bureaucracy and group-egotism have led them to stick to inadequate regulatory frameworks for convergence, which has led to endless discussions and wastes of valuable public resources. As for the government, poor national mechanisms for ensuring accountability, competition, transparency, and political oversight both explicitly and implicitly allowed the MIC and the KBC to abnormally dominate their respective sectors contributing to the stifling of telecom and broadcasting providers through business-government collusion. The alternative route of the post-industrial era has been labelled with the catchword "convergence." The problems in convergence can be the tip of a huge iceberg in the Korean political economy milieu. Convergence in Korea has occurred only at a functional/technical rather than at a formal/political level, leaving the underlying traditional policies largely intact. There are significant obstacles that stand in the way of such convergence: politics, economics, culture, social and commercial norms and legal mentality. Unless there is paradigm change in policy in communications, similar problems will likely continue to occur in the future. Despite the turmoil over convergence policy development, technological convergence in Korea continues to be developed in industry, markets, and technology sector at a fast rate.

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RESEARCH INTO CHINESE MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

THE CASE OF XINHUA SHANGHAI BUREAU

XIN XIN

Abstract

This article examines the impact of media marketisation in China upon organisational structure and journalistic practices of Chinese news organisations. It aims to assess to what extent market factors have weakened the centralised control over local journalistic practices in the last two and a half decades. This paper focuses on Xinhua Shanghai Bureau, a local division within a central news organisation, Xinhua News Agency, which is headquartered in Beijing and operates nationwide. This article looks not only at the news institution itself, but also at how news organisations interrelate with other institutions. In other words, the paper explores structural and journalistic changes in connection with a set of relations, which a Chinese news organisation has to deal with, existing relations within and outside the organisation.

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Introduction

This article examines the impact of media marketisation in China upon organisational structure and journalistic practices of Chinese news organisations. It focuses on Xinhua Shanghai Bureau, a local division within a central news organisation, Xinhua News Agency, which is headquartered in Beijing and operates nationwide. In this study, Xinhua as a whole is a symbol of centralised media control in China. Its Shanghai Bureau is a local force for the headquarters as well as a central force for other local media outlets based in Shanghai – a showcase of China's economic reforms and openness. The status of Shanghai bureau can be understood from the following statement of a Shanghai-based media scholar:

> *Xinhua [Shanghai Bureau] operates in an independent kingdom. It has less contact with local media, but keeps a peculiar relationship with the local government. It is beyond the administrative control of the local government. The professional ranks (zhicheng) of all Shanghai journalists are examined by a panel chaired by the Propaganda Department of Shanghai Committee of the Party. The director of Xinhua local bureaus is also a member of the panel. However, the ranks of Xinhua journalists based in Shanghai are decided by Xinhua itself.*[1]

Regarding the autonomy of the bureaus in terms of personnel management, the scholar assumed that "Xinhua cannot go too far away from the local government, which is always very careful in dealing with the central media." Here Xinhua Shanghai bureau represents a member of the central media. If the "national" is taken as the basic level, then the "local" is the level below the "national." In China, the notion of "local" has to be understood in relation with the tiered administrative bureaucracy under the control of the central government. In terms of media, the "local" mainly includes provincial, municipal and county establishments (ZGXWNJS 2003, 268). They are affiliated to the local authorities and responsible for protection of local interests, which may be in conflict with national interests (Chan 2003, 159-176).

This paper aims to assess to what extent market factors have weakened the centralised control over local journalistic practices in the last two and a half decades. For some scholars, local media are the force which weakens or subverts the centralised political and ideological control (White 1990; Yu 1990). The proliferation of local newspapers in China between 1979 and 1997, for example, is taken as an indicator of media "decentralization, socialization and marketization" (Wu 2000, 47). The rise of local newspapers and the decline in circulation of Party organs, such as Renmin Ribao,[2] as suggested by Lynch (1999, 160) illustrate the tendency towards pluralisation of news sources, once monopolised by Xinhua and Renmin Ribao. In line with this argument, market factors are assumed to be the driving force behind the decentralisation of state, economics and culture. In turn, this process of decentralisation is hoped to create the conditions for media liberalisation (Berger 1985).

This article looks not only at the news institution itself, but also at how news institutions "evolve in relationship with other social institutions" (Schudson 2000, 175). In other words, the paper explores structural and journalistic changes in connection with a set of relations, which a Chinese news organisation has to deal with

more or less, existing within and outside of the organisation. This approach, which requires research into news organisation(s), has proved useful to study a number of Chinese news organisations (see He 2000; Pan 2000; Rosen 2000; Lee, He and Huang 2006) and international news agencies (Boyd-Barrett, 1980). Research into media organisations, though difficult to undertake because of access, is essential for understanding the main influences on news production and the way in which journalism is exercised in reality (McQuail 2005, 276). The major influences that affect what media messages are produced come from society, media markets (owners, advertisers and audiences) as well as from internal relations, conflicts and problems encountered by the media organisation (p. 276). Moreover, these influences are intertwined with "a number of different relationships within and across the boundaries of the organization" (McQuail 2005, 280-281). These relationships, as McQuail (2005, 281) has suggested, are "often active negotiations and exchanges and sometimes conflicts, latent or actual" and have to be tackled by any investigation into media organisations and occupations. On the one hand, almost all media organisations, no matter whether based in liberal-democratic or authoritarian societies, have to think about how to deal with government, their main news sources, organised pressure groups and clients/audiences (McQuail 2005). On the other hand, there is "a diversity of function of many media organizations," and within the boundaries of each organisation there are "different interests competing for status and finance" that can be "a source of latent conflict" (McQuail 2005, 297).

In the Chinese context, media marketisation implies diversification of forms of financing, proliferation of local media outlets, intensifying competition for advertising and audience and commercialisation of media operations (Herbert 2001; Pan 2000; Polumbaum 1994; Wu 2000; Zhao 1998). The diversification of forms of financing has been characterised most notably by the rise of advertising and other forms of financing rather than state subsidies (Polumbaum 1994, 115). Media marketisation in China started in the early 1980s and has been accelerated since 1992 after a few years of reorganisation because of the Tiananmen movement in 1989.

In terms of the impact of market journalistic practices, the optimistic view of a number of authors suggests that marketisation means decentralisation and liberation. However, most studies have painted a mixed picture: on the one hand, after nearly three decades of marketisation, Chinese media have been transformed from a pure propaganda apparatus into a semi-industrialised sector. The emerging market has been opened to international competitors (Curtin 2005; Guo 2003; Hu 2003; Lee, He and Huang 2006; Weber 2003; Zhao 2003). The development of media and consumer markets has to a certain extent eroded the Party journalism ideology and has served to nurture the spirit of journalistic professionalism for objective reporting and press freedom (He, 2000; Pan and Chan 2000; Pan and Lu 2003). During the process of media marketisation, "the yearning for content diversity and the desire for ideological laxity might have begun to take shape in the minds of journalists" (Chang, Chen, and Zhang 1993, 20). At the same time, "the assumption that the Chinese journalists often act in unison needs to be reconsidered" (p. 20).

On the other hand, journalistic practices in China, particularly news collection and distribution, remain subject to still tight political and ideological control of the Community party (Chan 1993; Chen and Chan 1998; Zhao 1998; Pan 2000; Lee 2003). Although Chinese journalists are allowed or even encouraged from time to

time to criticise wrongdoings of Party officials, there are still many restrictions (de Burgh 2003; Zhao 2000). Few investigative reports "criticize or expose corruptions of high ranking officials" (Hong and Cuthbert 1991, 8). Moreover, Chinese news organisations predominantly remain state-owned or party-owned, although they have begun to generate revenues by themselves in an increasingly market-driven environment (Zhao 1998). This version of marketisation is distinctively different from the one observed in UK and other Western European countries. In Western Europe, marketisation has been defined as those "policy interventions" designed to "increase the freedom of action of private corporations" (Murdock and Golding 1999, 118). However, there is no sign indicating the change to the ownership of Chinese news organisations, which are still owned, though not necessarily funded, by the Party-state. Chinese news organisations as mixtures of governmental and business sectors are mostly directed according to administrative orders and temporary regulatory measures rather than by statutory legislation (Lee 2000). Their corporate goals and organisational procedures remain ambiguous and are far from being institutionalised as is the case in many European countries (Lee 2000).

Most existing literature on the marketisation of Chinese media focuses on newspapers and television stations. Very few studies research into Xinhua, one of the most influential news organisations in China. The study of the impact of marketisation on the Chinese media structure has also largely excluded the case of Xinhua. This agency still holds the privilege granted in Mao's era in terms of reporting politically sensitive events and foreign news supply, although its monopoly of news sources has been challenged by intensifying media competition (Xin 2006a). Xinhua headquarters and all local bureaus located nationwide started various business activities in the early 1980s and opted for financial independence by the end of 1999. This marketisation path that Xinhua went through in the 1980s and the 1990s had an impact on the relations between the headquarters and local bureaus, between local bureaus and local governments, between local bureaus and other local media. The continuities and discontinuities of the set of relations listed here are essential to understand dynamics of media marketisation and its impact upon central-local relations and journalistic practices. For all these reasons, this paper aims to fill the gap by researching into Xinhua.

Financial Autonomy from 1997 to 2003

Xinhua is the only legitimised national news agency in China. Xinhua has 31 domestic local branches spread across the major cities of the country, such as capitals of provinces and autonomous regions, and municipalities, including Shanghai. There are sub-divisions affiliated to some provincial bureaus. Local provincial bureaus function as representatives of headquarters. The implication of this is twofold: First, local bureaus were given the same political status as that of headquarters. After Xinhua became a centralised national news agency in the early 1950s, all local bureaus, including Shanghai bureau, were detached from direct administration of local governments. They all represented the interests of the central government as well as functioned as central media institutions at local level. They should be supported politically and journalistically by, cooperate with and supervise local governments according to the directive of the Central Committee of the Party released in the 1950s (Xinhua 2002). Second, all local bureaus

were under headquarters' editorial, personnel and financial control. Shanghai Bureau is Xinhua's biggest local division in terms of permanent members of staff (Xin 2006a; Xin 2006b).

In 2005 Shanghai Bureau had 71 permanent staff members treated as cadres and over 100 contract employees, working for facility and service sectors. The bureau was among the first financially self-sufficient divisions of Xinhua in the 1990s, when the whole agency was struggling for more financial independence. The division made its first significant profit by publishing and trading directories of Chinese enterprises. Between 1992 and 1996 the bureau diversified its business by trading economic news and information, running *Shanghai Securities* daily and entering the advertising, public relations, publishing, real estate businesses and foreign trade. *Shanghai Securities* daily became profitable in 1997 and was then turned into a corporation engaging in advertising, public relations, publishing, consultancy, TV production, Internet services and other businesses. Subsequently, the newspaper became the major financial source of the bureau, contributing 12-14 million RMB per year.[3] In addition, the bureau earned 5-6 million RMB per year from letting offices and several millions RMB by selling repacked news and information products.[4] Since 1997, the bureau along with eight counterparts began to cover most expenditure from self-generated income apart from staff's basic salary. Until 2003, Shanghai bureau enjoyed substantial financial autonomy.

More financial autonomy, however, also meant more pressure. First, there were labour costs. The proliferation of economic units within the bureau resulted in a rapid growth of contract workers in addition to permanent members of staff. The division was under increasing pressure to keep salary high in order to meet its staff's expectations for constant bonus rises. In 1998 the average annual income of an editor of middle professional rank in Shanghai Bureau was 100-120 thousands RMB, about 10 times more than the level at Xinjiang Bureau (in North-West China). Second, there were costs for maintaining non-profitable companies. As Xinhua is a not-for-profit organisation, its business affiliations were not allowed to go bankrupt. Most employees laid off from any company had to be re-employed within the bureau.[5] Third, there were costs for maintaining office buildings and updating communication facilities. Last but not least, the bureau was under increasing pressure to compete with other local bureaus for economic and editorial performances in order to keep its leading position. In 1998, Shanghai Bureau was in second place after Guangdong Bureau for self-generated revenues (Xinhua 1998, 502). The performance of local bureaus was closely connected with the promotion of their chiefs.

Journalists' Concerns

Meeting news reporting quotas allocated by headquarters was the major concern of each local bureau during the period of financial independence. The quota varied from year to year and from bureau to bureau. In 1997 the yearly quota for Shanghai Bureau included 1,000 pieces of general news, 200 reports for "internal references" and more than 600 news photos. Each journalist of the bureau was allocated an individual news quota, which was calculated on a seasonal or monthly basis and varied according to journalist's professional ranks (junior, middle and senior). The completion of quotas was linked to the bonus salary income of each

journalist. In order to complete news quotas, all local bureaus utilised financial incentives (such as increasing bonus for extra work) to motivate journalists to work harder. Originally, in the late 1980s, news quota was designed to increase Xinhua news reporting capacity in order to compete with Western counterparts. This can be seen as a reflection of headquarters' tight centralised editorial control over local bureaus. In addition, each bureau was required to respond to a number of planned news events and to be ready for unexpected events, such as the death of Deng Xiaoping in 1997. In the same year planned news events included Hong Kong's handover, the 15th congress of the CCP and the 8th National Sports Games (Xinhua 1997, 416). Journalists at local bureaus were required to follow the directions of headquarters to cover these events and encouraged to discuss ideas and news strategies with editors based at headquarters. Completion of news quotas was important for local bureaus to legitimise their business activities.

Journalists were also required to engage in business activities. This was partially due to scarce labour. But it was also aimed at taking advantage of the relations between journalists and news sources, particularly local officials. Journalists in general attempted to keep good contacts with local political and economic authorities for news sources and for personal reasons (e.g. networking). Xinhua journalists based in Shanghai and elsewhere were responsible for reporting accomplishments achieved by local authorities as well as investigating their misbehaviours in "internal references," which are circulated only among Party cadres. They functioned as a bridge between local and central governments. This multiple role of Xinhua journalists, combining journalistic with business tasks, was considered as an "advantage." Many journalists thus became negotiators between Xinhua and local political and business authorities. They were required to distribute headquarters' publications, such as *Reference News* and *Xinhua Daily Telegraph,* and trade news and information products. Collecting newspaper subscription fees from governmental departments and other institutions became a part of the job that journalists at local bureaus, including Shanghai division, had to do. Journalists engaged in various business activities, including selling economic news and information products, public relations, advertising, foreign trade and real estate. A small group of journalists became full-time businessman, but the majority were doing both an editorial and a business job. The role of journalists changed, so did their relations with local governments.

Relationship with Local Governments

In the pre-reform age the relationship between Xinhua and local governments was journalism-driven but politicised as well. Local governments were a major news source of Xinhua. News reporting and being reported were taken as political missions. As representatives of the central government, Xinhua local bureaus were required to investigate the misbehaviours of local authorities, reporting their problems in "internal references."

However, Xinhua's privileged status began to be challenged in the 1990s, especially in big cities where local authorities gained substantial autonomy to control local budgets and local media outlets boomed. This is the case of Shanghai. Its political significance was highlighted by the fact that several leaders of the central government and the Central Committee of the Party came from Shanghai, for

example Jiang Zemin, Zhu Rongji, Huang Ju and Wu Bangguo. The autonomy of Shanghai resulted in tightening control over local media outlets. An informant pointed out: "The more open [economically] Shanghai is, the tighter is the control [over Shanghai-based media] exercised by the local government. They [local officers] are afraid that local media might cause damage to their career."[6]

Xinhua was exempted from the control of local governments according to a notice released in the 1950s for ensuring Xinhua's privilege to access local official sources. The document is still valid, but many Xinhua journalists claimed that it was getting harder for them to access Shanghai local authorities, especially regarding "negative things" about the city. Press officers in Shanghai preferred to provide media outlets with standard news reports about topical issues, including cultural fairs such as Beijing Opera Festival held in Shanghai. Local media outlets were required to go along with the lines set by local authorities, and sometimes were urged to release them without any editing. Xinhua journalists, representing the central government and reporting news from a national perspective, did not have to follow the rules made by local authorities.[7] Xinhua journalists were responsible for checking on local authorities on behalf of the central government and the general public. However, local authorities tried to provide Xinhua journalists with the least "negative" news. Sometimes Xinhua journalists were not invited for press conferences in relation to local happenings. Many journalists claimed that they were treated as "outsiders" in contrast to their colleagues working for local media who were considered as "insiders." An informant observed that: "Local officials dare not talk to Xinhua people about faults in their fields. They do not talk about negative things, or talk very little about them."[8] This, as explained by the journalist, was partly related to the local culture, which saw "face value" more important than "truth." Any faults, disadvantages, mistakes and errors might damage not only their political careers, but also "face values" (mianzi).[9]

Local authorities treated local media outlets more favourably than Xinhua's Shanghai bureau. The former were informed earlier and were provided with more detailed information about local happenings. An informant pointed out: "Xinhua [Shanghai bureau] is central media. [Xinhua] is not their [local governments'] own child. They tell us [Shanghai bureau] less, or don't tell us at all about some local things."[10] Similar views were expressed by a number of Xinhua journalists interviewed for this research.

Shanghai governmental departments were Xinhua's important clients, subscribing to the agency's wire news, newspapers, news magazines and "internal references." Shanghai bureau developed 3,500 news and information subscribers in Shanghai by the end of 2001. The majority of them were governmental institutions and state-owned enterprises. The bureau made about 6 million RMB profit out of subscription fees.

In reality, the relations between Xinhua bureaus and local governments were more complicated than a combination of agency-source and agency-client relationships. They were tied up together by a set of social networks connecting the agency's executives and journalists with political and economic elites. This was particularly true in the 1990s when the bureau was fighting for financial independence and Shanghai was undergoing rapid economic development highlighted by the rise of its new economic zone – Pudong. In this period Shanghai was opening up to the

outside world, and local authorities needed timely, accurate and comprehensive information for decision-making. Most importantly, they needed an official conduit like Xinhua to inform central authorities of their achievements. In order to become financially independent, Shanghai Bureau needed more business opportunities. This created a common ground for the two sides to develop more pragmatic relations based on mutual benefits. Good personal contacts of the bureau's former leader made such relations possible in the 1990s. Shanghai bureau benefited from the support of local authorities to gain more business opportunities. For example, the bureau was given an approval by local authorities to develop real estates in Pudong.[11] Xinhua, in exchange, released a series of "positive reports" about the development of the zone.

This had an impact upon journalistic practices. First, Xinhua journalists reported more about accomplishments of local governments and more positive news stories about the municipality. Second, journalists were reluctant to investigate misbehaviours of local authorities. The bureau was criticised by headquarters several times for the small quantity and poor quality of investigations circulated as international references among Party cadres. Journalists found it difficult to criticise local authorities whilst trying to sell news products to them. A journalist explained: "The fact that they [local authorities] buy our stuff means doing us a favour. We know that some [of them] are not interested [in Xinhua news products] … they want something in return."[12] The journalist sometimes wrote favourable news stories about local governments upon their request. He pointed out: "I had to agree [with their requests], because I need their help as well. I hate to be a newspaper seller, but there is nothing I can do. The headquarters forces us to do this."[13] The journalist also admitted: "They [local officials] are nice to me. They are buying things from us. I feel embarrassed to criticise them again." Meanwhile, it was getting harder for Xinhua to sell newspapers in an increasingly competitive media market. The rise of local media posed more challenges to the agency.

Relationship with Local Media

Liberation Daily and *Wenhui Daily* were the main local newspapers which carried Xinhua releases for free before 1980. Without economic motivations Xinhua only wanted its news wires published by local press. The situation changed when Shanghai bureau began to charge newspapers a subscription fee in the late 1980s. However, the incomes generated from subscription fees from local media contributed little to the bureau before 2003.

Shanghai-based newspapers were used by Xinhua as second-hand news sources. Local media carried Xinhua news wires when they were obliged to do so. These mainly concerned news about significant national events and official documents released by the central government. They sometimes quoted Xinhua wires when they were not sure about the issues concerned. Local newspapers carried the agency's international news and news about other regions of the country, using Xinhua news wires as background materials or a source for further investigation. Local newspapers tended to use more general news reports produced by their own journalists as competition intensified within China.[14]

The competition between Xinhua and local media was subtle but could not be ignored. Xinhua newspapers, *Shanghai Securities* and *Xinhua Daily Telegraph*

(based in Beijing but distributed in Shanghai), competed with local counterparts for advertising revenues and subscribers. The *Securities*' circulation was three hundred thousand copies in 2002 and had over 10% of the advertising market share in Shanghai.[15] The *Telegraph* had much less circulation in Shanghai, but competed with local newspapers for readership and advertising revenues as well. Besides, Xinhua journalists competed with their colleagues at local media for news sources and newspaper publishing space.

The collaboration between Xinhua and Shanghai local media mainly applied to informal news exchanges between journalists. As discussed earlier, local journalists were better informed by local officials, but had less autonomy to decide content of coverage, while Xinhua journalists gained more autonomy to cover local issues and an advantage to access central government. The two sides tried to benefit from each other by exchanging news sources. Local newspapers sometimes published Xinhua's reports on those local issues, which were too sensitive to cover by themselves.[16]

Reorganisations in the Early 2000s

In 2002 Xinhua decided to turn to the central government for more subsidies, taking back financial control over local bureaus (Xin 2006b). An extra year was given to Shanghai Bureau to reorganise its business activities before its financial independence ended in 2004. Meanwhile, an investigation of the "economic problems" of the bureau's chiefs took place, focusing on the "mismanagement and bribery" of the former managers Wu Mingfei and Pu Xiaojiang. After both were removed from leadership positions, new chiefs were appointed. *Shanghai Securities* daily was separated from the bureau's administration and began to be managed directly by headquarters. The bureau was required to close down non-profitable companies. Local managers were concerned that the closure of unprofitable companies which, however, were growing up might cost Xinhua more in the future. They were worried that the ongoing reorganisation set the agency back to the command economy period, arguing that what Xinhua was doing in the early 2000s led to the opposite direction of the economic reforms.[17]

Meanwhile, a new evaluating mechanism, designed to assess journalistic and business performances of all divisions, was introduced within Xinhua in order to help the recentralisation of financial control over local bureaus. Each division was given a certain amount of editorial and business tasks. The business tasks included helping with marketing news wires and newspapers. Completion of these tasks was the precondition for receiving a certain amount of bonus salary for the members of staff of each department or bureau. Only a small gap in bonus salary between different divisions of the agency was allowed. The evaluating mechanism was criticised by rich local bureaus, such as Shanghai and Guangdong, which were able to provide staff with higher bonus salaries in the 1990s.

Shanghai Bureau was seen as a victim of such reorganisations initiated by the headquarters as its major revenue source, *Shanghai Securities* and the autonomy to control its own expenditure were lost. Moreover, staff's incomes were reduced dramatically in comparison with the level in the 1990s. Only 60 thousands RMB for bonus salaries per head per year was allocated to the bureau in 2004.[18] This was about the same level as that in Xinjiang Bureau, which used to be 10 times less than the standard of Shanghai Bureau 10 years ago. Shanghai Bureau's managers were

worried about whether they could keep talented journalists to stay for long with less salary. The same problems were faced by other bureaus which enjoyed greater financial autonomy in the 1990s. A manager of Shanghai Bureau saw the reorganisations as a setback for Xinhua in its quest towards marketisation. He suggested that financial autonomy was not the fundamental cause of the bureau's "economic problems," such as "black accounts," bad debts, corruptions, and overexpansion of real estate businesses. For him, the problem was that:

> *Xinhua managers did not know how to develop market economy, using command economy methods to solve new problems. Once an enterprise got problems, the problems were not seen as a result of mismanagement but as a problem of doing business. They [Xinhua's top managers] forgot Shanghai bureau contributed to Xinhua 400 million RMB in total during 1997-2003. They thought what we did was totally wrong and caused them only troubles.*[19]

Continuities and Discontinuities

The reorganisations also led to the reconstruction of the relationships of Shanghai Bureau with local governments, local media and headquarters under the new evaluating mechanism. Both continuities and discontinuities apply to the relationships with Shanghai local governments and media. The relations between Shanghai bureau's leadership and local authorities became less close than before. The new chief came from another province and had less local contacts than his predecessor.[20] The bureau became less dependent on local governments for business opportunities and tried to focus on news-oriented businesses.

Local governments remained an important news source of the bureau. In comparison with other local media outlets, the bureau found access to local officials less easy but had more autonomy to cover "negative things" about local authorities.[21] It was getting more difficult for Xinhua journalists to access local officials, particularly about "negative" news. A Xinhua journalist by chance got access to a meeting between local authorities for discussing the problems of "complaint-lodging work" (Xinfang).[22] The journalist's investigation of the problems with the "Xinfang" system was later published as an "internal reference." After Shanghai local authorities read the report, they began to treat Xinhua journalists more cautiously. In fact, a journalist working for a local newspaper *Xinmin Evening News* gained similar materials but dared not disclose them in order to avoid displeasing local authorities.[23] On the other hand, local governments remained important consumers of Xinhua, subscribing to its "internal references," newspapers and wires news.[24] To a certain extent local governments became even more important to Xinhua for marketing its news and information products.

The agency-source relationship with local media remained in place. Local newspapers remained an important news source of Xinhua about local happenings. Xinhua journalists still exchanged news sources with local media, which sometimes turned to the agency's news wires about sensitive political issues for reference. Xinhua drew more attention to news and information marketing, treating its media clients more seriously than before. The news provision model "1+X" was also applied to Shanghai-based media clients.[25] Competition between journalists for news sources and publishing space with local media still existed. *Shanghai securi-*

ties, although it was separated from Shanghai bureau, continued to compete with local newspapers for advertising revenues and readership. *Xinhua Daily Telegraph* and *Reference News* also attempted to increase their market shares in Shanghai. There were more continuities applying to the relationship of the bureau with local newspapers. A noticeable action was Xinhua's collaboration with Dragon TV with little involvement of Shanghai bureau.

Collaboration between Xinhua and Shanghai Dragon TV

On 20th November 2003, Xinhua's headquarters released a "Notice on Issues Relating to Collaboration with Shanghai Dragon TV." The document required all news departments of headquarters, domestic and overseas bureaus to coordinate with Shanghai Dragon TV for news reporting. The coordination included: (1) Xinhua news divisions to invite Dragon TV journalists to join the agency's actions of reporting important events; (2) Xinhua journalists to provide interviews via telephone and other means for Dragon TV when unexpected events took place on sites near to Xinhua bureaus (both domestic and overseas); (3) Xinhua domestic bureaus to assist Dragon TV to access news sources outside Shanghai; (4) Actions taken by Xinhua divisions in coordination with Dragon TV to be assessed by the new evaluating mechanism. Xinhua Audio-video News Centre based at headquarters took charge of the news production in collaboration with Dragon TV – the Shanghai-based satellite TV channel. Shanghai bureau according to the document should work together with the Centre to coordinate the collaboration.

Shanghai bureau was not satisfied with such a supplementary role as well as disappointed by the not-for-profit mode of collaboration with Dragon TV. A manager of the bureaus stated: "There are no [economic] benefits for us; we are just a bridge between the Audio-video centre and the TV station."[26] Initially, the bureau suggested establishing a news production company in collaboration with Shanghai TV station. However, the proposal was not approved by headquarters, which did not want the bureau to get involved and took over the negotiation with Dragon TV. Xinhua's top leaders considered the collaboration as a good opportunity to improve the agency's TV news production and distribution as well as for branding the agency (Ju 2004).

For understanding this collaboration, it is necessary to briefly review Xinhua's TV business. The agency's TV services started by setting up an Audio-video news centre in Beijing in the early 1990s. After a decade of development, its TV news production remained undeveloped. It "was not recognised by TV stations and was not known by the general public" (Ju 2004). The centre used to produce documentaries and news packages with little concern to "timeliness." Staff lacked adequate professional training and expertise.[27]

The agency's desire to expand its TV business can be traced back to the early 1990s when the agency applied for a licence to run a TV station. However, the application was rejected by the former Ministry of Radio, Film & Television (now State Administration of Radio, Film & Television). In 2000 the former head of this TV regulatory body was appointed as Xinhua's President (Tian Congming). Xinhua soon made its second application, which was rejected again. The rejection was claimed to be based on the decision made by the former minister, Mr. Tian. There are underlying meanings for this. First, the main reason for rejecting the agency's

application was to protect the national TV broadcaster CCTV.[28] Both Xinhua and CCTV were key central players allowed to collect and distribute news nationwide and worldwide. Both had exclusive rights to cover politically sensitive events, though in most cases CCTV had to follow Xinhua's tone for reporting special occasions. Xinhua in comparison with CCTV had an advantage in terms of widely spread news collection and distribution networks. If Xinhua was allowed to run a news channel, it would unavoidably pose a challenge to CCTV.[29] In this case, collaborating with Dragon TV seemed a better choice (Ju 2004; Ma 2003). Dragon TV could provide what Xinhua was looking for (Ma 2003).

Xinhua preferred to adopt a non-commercial mode of collaboration: Dragon TV gained free news footages supplied by the agency, whilst Xinhua journalists gained free training offered by Dragon TV. The agency agreed to help the TV station to access news sources outside Shanghai as well as with news production. In return, Xinhua's news was allowed to "land" in the TV channel. This non-commercial mode seemed to the agency's managers less troublesome than the profit-oriented module adopted for running Xinhua TV services before.[30] Xinhua tried to learn lessons from previous experiences of running the TV centre. A manager of Xinhua gave the following explanation:

> *Originally, Xinhua audio-video centre was considered as a "Money machine," but was managed badly. Its divisions based at local bureaus were also driven by making profits. Many business activities they were involved in did not bring Xinhua enough profits but damaged the agency's reputation. Many TV journalists adopted "Paid journalism" as well* (Ju 2004).

The not-for-profit collaboration with Xinhua was the best deal that Dragon TV could expect to have. The predecessor of Dragon TV was Shanghai satellite TV channel launched in 1998. It used to transmit programmes made by terrestrial channels for local audiences. The satellite channel was not very popular both within and outside Shanghai. Its advertising revenue was only 56 million RMB in 2002, which was even lower than other provincial satellite TV channels, such as provinces Yunnan and Shanxi (Zhu, Huang and Zhou 2004, 195-226). Later, the Satellite channel was merged with SMG and began to modify its services. The channel aimed to play a leading role for projecting Shanghai's image to the outside world, functioning as a "business card" for the city. It also aimed to compete with CCTV and Phoenix TV which were popular within China and among overseas Chinese audiences. Most importantly, the channel needed to make profits urgently. For all these reasons, Dragon TV decided to brand itself a channel providing news programmes of good quality.

Dragon TV needed a strong partner to collaborate with in order to overcome regulatory and financial constraints. In China there were and still are regulatory constrains on cross-regional news collection, particularly for local media organisations, including Dragon TV. Xinhua, CCTV and a few other central media players are exempted from such restrictions. Local protectionism also limited cross-regional news collection of local media outlets. Dragon TV had influence in Shanghai and nearby areas in Yangzi river delta, but faced difficulties to expand news production and distribution in other regions[31]. In addition, scarce human and financial resources increased difficulties for Dragon TV to establish its own news collection networks nationwide. A manager of the TV channel admitted:

We set up a correspondent station in Beijing, but our own resources are not enough to build up our own [nationwide news collection] network. It took at least 3-5 years to build one. We very much value the authority of Xinhua and its nationwide and worldwide news networks. Also, we are not compet-ing with each other [in terms of advertising revenues and audience]. We are supplementing each other although this might not be proper to describe our relations with such a national news agency.[32]

Therefore, there were mutual benefits. Xinhua helped Dragon TV report impor-tant domestic and international issues. Xinhua journalists began to be interviewed "on the spot" for free by Dragon TV. Before that they accepted interviews only by CCTV. Xinhua supplied TV footages and textual reports about breaking news, such as earthquakes in Gansu province, coal mining accidents in Jiangxi, Beijing and Hebei provinces. There were news sites which Dragon TV journalists were not allowed to access, but Xinhua local journalists could.[33] On these occasions, the TV channel relied on Xinhua for accessing news sources. In return, Dragon TV carried Xinhua's brand name, broadcasting the agency's news reports. Between 10th and 15th June 2004 Dragon TV broadcast 46 Xinhua news reports, including 26 telephone interviews and 20 TV news bulletins.[34] Besides, the TV station ran free training courses for Xinhua journalists.

The collaboration between Xinhua and Dragon TV has demonstrated that the negotiation and collaboration between the national and the local have helped both national and local players to overcome regulatory constraints. In addition, it is an indication of the rise of local media players which have become more capable of negotiating with national players. However, the not-for-profit mode of the col-laboration seems to run counter to the common argument that Chinese media are becoming increasingly market-driven.

Centralised Editorial Control and Local Worries

Xinhua's headquarters relaxed its *financial* control over local bureaus in the 1980s and the 1990s, but tightened it again in early 2000s. Throughout, they never give up its centralised *editorial* control over local bureaus. For local journalists, the relationship with editors at headquarters remains one of their major concerns. Most of them did and still do both "propaganda" and "investigative journalism."

Xinhua's centralised editorial control system was established in the 1950s and was considered as the core of news management of the agency. It appeared to the agency's leaders more important than the financial control. The centralisation of editorial control was reinforced by personnel management. For example, headquar-ters appointed heads of local bureaus, and the number of permanent members of staff at each bureau was also controlled by headquarters.

Editorial control was exercised in three main ways: (1) local journalists had considerable autonomy to collect and write general news stories, but editors based at headquarters made the final decision on whether the news stories should be accepted. Generally speaking, editors at headquarters were "superior" to local journalists, though the latter might be more senior in terms of professional ranks and working experience; (2) headquarters' editors were responsible for suggestions to local journalists about coverage of significant local events. They also worked together with local bureaus to report the important events; (3) the editorial board

and news departments of headquarters initiated reporting plans and allocated news tasks to local bureaus. For example, 80% of news reporting topics of Guangdong bureau was allocated by headquarters.[35]

The local worries mainly concerned the relationship of bureaus' journalists with editors of headquarters. Local journalists discussed their works with editors at headquarters before finalising reports if time permitted. Discussions seemed particularly necessary when it came to long reports. This was adopted by local journalists as a strategy to manage their "professional risks." However, this unavoidably would affect timeliness of news reports.

Local journalists also worried about conflicts between their own news tasks and extra works allocated by editors at headquarters. Each journalist was responsible for several beats and had to balance their time and energy to cover important events. A journalist admitted that he sometimes wrote non-newsworthy stories, which were mainly based on the materials provided by press officers. He did this for keeping press officers happy or completing news quota, although he wanted to produce some "valuable new reports." He took pride in his investigation about a family worker-girl who came from a poor village but got injured in an accident and had an operation. Neither she nor the family where she worked could afford the medical expenses that raised an issue about the inadequacy of the social insurance system which excluded the rural population. This report was initially published in Xinhuashidian column as well as circulated as an "internal reference," and then republished by other media outlets. The story aroused attention of central and local authorities and the general public. The injured girl subsequently gained financial support from the public. Later, local authorities carried out a new policy for improving the social insurance system in Shanghai. The journalist claimed that producing such reports gave him satisfaction to function as a professional journalist, but his busy daily schedule always forced him to produce something "dull and not newsworthy at all."[36]

Conclusions

This paper has examined how news production at Xinhua Shanghai Bureau between 1980 and 2005 has been influenced by changes in the bureau's financing and organisational structure. It has explored a set of relations of Shanghai Bureau with the headquarters, local government and local media. There are some conclusions which can be drawn from the above discussion.

First, the rise of market forces resulted in financial decentralisation. This is the case of Shanghai Bureau, which obtained considerable financial autonomy from 1997 to 2003. Second, the rise of market forces resulted in a certain degree of personnel decentralisation. For example, Shanghai Bureau began to be allowed to employ contract workers. Third, the increase in financial autonomy in the case of Shanghai Bureau did not weaken the centralised editorial control. Instead, the headquarters tightened their control over all journalists by using news quotas. However, the rise of local media based in Shanghai and the difficulties faced by Xinhua Bureau signalled the weakening of centralised editorial control.

Fourth, the rise of market forces had a huge impact on the role of journalists and their relations with news sources. Journalists were forced to play multiple roles and faced more pressure than before. Journalists became aware of and were willing to do both propaganda and investigative journalism. However, they had

to negotiate their journalistic ethics with the pressure that they were facing. The mixed organisational goals, multiple roles of journalists and their competing tasks and interests have resulted in a mixed picture of journalistic practices within the local bureau. Journalists adopted a pragmatic approach to negotiate journalism norms with their own concerns and organisational rules. Therefore, there was a mix of "Party journalism," "watchdog journalism" and "paid journalism." This also is the result of "active negotiations and exchanges and sometimes conflicts, latent or actual," as suggested by McQuail (2005, 281). Under economic pressure Shanghai Bureau's relations with news sources became more commercialised. Local governments were and still are the main news sources and important clients of Xinhua news products.

Fifth, the reorganisation of Xinhua in the early 2000s has also demonstrated the countervailing force of Chinese media marketisation. The changes to Xinhua's organisational goals in the early 1980s and in the early 2000s respectively were all followed by structural and operational shifts. However, they directed Xinhua to opposite directions. Changes in the early 1980s resulted in Xinhua becoming more market-driven. Shifts in the early 200s brought Xinhua back to a situation of more direct financial dependence on governmental subsidies. The more recent changes to Xinhua along with the not-for-profit mode of the collaboration between Xinhua and Dragon TV provide counter-evidence to arguments that Chinese media are becoming more and more market-driven. Although the nature of Xinhua as a traditional national news agency and an important Party-organ seems to make this case study quite unique, the problems and challenges that the organisation encountered in dealing with its internal conflicts and competing interests within the boundaries of the organisation as well as with government, news sources and clients are quite common among Chinese media. The setbacks of Xinhua in becoming financially independent provide a good illustration of the countervailing forces constraining efforts by Chinese media to become fully commercialised or more financially independent. In turn, the influences of the setbacks on journalistic practices cannot be easily assessed according to analyses based on the liberal model of journalism.

Sixth, the collaboration between Xinhua and Dragon TV also challenges the dominant view on the impact of marketisation which should result in further intensifying competition between different media players, particularly between national and local media. In the context of China there were and still are regulatory constraints in limiting cross-regional expansion of local media and cross-media expansion of Xinhua. Yet, the conditions for application of conventional or normative principles, which proved to work well in societies based on the optimal combination of liberal-democratic system and market economy, remain absent. In order to overcome regulatory constraints, Xinhua and Dragon TV opted for a pragmatic collaboration instead of competition. However, the challenge faced by Xinhua Shanghai Bureau in the local media market somehow has echoed the dominant argument.

To sum up, the case of Xinhua has shown that more financial independence did not necessarily result in more editorial independence and journalism modifications. In the Chinese context, media marketisation was accompanied by more competing tasks allocated to journalists, more "paid journalism" and managerial misbehaviours and more conflicting interests between local bureaus and headquarters within Xinhua. Market factors weakened the centralised financial control over local media.

However, there was no obvious sign of weakening of the centralised ideological control. Market competition caused conflicts between central and local media at the local level, but also forced negotiation and collaboration with each other for overcoming regulatory constraints.

Although it is impossible to make any generalisation drawing on a single case, Xinhua is definitely a valuable starting point to understand the complexity of the impact of Chinese media marketisation. Moreover, it serves as a good example to analyse the main forces that might affect what news is produced in a non-Western context and provides an original case study for further comparison of journalistic practices in different social, political and organisational backgrounds.

Acknowledgement

Notes:

1. Interview No. 57, see Appendix I.

2. Renmin Ribao (or People's Daily) dropped from 7 million copies per day in 1979 to 1,65 million in 1993 (Wu 2000: 161).

3. Interview with a business manager, Xinhua, Shanghai, 01/12/2004.

4. Interview with a senior manager, Xinhua, Shanghai, 01/12/2004.

5. Interview with a business manager, Xinhua, Shanghai, 01/12/2004.

6. Interview with a reporter, Xinhua, Shanghai, 29/11/2004.

7. Interview with a reporter, Xinhua, Shanghai, 03/12/2004.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Interview with a reporter, Xinhua, Shanghai, 03/12/2004.

11. Interview with a business manager, Xinhua, Shanghai, 01/12/2004.

12. Interview with a reporter, Xinhua, Shanghai, 26/11/2004.

13. Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15. Interviews with a senior manager and a business manager, Xinhua, Shanghai, 02/12/2004.

16. Interviews with a reporter, Xinhua, Shanghai, 29/11/2004.

17. Interviews with a business manager, Xinhua, Shanghai, 01/12/2004.

18. Interview with a business manager, Xinhua, Shanghai, 02/12/2004.

19. Interviews with a business manager, Xinhua, Shanghai, 01/12/2004.

20. Interviews with a manager, Xinhua, Shanghai, 01/12/2004.

21. Interview with a reporter, Xinhua, Shanghai, 03/12/2004.

22. Interview with a reporter, Xinhua, Shanghai, 29/11/2004.

23. Interview with a business manager, Shanghai, 01/12/2004.

24. Interview with a business manager, Shanghai, 01/12/2004.

25. Here the 'X' implies the flexible part of the services, which can be designed for media clients according to their requirements and at acceptable prices (He 2002, 15).

26. Interview with a senior manager, Xinhua, Shanghai, 26/11/2004.

27. Interview with a manager, Dragon TV, Shanghai, 03/12/2003.

28. Interviews with a scholar, Renmin University, Beijing, 13/01/2005; two scholars, Fudan University, Shanghai, 30/11/2004.

29. Interview with a scholar, Renmin University, Beijing, 13/01/2005.

30. Interview with a vice-president, Xinhua, Beijing, 04/11/2004.

31. Interview with the managing editor, Dragon TV, Shanghai, 03/12/2004.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Archive of Xinhua , accessed in Beijing, November 2004.

35. Interview with a manager, Xinhua, Guangdong, 13/12/2004.

36. Interview with a reporter, Xinhua, Shanghai, 03/12/2004.

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"IS THIS NEWS TO YOU, PRIME MINISTER?"

MEDIA AGENDAS, NEWS MANAGEMENT AND A CAMPAIGN INTERACTION IN THE 2005 UK GENERAL ELECTION

JEREMY COLLINS

Abstract

This paper presents a specific case study – a "campaign interaction" between the prime minister and a member of the public during a live BBC TV general election debate – in order to examine a number of issues around concerns over the "crisis in public communication" and political control of news information flows. In a wider political sense this episode, in which Tony Blair seemed to be unprepared for a question about family doctor appointment times, was a relatively minor element of a general election campaign dominated by issues such as asylum policy and the Iraq war. Nevertheless, analysis of the ensuing news coverage suggests that election news agendas can be diverted away (at least temporarily) from the planned communications of political agents towards issues and themes publicised by non-official, non-expert sources, while also illustrating the ultimate reliance of the media on those official accredited sources. The role of the BBC in the case study also raises the issue of its position as a public service broadcaster, and the interaction between press and broadcasting in British political news coverage.

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Introduction

The UK General Election of 2005 was considered by many to be a predictable and rather dull campaign (BBC News website 4 May 2005) as the Labour party led by Tony Blair again won a substantial majority, in line with virtually all opinion polls and almost exactly reflecting the results projected by the "exit polls" broadcast at the close of polling on election day. Such criticisms have been made against most recent general election campaigns and have often emphasised the control of the politicians (Seymour-Ure 2002, 127) and the failures of the media to control the agenda (Norris et al 1999, 17). In 1997, Labour's "near-robotic incantation" of their key messages, themes and slogans (p. 53) were considered to be evidence of a determination to remain resolutely "on message."

The political parties attempt to control the election agenda through a variety of strategies that include advertising, photo opportunities, sound bites and the daily press conference (Franklin 2004, 132).[1] Margaret Thatcher's 1979 general election photo opportunity with a new-born calf (Watts 1997, 191) is considered by some to be a pivotal moment in modern political marketing (Cockerell 2005),[2] Wring's history of the Labour party's political communications suggests however that the photo opportunity can be traced back to the earliest decades of the twentieth century at least (Wring 2005, 31).

The "permanent campaigning" of modern politics (Cockerell et al 1985, 189; Palmer 2002, 351), along with evidence that political opinions and attitudes tend to remain fairly stable over time (Norris et al 1999, 170-1) support the argument that general election campaigns have little effect on voting behaviour (Davis 2002, 9). Nevertheless, the resources which the main parties put in to their campaigns illustrate the importance they attach to the four weeks leading up to a general election, "arguably the most contested time for both citizens and elites to access news space" (Cushion et al 2006, 46). The campaigns may not produce clear effects in terms of voting behaviour or political attitudes, but the parties' intense focus on news management suggests that they at least consider the campaign period to be of crucial importance (Norris et al 1999, 171).

In 2001, politicians and journalists were concerned that news audiences were turned off (and were turning off) election coverage (Coleman 2002, 731; Deacon et al 2001, 105), even while it presented politics "mediated as performance rather than policy" (p. 113). In terms of media analysis, this assessment might be argued to underline the control over the media agenda that is exercised by the party communications machines. It has been argued that the "sultans of spin" (Jones 1999) manipulate the media coverage of politics to the extent that journalists become "adjuncts to media campaigns by politicians" (Cockerell et al 1985, 248). The political agenda thus becomes an elite agenda with little input from the "ordinary citizen" (Cushion et al 2006, 44) and the democratic role of the media becomes seriously compromised. Others have argued, adopting a form of Habermas's "refeudalisation thesis" (Habermas 1989; Stevenson 1995, 50), that "public relations and advertising increasingly dominate public discourse and structure political communications" (Brookes et al 2004, 74), thereby raising questions about the extent to which media representations of the public contribute to public discourse, or merely reinforce existing power structures.

Such concerns also arise in the context of a recent shift in political allegiances among British newspapers. While arguably the most significant of the changes was *The Sun*'s[3] switch to support new Labour in 1997, other changes have also emerged. However, the ways in which such support has been expressed has led both journalists and academics to argue that this shift represents a "dealignment rather than re-alignment" (Scammell and Harrop 2002, 154) as the support is argued to be often tentative and heavily qualified. It is also characterised as a "conversation rather than an endorsement" (Seymour-Ure 2002, 124); a shift towards Blair rather than the Labour Party (Franklin 2004, 142) and as such subject to reappraisal according to policy shifts and personnel changes. Seymour-Ure suggests this attitude was evident in the "reservations and hesitations" in the newspapers' final election day editorials (2002, 137).

This has led to a reassertion by some analysts of the relative autonomy of the British press (Norris et al 1999, 83), while others suggest it has led to the Labour government seeking the approval and acquiescence of the tabloid press in particular in the field of media policy (Franklin 2004, 63-4).

Brookes et al (2004)'s study of the representation of public opinion discusses the role played by interactions between members of the public and politicians. While they argue that during the 2001 election these "campaign interactions" were a relatively minor form of (media representation of) "public opinion," they nevertheless concede that two such encounters became "defining moments of the campaign" (2004, 66). They dismiss the coverage of the 2001 campaign interactions due to its emphasis on the exceptional and "irrational" aspects of the events in question. The first concerned deputy Prime Minister John Prescott throwing a punch at a protester who had thrown an egg at him; the second was the "haranguing" of Tony Blair by a member of the public, Sharon Storrer, at the entrance to a Birmingham hospital, on the topic of the National Health Service and its treatment of her partner (a cancer patient at the hospital) (2004, 76). The "fervour and frequency" of the coverage that these events received supplanted the launch of the Labour manifesto in the news (pp. 75-6; Butler and Kavanagh 2002, 96) and can arguably be understood to reflect a journalistic consensus that such episodes reveal some underlying symbolic truth about the campaign. Sabato suggests that such a "subtext" can lead to journalists emphasising such events out of proportion to their formal news value, thus "validating" their pre-existing perceptions (Sabato 1993, 71, cited in Palmer 2002, 356). Thus the aggressive elements of these two campaign interactions may be understood by journalists as revealing an underlying discontent with Labour which may not be evident either in opinion polls or in the traditional forms of election news coverage. Indeed, Norris has suggested that Storrer's concerns about the National Health Service (NHS) highlighted the wider failures (due to over-caution) of Labour's first term, and thus represented the "pervasive sentiment" of the election (Norris 2001, 6).

For Brookes et al, the focus in the coverage on the "spectacular" situate these interactions in the realm of the "ritual" pretence of citizen involvement in public debate (2004, 76).[4] Nevertheless, they acknowledge that (in principle, at least), such events "offered the space for the unscripted expression of public opinion" (p. 76).

During the 2005 election another campaign interaction between the Prime Minister and a member of the public was captured by the TV cameras which, in

itself, was a relatively minor episode in terms of its political impact. Certainly it was considered to be "one of the most memorable moments of the campaign" in terms of its entertainment value (Battle 2005, 53); however, its wider significance can be found in the way it illustrates both the possibilities for, and limits of such interventions in the controlled agendas of the political campaign managers.

Part of the modern election agenda (Franklin 2004, 148) is the questioning of party leaders both by media interviewers and directly by audience members.[5] In his discussion of the 1992 US presidential campaign, Sabato suggests that the appearance of candidates on TV to answer "issue-oriented questions" from voters was a positive development, providing a contrast with the "horserace" perspective of many reporters and promoting a limited kind of "talk show democracy" (Sabato 1993, 249-50). Livingstone and Lunt similarly suggest that such participation can provide a "challenge to expertise" (1994, 98) which can go "beyond the rules of professional interviewing" (p. 57).

In the 2005 general election, such media appearances included the BBC's *Question Time: Leaders Special* in which the leaders of the three main parties were questioned by a studio audience under the chairmanship of David Dimbleby[6].

A Campaign Interaction –
Question Time: Leaders Special

As part of the usual format of the programme (outside election time), the producers of the long running BBC current affairs programme *Question Time* ask studio audience members to suggest questions for the guests on the major political issues of the day, and the most interesting or relevant questions are then selected by the producers to be asked. David Dimbleby, as presenter, calls on each of the questioners in turn, and the answers are then followed by a more "open" discussion in which other members of the studio audience ask "follow up" questions. Usually, a panel of five guests (including politicians, usually from the three main parties - depending on the location of the programme – and one or two "non- party political" celebrity guests) are invited to respond to the studio audience's questions. However, the *leaders special* on 28 April 2005 – a week before the election – took each leader in turn for around 30 minutes each beginning with Charles Kennedy (leader of the Liberal Democrat Party) followed by Michael Howard (leader of the Conservative Party) and finally Tony Blair[7]. The issue of GP (family doctor)'s appointments was raised following a scheduled question about "new stealth taxes." This initial question was followed up by others in the studio asking about the funding of the health service and hospital waiting times, and eventually led to Dimbleby (apparently at random) inviting a question from a man who asked why he was unable to book an appointment with his GP a week in advance. He was told, he said, that this was in order to meet the government-set target to see all patients within 48 hours. Blair replied by saying he was "absolutely astonished" by this, and suggested that it was surely not the case that the surgery would force patients to make appointments earlier than they need. The woman sitting next to the original questioner (apparently his wife/partner, and later identified in the press as Diana Church) then took up the point, explaining that their GP's surgery only allows appointments to be made 48 hours in advance. At this point, Dimbleby asked Blair "Is this news to you?," to which Blair replied, "I have to say that is news to me…."

Blair seemed to be unclear precisely what the problem was, and expressed disbelief that the GP might "force" patients to book appointments earlier than they were required. As other members of the studio audience reported similar experiences, Blair said he would "look into that."

The Televisual Context

Street argues that in order to understand modern political communications, it is necessary to understand the wider context of "popular forms of communication generally" (Street 2001, 206). For our purposes this suggests a need to examine the way in which politics is presented via particular media institutions and formats. *Question Time* represents a key element of the BBC's conception of itself as a public service broadcaster, whereby members of political (and other) elites are invited to answer questions and discuss issues raised by a self-selected, but roughly representative public audience. The interactive nature of programmes such as these has been argued to be a positive contribution to "democratic accountability" in the UK (Coleman 2002, 741) and elsewhere (Sabato 1993, 250), potentially providing the site of a form of public sphere which might help dispel cynicism about the impartiality of the media (Ross 2004, 786). Indeed, Cushion et al's study of local newspaper coverage of the 2005 UK general election notes how the programme became a relatively unusual source for discussions on topics other than the personality or campaign coverage which is more common, thus becoming an "intervention in the elite agenda" (2006, 49). In the BBC's own words, the programme has, for over 25 years, been "offering British voters a unique opportunity to quiz top decision-makers on the events of the day." (BBC *Question Time* website, 2005).

The almost constant pressures on the BBC to justify its unique position, and the "dilemmas of 'public service'" (Crisell 1997, 109) mean that the BBC has always needed to combine popular programming with more "worthy" material (especially news and current affairs) which can be seen to serve the public without necessarily gaining large audiences. Indeed, the BBC defends such programming by pointing not so much to its audience share at any particular time but by its "reach" – how many people see some part of the series - over the course of its run (Docherty 1996, 67). Recent debates, for instance, around the fate of *Panorama*, BBC One's "flagship" current affairs programme, highlight the extent to which this issue is currently a major concern for the BBC.[8] *Question Time*'s relatively prominent scheduling (Thursday 10:35pm) suggests that while its public service remit remains, there is also likely to be some pressure to find and maintain a substantial audience.

During a general election, the BBC's political output takes on an even greater importance as it plays a role in the election of a new government. Negrine quotes a senior BBC figure who, in discussing media election coverage in the 1980's, argues that it is not the BBC's job to set the terms of the political agenda or to raise issues of its own, but rather to adopt a less active approach: "Our job as public service broadcasters is to reflect the continuing debate, to help the public understanding" (Alan Protheroe, quoted in Negrine 1994, 165).

Such an attitude reflects what has been characterised as a "sacerdotal orientation" to the electoral process (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995, 117-118) among public service broadcasters. As Negrine suggests, this raises the question of the extent to which the political debates within programmes such as *Question Time* are ef-

fectively controlled by an agenda set by the parties themselves. It is certainly the case that in all such interview situations, the party communications experts will attempt to construct the process in the interests of the politicians. Brendan Bruce, as a former adviser to Mrs Thatcher, describes a crucial five-stage process in which a media "bid" for an interview is subjected to assessment and negotiation, before the interviewee is briefed, rehearsed and (post-interview) appraised (Bruce 1992, 162-3). The negotiation element of the process might well involve discussions with the broadcaster concerning location, timing and studio setting; however, in the case of *Question Time: Leaders Special*, it would perhaps have been difficult for any of the politicians involved to decline the invitation.

The Campaign Interaction as Election News

Question Time: Leaders Special was not the first time the GP appointments issue had found its way onto the media agenda. On 27 July 2000 the Department of Health published the NHS Plan, a wide-ranging programme for the "reform" of the NHS (NHS Plan 2000). The NHS plan set out various reforms including changes to GPs contracts and various targets for different parts of the health service. Clause 12.6 of the plan says that "By 2004, patients will be able to see a primary care professional within 24 hours, and a GP within 48 hours" (NHS Plan 2000, 102). There was immediate criticism of the details of the plan from doctors, usually presented by the British Medical Association (BMA) (particularly at their annual conference) and reported in the media. In July 2003 for instance, the *Mirror* reported the criticisms of BMA Chairman Dr Ian Bogle that targets are set without any understanding of their consequences and that they reflected the governments "paranoid centralism" and "corporate bullying" (Palmer 2003). However, the views of the BMA's GP committee could be characterised as those of a vested interest, despite its influence as a (usually) highly credible news source.[9] Following Thursday's *Question Time Leaders Special*, the national morning newspapers had little to say about the issue of GP appointments. The *Daily Express*, for instance had 3 pages (including page one) on "Blair's lies" focusing on the aftermath of the Iraq war, but no mention of GP appointments. A number of the newspapers (*Independent, Daily Mirror, Daily Mail*) carried what were effectively (if not expressly) TV reviews of *Question Time*, with the *Guardian* dedicating two paragraphs to the GP appointments issue. Only the *Daily Telegraph* led an article with the issue ("Blair learns of 'absurd' appointment rules for GPs," 29 April 2005), describing the Prime Minister's "severe grilling" which revealed his "ignorance of the contemporary National Health Service." Like most of the other newspaper coverage on 29 April, this was really no more than a summary of the programme, covered as part of the general election coverage rather than as a news item in its own right. The key focus for the newspapers that did highlight the interaction was that the GP appointments issue was important mainly in illustrating how Blair was "out of touch" and "did not understand" (*Times*); that he "did not seem to have a clue" (*Daily Mail*). Despite the newspapers' apparent lack of interest, BBC radio 4's *Today* programme (itself a bastion of the BBC's current affairs output) interviewed Diana Church, and the story was followed up on both TV news bulletins and news websites throughout Friday, 29 April. It was the lead story for the BBC at lunchtime, and by mid-afternoon both the *Times* ("U-turn over GP appointments") and *Guardian* ("Minister defends 48-hour GP target") websites

were following suit. By 4pm BBC radio *Five Live* were calling the story "the election story of the day" (*Five Live* Drive, 29 April 2005).

On Saturday 30 April eight national newspapers produced a total of 16 articles (over 8000 words) including three leader editorials on the issue. The next day produced five articles in four newspapers, and two more in each of the following two days. The Saturday coverage is notable not just for its volume but for its sources. It is unsurprising, particularly a week before an election, that politicians are referred to in the coverage, and Conservative and Liberal Democrat representatives do appear as opposition sources. Other major sources referred to and quoted are medical organisations such as the Kings Fund, the Royal College of General Practitioners and, principally, the BMA in the form of GP committee chairman Hamish Meldrum. Meldrum had been a key source in news coverage of the issue prior to Diana Church's intervention on Question Time, and it is therefore again unsurprising that journalists turned to the BMA as the issue resurfaced. Nevertheless, this reliance on routine, accredited, institutionalised sources can also be seen as limiting the ways in which the issue might be addressed in that non-official, non-accredited perspectives become marginalised.

Widening the Debate?

Diana Church's contribution to *Question Time Leaders Special* was certainly passionate, perhaps angry. It could not however be described as violent. It is comparable with Sharon Storrer's 2001 confrontation with Blair outside the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, but the structured environment of the BBC studio debate provided a rather different context. Where Storrer could be marginalised in subsequent media coverage as an irrational, spectacular interruption in the smooth running of the Labour campaign in 2001, the legitimacy of Church's question on GP appointments could not be so easily minimised. In highlighting an apparently irrational outcome of government policy, Church could be seen to adopt a clearly "rational" position, despite her apparently personal experience of the unfairness of the system. Presented in the programme as an anonymous member of the public, she could not easily be characterised as biased or unqualified to comment, and as Watts suggests, questions from members of the public cannot be "disdained" in the way those of professional media interviewers might be (1997, 184).[10] The subsequent press coverage (which to some extent relied on her to personify the issue) similarly lacked any reference to political or interest group allegiances that might provide evidence of her lack of source credibility.[11] Indeed, she was for instance referred to by the *Daily Express* as a "40-year-old chartered accountant" illustrating her independent, professional status (*Daily Express*, 30 April 2005). I would also argue that the scope of the subsequent coverage illustrates that in this "campaign interaction," an "unscripted expression of public opinion" was (if briefly) allowed to generate relatively sympathetic media coverage. The two "spectacular" campaign interactions in the 2001 election (Blair's haranguing by Sharon Storrer, and Prescott's response to an egg throwing protester) highlighted by Brookes et al (2004) were newsworthy primarily for the way in which they departed from the usual "script" of the campaign process (p. 76). However, no substantial policy debates arose from them, and this paradoxically only underlines their part in the continued media focus on the election "process," in which the emphasis is on the way in which the campaign is being conducted (or, occasionally, disrupted).

One study puts the amount of such "process" coverage in the 2001 election as high as 45% (Deacon et al 2001, 107). This emphasis on the election process rather than on "serious policy debate" has drawn criticism not just from scholars (Norris et al 1999, 84), but also from "spin doctors" themselves (Franklin 2004, 148). The GP appointments issue by contrast does highlight a specific policy issue within wider political themes (the efficacy of the National Health Service; the wisdom of setting "targets" in public services; and more generally the "managerialism" of new Labour's approach to public services). Diana Church's intervention and much of the subsequent media coverage was not part of the "horse race" coverage characteristic of (post-) modern election news (Street 2001, 47-8). Nor was it *initially* one of the "delimit[ed] possibilities for citizen action and speech" which Brookes et al (2004, 76) find in the 2001 election coverage.

An Opening and a Closing Down

Nevertheless, the issue was to some extent "closed down" in two key ways. Most obviously, it became left behind in the final countdown to the election on 5 May 2005. The news agenda was always likely to move back towards the election process as the overwhelming news topic, and the failure of the issue to gain further coverage may reflect this. It is also possible that the issue was simply not considered to be a valuable news topic for any of the "political elites" which had the opportunity to prolong the coverage, and this particular "information flow" was not promoted by official news source organisations (Manning 2001, 107). Secondly, alternative perspectives on the issue failed to become established in the news agenda. For instance, some of the most negative coverage focused on Blair's failure to understand how the 48 hour target was being implemented by many GP surgeries. Newspapers reported that Blair was "out of touch," "looked sheepish" (*Daily Mail*) and took a "pasting" (*Daily Express*, 30 April 2005). One columnist for instance compared Blair's usual ability to "wriggle out" of questions like a snake with the way in which the GP appointments issue "well and truly pinned [him] down with a forked stick" (Marrin 2005). The *Daily Mail* described it as the "most telling image of the week": "a sweating, floundering Prime Minister reduced to open-mouthed confusion" (*Daily Mail*, 30 April 2005).

This kind of coverage undoubtedly reflects the politically partisan nature of the particular newspapers concerned, but also illustrates the "presidentialisation" of election news coverage (Franklin 2004, 149) and the newsworthiness of personalised criticism. Marrin's article also represents a fairly traditional *laissez-faire* criticism of "statist micromanagement" and the "wasteful culture" of quangos and bureaucrats (Marrin 2005) and thus (notwithstanding Marrin's own criticism of the Conservatives' election strategy) fits well within the agendas of mainstream accredited news sources.

Similarly, the *Guardian*, usually considered to be the most sympathetic to those working in the public services, was forced to defend the targets policy by criticising the opposition parties for "supporting the providers rather than the patients" (*Guardian* 2005). Thus, I would argue, the limits of the debate begin to become apparent. The established political perspectives of the newspapers and their commentators take centre stage and the potential for unorthodox analyses by non-accredited news sources is diminished.

Media Agenda, Public Agenda

On the BBC's *Newswatch* website, *Question Time: Leaders Special* was described as "one of the highlights of the BBC's election coverage." The programme's executive editor Ric Bailey suggested that the GP appointments question was a "beneath the radar" issue in that it was not considered by the producers to be an obviously important issue (*BBC Newswatch*, 13 May 2005), and given the pressures on the BBC it is likely that this assessment would reflect the assumptions and intentions of the parties themselves. Gurevitch and Blumler describe the way in which media organisations attempt to structure the flow of information "into the day's election jigsaw" (quoted in Negrine 1994, 155). Coleman's study of *Election Call* (in which members of the public call in to ask questions of politicians) in the 2001 election distinguished between those issues which were listed by the programme's producers as the key topics for that day in a briefing for the telephonists receiving calls (the "media agenda") and those not in the briefing notes but raised by callers (the "callers agenda"; Coleman 2002, 738). We might conclude from Bailey's point, together with the evidence of the way in which the question arose during the programme, that the issue was not part of what might be seen as *Question Time*'s "media agenda." We should of course distinguish between the agenda of the studio audience (which may well be influenced by the social and political make up of this essentially self-selecting group) and the issues of interest to the wider public. Nevertheless we can suggest at least that the GP appointments issue was part of the former, if not necessarily the latter. Certainly the "group discussion" nature of the *Question Time* format (in comparison with dialogical radio or TV phone-in shows; see Coleman 2002) allowed the studio audience to provide clarification of and support for Diana Church's original contention, and emphasised Blair's apparent remoteness. Studies of political radio phone in programmes suggest that callers to such programmes certainly feel that while the power differential between them and their politician interlocutors is always evident, they at least gain the opportunity to present the views of the "ordinary voter" (Ross 2004, 788)

Davis describes as the "radical pluralist perspective" the body of research which suggests that non-official sources can gain access for their own discursive positions within media agendas (2002, 120). A number of these studies have examined the potential for "resource-poor" outsider or pressure groups to influence news agendas (Murphy 1991; Ericson et al 1989; Schlesinger and Tumber 1994). Goldenberg for instance suggests that while such "non-authoritative" groups can achieve coverage of their perspectives, these are often presented as "advocacy" rather than objective news (1975, 100). Diana Church's *Question Time* intervention could nevertheless be seen as a relatively successful intervention by a traditionally marginalised "non-official" source; perhaps more so as it came from an (apparently politically unaligned) individual "voter" rather than an advocacy group. It might also be argued that the BBC's public service commitments in the context of the election campaign, and the *Question Time* format in general, helped to create the conditions in which such an intervention in the news process could occur.

Agendas and Distractions: The Wider Political Context

Deacon et al. argue (in passing) that one of the most spectacular campaign interactions of the 2001 election – John Prescott's fracas with an egg-throwing protester

– worked to deflect news attention from other problematic events on the same day (2001, 107). Without suggesting this was an intentional example of news management, it is, they say, "convenient." It is therefore important to acknowledge the wider political context within which the GP appointments story became (briefly) a high profile election issue.

The Iraq war was always likely to be a major election issue, but it arrived at the top of the news agenda on the day of the *Question Time Leaders Special* when the government published the legal advice given by the attorney general (the chief law officer) to Tony Blair in the run up to the war. This was considered to be of crucial importance to the arguments surrounding the legality of the war, and was compared with other government information and advice in the widespread coverage. By the evening of that day, when *Question Time* was broadcast live, it is possible that the Labour party's communications strategists were happy to see other newsworthy issues arise. When the GP appointments story attracted press attention over 24 hours later, it could be argued to have provided a relatively self-contained and controllable alternative to the potentially more damaging issue of the legality of the Iraq war.

Ross's study of radio callers argues that audience participants often feel that the communicative skills and experience of the politicians they talk to puts them at a disadvantage (Ross 2004, 795). Blair's apparent inability to respond with anything other than bemusement following Diana Church's question might lead us to qualify such an idea, as it would seem that in this case at least, the "ordinary voter" gained the advantage. It has however been suggested that following criticism of Blair's apparent aloofness, and his avoidance of "set piece studio encounters, tough interviewers and the more intensely political programmes" (Seymour-Ure 2002, 130; Street 2001, 208-211)[12], the Prime Minister has occasionally subjected himself to public interrogation as a form of expiation – what journalists have described as a "masochism strategy"– in order to show he listens to the electorate (e.g. *Sunday Times*, 1 May 2005). With this in mind we might, on the contrary, see this – as Wring (2005a) suggests – as part of such a strategy whereby Blair takes advantage of an effectively unavoidable public "grilling" by appearing as an individual under pressure (rather than as part of a wider political process; Street 2001, 49). The televised discussion and subsequent news coverage of the GP appointments issue provides a vehicle for disillusioned Labour supporters to feel that the prime Minister has taken a deserved beating; following this cathartic expression of anger, (according to the strategy) such voters will then feel it is time to return, perhaps grudgingly, to their Labour "home."

Conclusion

This study does not take issue with the notion expressed by (among others) Brookes et al (2004, 77), Coleman (2002, 741) and Davis (2002, 7) that a "crisis in public communication" exists in contemporary British political culture: "citizen participation in public deliberation over their shared future is all but non-existent, and the political parties and media institutions not only set the agenda, but also overdetermine subsequent discussion" (Brookes et al 2004, 77).

In terms of the 2005 UK general election more particularly, there is little evidence that the news coverage reflected the concerns of ordinary citizens (Cushion et al

2006). *Question Time: Leaders Special* was one example of the attempts of broadcasters to engage the public in the election process; firstly through the restricted access provided to a small selected group of citizens as members of the studio audience, but more importantly and widely through the live broadcast of political debate. It is however likely to be subject to the same kinds of pressures that have been identified regarding the attempts of political elites to control and restrict the public agenda. These are multiplied with regard to the BBC, due to its institutional position as well as its recent clashes with Blair and new Labour over Iraq and the Hutton Inquiry.[13] At a more micro level, the need to control the debate during *Question Time: Leaders Special* was evident in David Dimbleby's attempts to remonstrate with one member of the studio audience who persistently attempted to protest against the way in which asylum seekers were being treated in the election campaign.[14]

It is also clear that the extent to which the GP appointments issue can be understood as offering ideologically alternative perspectives to those of accredited mainstream media news sources is limited. Certainly, other studies have found clearer examples of news sources gaining access for more challenging non-official agendas (Murphy 1991; Schlesinger and Tumber 1994). In this case however, the source was an apparently unaligned individual member of the public – a "voter," not any kind of source organisation. This can be understood as a hindrance in that even non-official source organisations can often have (and indeed spend much capital in building and sustaining) modest amounts of credibility with journalists (Goldenberg 1975; Manning 2001; Schlesinger and Tumber 1994). But in the political context of an election campaign, and the televisual context of the Question Time studio, Diana Church's *positive* status (as an "accountant" (*Daily Mail*, 30 April 2005), a "disgruntled audience member" (*Daily Express*, 5 May 2005), and a "mother" (*Sunday People*, 1 May 2005)) implicitly underlined her *negative* status as someone with no "axe to grind" and this provided some compensatory credibility.

The GP appointments issue does not map easily onto any "progressive" agenda, nor is it unproblematically part of any sub-political movement or campaign, and it should not therefore be understood as part of a progressive left challenge to the dominant consensus; nevertheless, the extent to which it briefly emerged onto the election media/political agenda underlines the possibility of intervening in official news agendas. The extent to which it was fairly quickly "normalised" via established news sources (including government ministers) and effectively closed down as a political issue also perhaps illustrates the limits of such interventions. This can also be understood as illustrating the possibility that none of the key source organisations concerned had both the credibility and the will to prolong the issue as a topic of news media attention. While the opposition political parties may have felt there was little "leverage" in such an issue (particularly with one week of campaigning before the election), the only accredited source organisation that might wish to see the coverage prolonged – the BMA GP committee – was hampered by media suspicion of its motives as a "vested interest." The GP appointments issue may then have fallen between the competing communications strategies of the institutions involved.

Notes:

1. Similarly, but perhaps even more routinely, White House press briefings set out an "issue of the day," as discussed by Street (2001, 192).

2. This was part of a conscious strategy to "soften" Thatcher's image; she reportedly said at the time "It's not for me, it's for the photographers. They're the most important people on this campaign" (Young 1993, 130).

3. The Sun is a populist tabloid, published by a subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

4. Norris et al (1999) suggest that elections more generally can be seen as "ritualistic devices" in which the agents involved move through a series of familiar steps in an effectively pre-ordained process.

5. For instance, Margaret Thatcher was subjected to a grilling by Diana Gould, a "hitherto anonymous West Country housewife" over the precise circumstances of the sinking of the Belgrano when she appeared on a special edition of *Nationwide* during the 1983 election campaign (Cockerell et al 1985, 189).

6. The ITV equivalent, *Ask the Leaders*, involved three separate interviews, broadcast over three Monday evenings, presented by the younger Dimbleby, Jonathan.

7. One of the final questions from David Dimbleby asked why Blair refused to appear simultaneously with the other two main party leaders; broadcasters have attempted without success, over a number of years, to bring US style "presidential debates" to UK general elections (Watts 1997, 148; BBC website 28 April 2005). There is an assumption that such debates can only favour challengers, and offer little to incumbents (Bruce 1992, 171).

8. One newspaper article refers to the "perceived wisdom of BBC executives" that *Panorama* needs "protection" from competition by scheduling in a less competitive Sunday evening slot. (Brook 2005)

9. This illustrates the point that authoritative news sources are subject not just to the relatively long-term shifts in accreditation discussed buy Schlesinger in his critique of the "atemporality" of the primary definition thesis (1990, 67), but also to the specific contexts of particular news stories. On health issues, the BMA is likely to be treated as a key expert source; with regard to the administrative structure of the NHS however, it becomes a "player" representing a minority interest.

10. Bruce suggests that a combative response to a question from a member of the public (which might be entirely acceptable if given to a media professional) would almost certainly lead to a damaging media backlash (Bruce 1992, 169).

11. Curtice and Davis' (1999) study of the BBC's Election Call (in which public phone callers put questions to politicians in the 1997 election) found that the callers were not representative of the general public. This imbalance reflected existing social disparities between those who are and are not likely to engage in politics, and was also due to the public service responsibilities of broadcasters to ensure "balance."

12. This strategy is not a new Labour invention: Watts describes how Margaret Thatcher appeared often on the Jimmy Young radio show, usually considered a relatively "soft" interview (Watts 1997, 111).

13. The Hutton Inquiry was set up to investigate the circumstances of the death of Doctor David Kelly, a Ministry of Defence expert on biological weapons who was named as a source for BBC news reports critical of government "spin" on Iraq's military capabilities in the run up to the war. The Inquiry's final report was highly critical of the BBC while largely exonerating the government, and resulted in the resignations of the Chairman and Director General of the BBC (see: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/uk/2003/david_kelly_inquiry/default.stm).

14. The protest was directed most clearly against Michael Howard and the Conservatives, but as the programme came to an end and the audience member attempted to address Tony Blair, Dimbleby instructed him to "be quiet."

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PUBLIC DELIBERATION GOES ON-LINE?

AN ANALYSIS OF CITIZENS' POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS ON THE INTERNET PRIOR TO THE FINNISH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN 2007

KIM STRANDBERG

Abstract

This article examines on-line political discussions' potential of becoming truly deliberative discussions, capable of bringing about democratic benefits, through combining two theoretically important aspects found in the literature – concerns regarding citizens' participation in on-line politics and the quality (or lack thereof) of on-line discussions – in one analytical framework. Specifically, the article firstly examines how many, and more importantly, which types of citizens participate in on-line discussions. This part of the analysis adds to the scholarly debate concerning whether on-line politics is reaching beyond politically active and interested segments of the public. Secondly, the article examines the discussions on four Finnish political discussion boards during the last three weeks before the Finnish parliamentary election in March 2007. The quality of the discussions is assessed and discussed in light of several criteria based on the literature concerning deliberative democracy. In combining these two aspects, the article fills a gap in the research field where these aspects have mostly been examined separately. The findings of the article generally demonstrate that on-line discussions are not, at least for the time being, truly deliberative. The debates analysed generally did not meet deliberative standards in terms of quality and only politically very active and interested citizens seemed to take part in them. The question thus still remains if, and how, on-line citizens' discussions can ever become truly deliberative.

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Introduction

Scholars have argued that indications of declining civic political engagement and participation are evident in modern representative democracies (Dalton 2000; Lusoli et al 2002; Norris 2001a; Wattenberg 2000). It is proposed that citizens are becoming increasingly detached from traditional institutions of representative democracy and feel unenthusiastic about traditional political mobilisation agencies (Dalton 2000; Kippen & Jenkins 2004, 254; Norris 2001a, 217). The membership of political parties along with electoral turnout has experienced downward trends (Djupsund & Carlson 2003; Mair & van Biezen 2001; Scarrow 2000). Modern representative democracy has even been labeled as a "thin" form of democracy, failing to involve the citizens in decision making (Barber 1984).

These trends have seen several scholars calling for democratic processes which are better capable of involving citizens (e.g. Barber 1984; Dahl 1989). Essentially, the ideals of participatory and deliberative democracy have been called upon as alternatives to the top-down vertical communication symptomatic of representative democracies. Notions such as 'strong democracy' (Barber 1984) and 'the public sphere' (e.g. Habermas 1962), which both strongly emphasise horizontal citizen deliberation and communication, have been put forth. Drawing on these democratic theories, scholars have especially perceived the internet as providing excellent tools for realising *horizontal* communications and consequently possibly reviving citizen deliberation and participation in public matters (e.g. Budge 1996; Dahl 1989; Rheingold 1993). Several web-specific features hold a potential to increase citizens' knowledge, political engagement and participation (Kavanaugh et al 2005, 21-22; Polat 2005, 436-437; Papacharissi 2002, 9-10). The vast amount of information available on-line, and the accessible opportunities for horizontal communication between citizens facilitated by on-line discussion boards are often mentioned in the literature. For instance, Coleman and Goetze (2001, 17) write that the internet "makes manageable large-scale, many-to-many discussion and deliberation". Some scholars even contemplate whether citizen discussions on the internet constitute a new 'virtual public sphere' (e.g. Fuchs 2006; Woo-Young 2005).

While on-line citizen discussions contain a clear potential for facilitating citizen deliberation and engagement in public and political matters, there is still much uncertainty whether the potential can actually be realised. In this article attention is drawn – both theoretically and empirically – to two aspects which are important to consider in relation to studies of on-line citizen discussions. Firstly, there are significant concerns regarding on-line political activity, especially participation in on-line discussions, not reaching beyond the already *active* segments of citizens. Secondly, scholarly discussions and concerns vis-à-vis qualitative aspects of on-line citizen discussions are highlighted. Both of these aspects are assessed through empirical examinations of on-line citizen discussions in Finland, a country with a long history of being among the countries with the highest internet penetration rates in the world[1] (Norris 2000). Two general questions are put in theoretical light in the two subsequent sections and empirically addressed thereafter; are on-line citizen discussions reaching beyond the active segments of the population and do they live up to the qualitative ideals of democratic deliberation? The findings mostly indicate that the answer to both of these questions is negative. On-line debaters are found

to belong to very active segments of the population at large and the discussions in which they engage fail to live up to rigid deliberative standards.

On-line Political Activity: Mobilising or Reinforcing?

Even though scholars have argued that the internet holds the potential to "inform, organise and engage those who are currently marginalised from the existing political system" (Norris 2001b, 218), it could nonetheless fail on all of these accounts. Two theoretical viewpoints concerning the internet's potential to engage citizens have been excellently described by Norris (2001b, 218-219); the mobilisation theory and the reinforcement theory.

The mobilisation theory recapitulates numerous optimistic visions regarding the internet's ability to affect citizens' political activity (e.g. Barber 1984; Budge 1996; Dahl 1989; Dertouzos 1997; Negroponte 1995; Rheingold 1993; Schwartz 1996). The theory contains four main arguments in defence of its assessment of the internet's impact on citizen participation (Norris 2001b, 218): Firstly, the internet provides abundant opportunities for political engagement. Secondly, the relative ease and low costs of receiving information via the internet could lower the barriers in order for citizens to learn about public matters (cf. Downs 1957). Thirdly, the large amount of information available on-line provides citizens with the opportunities to become more informed about public affairs, and thus more prone to become active concerning public matters. Finally, seeing that the internet enables two-way communication, it could strengthen and improve the links between citizens and mediating organisations (cf. Coleman & Goetze 2001; Kamarck 1999). To summarise, the internet is considered to form a distinct type of opportunity for political participation which considerably diverges from traditional participation channels; it possesses the ability to inform, activate and engage citizens.

A number of research findings have been found in support of the mobilisation theory. The political on-line audience has grown considerably over time, largely due to the increased penetration of the medium, but also due to a change of user preferences in seeking out political information (see discussion in Lusoli 2005, 154-156). The internet is increasingly becoming an important source of political information for young people, a group of citizens normally less politically active off-line (e.g. Boogers & Voerman 2003, 25; Carlson & Strandberg 2005; Gibson et al 2005, 578; Norris 2003, 39-40). Likewise, Gibson and colleagues (2005, 578) argue that their results indicate that the internet is "offering a space for political engagement among those who might not have been otherwise active." Johnson and Kaye state that "though the Web has not yet changed the larger democratic process […] The Web politically empowers individuals and increases their feelings of self-efficacy, levels of political involvement, political interest, campaign interest and likelihood of voting" (Johnson & Kaye 2003, 28-29; cf. Kaye & Johnson 2002, 65-67).

However, according to the opposing reinforcement theory, the internet would rather merely constitute an alternative channel for the politically motivated, active and engaged citizens to engage in familiar activities (Hill & Hughes 1998, 44; Norris 1999, 89). There is little reason to expect the internet to cause previously uninterested citizens to suddenly become 'political animals' (Davis 1999, 8; cf. Papacharissi 2002, 22). Politics on the net will fail to politically activate and engage citizens even if current 'digital divides' in internet access are overcome. Thus,

personal motivation and preferences are central. Along these lines, Djupsund and Carlson (2003, 41) observe that the internet differs from traditional mass media on one crucial point: it requires activity rather than passivity from the user. While television exposes the passive viewer to political content, the on-line citizen must actively seek out the information he or she desires from an overabundance of choices (cf. Hill & Hughes 1998, 183). This leads to the core argument of the motivation-based reinforcement theory: "There are a million places to go and sites to see on the Internet. Unless they stumble across political content accidentally ... those who choose to visit political sites will probably have far higher than average civic interest" (Norris 2001b, 221).

Several observations which underline the importance of motivation and personal preferences in determining citizens' use of the internet have been put forth by social science scholars. Largely comparable socio-economic patterns to those found regarding traditional political activity and interest have also been noted upon examination of *internet* users engaging in on-line politics (Lusoli 2005, 262; Norris 1999, 87). Norris (2001b, 231) found that "party websites tended to attract those who were already among the most aware of public affairs, as well as those with higher socio-economic status." Hill and Hughes (1998, 183) emphasise that political use of the internet is an act of self-selection: "people go on-line to find out more information about a subject, not to be transformed". Stromer-Galley and colleagues (Stromer-Galley et al 2001, 24) note that only a fraction of citizens seek out political information on the internet, and that an even smaller fraction is involved in more engaging forms of on-line political activity, such as taking part in political discussions (cf. Cornfield et al 2003, 20; Norris 1999, 81-82; 2001b, 223; 2003, 36). Muhlberger (2004, 235) similarly explicitly states that "motivation matters" pertaining to citizens' propensity to engage in on-line political discussions.

The Deliberative Quality of On-line Citizen Discussions

According to Dahl (1989, 169-179), a normative ideal for a truly democratic process contains certain criteria: effective participation, equal voting opportunities, and enlightened understanding. As Dahl himself notes (pp. 169-170), such a process is yet to appear and highly unlikely to ever do so. Likewise, Barber (1984, 24) claims that contemporary democracy, or what he calls "thin democracy," brings about "neither the pleasures of participation nor the fellowship of civic association, neither the autonomy and self-governance of continuous political activity nor the enlarging mutuality of shared public goods – of mutual deliberation, decision, and work." Several democratic theorists have instead called for more participatory, deliberative forms of democracy (e.g. Barber 1984; Dahl 1989; Habermas 1962). As mentioned in the introduction, scholars have especially looked to the internet as being potentially capable of achieving such participatory, deliberative democratic processes.

In essence, the general notion of deliberative democracy perceives political discussions to have benefits for democracy only if these meet certain qualitative criteria (e.g. Barber 1989; Fishkin 1995; Sunstein 2001, in Witschge 2004, 110). Drawing upon deliberative norms, Jankowski and Van Selm (2000, 153-154) pinpoint several important interrelated issues of concern to on-line citizen discussions: equality of the discussants, diversity of topics, reciprocity and tone of discussions. Dahlberg (2001, 2-3) similarly lists exchange and critique of criticisable moral-practical va-

lidity claims, reflexivity, ideal role-taking, sincerity, and discursive inclusion and equality as central components of a deliberative, democratic discussion. Barber (1984, 178) states that deliberative discussions should include a wide array of participants, cover a wide range of topics and the actual discussions should involve mutual understanding, respect, and "listening as well as speaking, feeling as well as thinking, and acting as well as reflecting."

However, correspondingly to the uncertainties concerning on-line politics not reaching beyond the active citizens, scholars have been rather inconclusive regarding whether internet discussions actually meet these standards. Bentivegna (1998, 8-9), on one hand, reports that on-line discussions show equality among members, and states that they are near equivalents of a public sphere. Other scholars, however, have found them to be dominated by a small number of very active citizens (cf. Fuchs 2006, 14; Jankowski & Van Selm 2000, 160, 190). Hence, there are few signs of either equality *between*, nor heterogeneity *of* participating citizens. Dahlberg (2001, 13-16) raises concerns regarding what he calls a risk of on-line interaction becoming merely an "elite public sphere." Also, both Wilhelm (1999, 172-183) and Hill and Hughes (1998, 74) similarly found tendencies towards "tribalisation" in as much as on-line discussants tended to engage in conversation with likeminded citizens resulting in situations where the discussions "emphasize particular topics from particular points of view" (Hill & Hughes 1998, 74; cf. Papacharissi 2002, 17; Polat 2005, 451). Therefore, diversity of discussion topics is usually found on different discussion boards but not to any wider extent within one discussion board. Bimber (2000, 332) talks about not one single, but many specific public spheres on the internet. Wilhelm (1999, 170-172) reports that some discussion boards do cover a rather wide range of topics, but that many nonetheless have well-defined agendas and strong in-group affiliation.

Turning to reciprocity, rationality, and tone of discussion – i.e. what Barber (1984, 223) mentions as some of the pillars of strong democracy – findings again point in fairly inconsistent directions. Bentivegna (1998, 9) argues that the horizontal nature of citizens' communication on on-line discussion boards correspond to communities "bound together by horizontal relationships of reciprocity and cooperation" Fuchs (2006, 24) concludes that the Austrian on-line discussions which he analysed contained a large degree of interactive discussion. He nonetheless expresses concerns regarding the significant presence of insulting and outright destructive postings. Papacharissi (2002, 16) also raises concerns regarding the abundance of "hasty opinions" and "flaming and conflict beyond reasonable boundaries" found in many analyses of on-line discussions (cf. Hill & Hughes 1998). Jankowski and van Os (2004, 190) write that asynchronous discussion boards appear to provide good opportunity for reading and reacting to the writings of other participants, i.e. preconditions for reciprocity and rational-critical debate. However, they also remark that this opportunity was not seized by the participants as there were little signs of achieving mutual understanding and agreement in the Dutch discussions which they analysed. Dahlberg (2001, 8) similarly notes that "few participants acknowledge the strength of criticism directed towards them and even fewer seem moved to change or compromise their positions in the course of argumentation." Wilhelm (1999, 170-171) similarly expresses concerns over on-line debaters not feeling responsible before each other and "not responding to the views of other group members" (cf. Strandberg 2005).

Analytical Framework

The discussion thus far has pointed at two central theoretical perspectives often used in research concerning on-line political activity by citizens in general, and on-line citizens' discussions in particular. Evidently, there has been a considerable amount of research of citizens' on-line discussions. However, there have been few, if any, studies considering the two aspects in conjunction. This is somewhat surprising given that the requirements of truly deliberative discussions, mentioned by all democratic theorists, is that these include a wide range of participants *and* have a good deliberative discussion quality (e.g. Barber 1984; Dahl 1989; Fishkin 1995). Arguably, a dual approach in studying citizens' on-line discussions could give a more comprehensive picture, and a better understanding of the on-line citizen discussions than what has been present earlier. While it is true that the deliberative quality is an important aspect of on-line discussions, there is an apparent risk of exaggerating the impact of the debates without knowledge of their spread among the wider public. Concerning this, Muhlberger (2004, 236) argues that: "Online political discussion is too small a portion of overall political discussion to have appreciable political effects currently." Nixon and Johansson (1999, 146) also express concerns regarding the fact that political internet users constitute merely a small share of the entire population and are not representative of all citizens. If on-line discussions only become a venue for an 'elite' group of citizens already politically engaged, they will do little to affect democracy, regardless of their potential deliberative virtues. In such a case, the discussions can hardly be regarded as truly deliberative; rather they merely have the potential to become so *if* a larger share of the citizens were to take part in them. Both dimensions thus shed light on each other which renders a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. The theories of mobilisation and reinforcement serve to position the assessments of on-line discussions within a wider societal context.

I therefore argue that both the extent to which citizens in general engage in on-line discussions, and the aforementioned qualitative aspects, are important elements in an assessment of on-line political discussions. Schematically, an analytical framework is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Typology of Political On-line Citizens' Discussions

		Deliberative quality of discussions	
		High	Low
Penetration among the population	Wide	A	B
	Narrow	C	D

Although, as most typologies are, the figure is a simplification of reality, the framework nonetheless provides a tool for analysing the current state of on-line discussions thoroughly. In effect there are four different types of discussions depicted in the typology. Firstly, in situation A, discussions are so-to-speak truly deliberative, i.e. a large and heterogeneous group of citizens participate in discussions which

also meet the qualitative standards of deliberative discussions. The type of discussion depicted in situation B is somewhat ambiguous to describe. While there is a satisfying share of citizens taking part in the on-line discussions, the quality of the debates fails to live up to deliberative standards. On a positive note, people appear to be drawn to on-line political discussions, but, on a negative note, they do not appear to engage in discussions which meet deliberative ideals. Situation C in the typology describes on-line discussions which hold a clear potential to become truly deliberative but still fail to engage larger shares and more heterogeneous groups of citizens. Finally, in situation D, the discussions do not hold any qualitative potential and are not reaching out to larger shares of the public.

Drawing on this framework and the theoretical discussions in the previous sections, three empirical research questions are formed for the purpose of assessing on-line discussions in light of the analytical framework:

RQ1: To what extent are citizens engaging in on-line political discussion?

RQ2: What are the characteristics of the citizens that participate?

RQ3: Do on-line political discussions meet the deliberative ideals concerning the quality of discussions such as equality of discussants, diversity of topics, reciprocity, and rationality of discussions?

Research Methods and Data

The empirical focus of the study is on on-line citizen discussions found in Finland, a country which has a relatively long history of a high level of internet penetration. In fact, Finland was among the world leaders already in 1999 (Norris 2000), and still ranks fifth in the EU with its penetration of 62.3 per cent[2]. This high internet penetration is important as it reduces the risk of differences in internet access influencing the findings regarding the spread of on-line political discussions among the citizens. As a result, the focus of the analysis is turned towards motivation-based aspects, which are stated as important to consider by the reinforcement theory. This focus is also arguably essential considering the short history of the medium's diffusion among the general public. As the medium spreads, as it undoubtedly will (cf. Norris 2001b, 92), access to the technology will be less influential on citizens' on-line behaviour, thus accentuating the role of individual preferences, interests and motivation.

In order to analyse the extent to which the Finnish people engage in on-line political discussions and the characteristics of those citizens actually talking politics on the internet, survey data from the Finnish national election survey 2007 is used[3]. The findings from the national survey are complemented by a quantitative content analysis of discussion threads and messages posted during the last few weeks, i.e. March 5th to 18th, leading up to the 2007 parliamentary election (see appendix for detailed coding scheme). It can, of course, be argued that in opting for a coding period prior to an upcoming election, there is a risk of hasty partisan opinions dominating discussions and adversely affecting the deliberative quality (cf. Papacharissi 2002, 16). However, on the other hand, elections do raise the overall interest in politics (e.g. Asp 1986, 108) which ought to serve to increase the likelihood of people engaging in political discussions. A coding period in between elections could very well serve to underestimate the *quantitative activity* on political internet discussions just as much as a coding period in times of elections possibly

underestimates the *quality* of discussions. It should also be noted that content analyses, naturally, are only capable of providing rather superficial indications of the deliberative quality of on-line discussions. There are most likely many underlying dimensions which go unnoticed in any form of content analysis. Then again, on the other hand, any form of deeper more participatory form of analysis restrains the capacity to encapsulate a large enough sample in order to generalise from the findings.

The content analysis focuses on discussions located both on the Usenet and on the World Wide Web. When turning to the choice of actual discussion forums, forums which appear to have a clear potential for relatively large scale, diverse discussions taking place were chosen. In search of such on-line discussion forums, where so-to-speak large enough, diverse and varying topics may occur, discussion boards situated on three popular websites in Finland in terms of user traffic4 were opted for; www.iltalehti.fi, www.suomi24.fi and www.jippii.fi. Additionally, discussions on one of the few existing Finnish political Usenet boards; sfnet.keskustelu. politiikka, were analysed. All of these sites host forums for several different topics, politics being just one of them. The political discussion on the website of one of Finland's two leading tabloids, www.iltalehti.fi is not focused on fixed topics. Instead, participants are free to start discussions around any political topic. The www.jippii.fi website – a web portal - hosts one "general politics" discussion, also without fixed topics. The political discussions on the most popular Finnish web portal, www.suomi24.fi are categorised into several sub-themes within which there are no fixed topics. Several of these forums were, however, devoted to discussions concerning individual political parties, which per se appears likely to mainly attract citizens with similar views. Therefore, I opted to only analyse the suomi24. fi discussions on the section labelled "politics in general." The sfnet.keskustelu. politiikka discussion group has the character of a "general politics" discussion without fixed topics.

Regarding the content analysis of the discussions, a random sample (20 per cent) of discussion threads was coded[5]. More specifically, the threads, consisting of several individual messages, were analysed using a coding scheme (see appendix for detailed description of the scheme) drawing upon existing research within the field (e.g. Bentivegna 1998; Hill & Hughes 1998; Wilhelm 1999; Strandberg 2005). In particular, the number of participants and messages, as well as the character of the start message of each thread were analysed. Moreover, the occurrence of conflicts or disagreements within threads, and whether mutual understanding nonetheless could be achieved, was noted. Secondly, the main topic, type of content, use of validations and tone were analysed for each *individual* message posted to the forums during the coding period (see appendix for details).

On-line Political Discussions: Amount of Activity and Characteristics of Participants

The first part of the analysis focuses on the extent to which Finnish citizens engage in on-line political discussion. Firstly, Table 1 contrasts the share of citizens engaging in on-line political discussions to the share of citizens obtaining election-related information from various media channels.

Table 1: The Share of Respondents Following the Election through Different
Media

	%*	N
TV news/current affairs programmes	65.5	931
Newspapers	48.8	694
Radio	16.8	239
Internet news	12.3	175
Party- or candidate websites	6.8	96
Blogs	2.7	38
Candidate selectors	13.2	187
On-line political discussion**	14.1	200
Total:	100	1422

* The share of respondents claiming they engaged in the activities either "very much" or "quite
   much."

** The share of respondents claiming to have engaged in at least one on-line political discussion
   during the last 4 years.

Evidently, internet sources are lagging far behind traditional media sources,
disregarding radio, in terms of the share of citizens using them for obtaining elec-
tion-related information. Notably, a substantial share of Finnish citizens claims
to have engaged in at least one on-line political discussion during the last four
years. However, due to the phrasing of the questionnaire item, this finding is not
to be regarded as representing the share of citizens *regularly* engaged in political
discussion on the internet. That share is most likely lower (cf. Cornfield et al 2003,
20). Turning to the characteristics of the on-line debaters, Table 2 firstly presents a
comparison of Finnish internet users in general and on-line debaters. Specifically,
demographical, as well as political and media activity items are compared.

Table 2 shows several interesting statistically significant differences between the
two groups. Most importantly, the differences found bear a strong resemblance to
the main argument of the reinforcement theory stating that the internet is mostly
a new channel for the politically motivated, active and engaged citizens to engage
in familiar activities (Hill & Hughes 1998, 44; Norris 1999, 89). In support of this,
the findings show that the on-line debaters voted to a significantly higher degree
than general internet users. Moreover, they used all forms of media for following
the election significantly more than general internet users. Their level of political
interest was also significantly much higher than general internet users.

Still, Table 2 does not reveal any information on the independent and relative
importance of these citizen-specific variables in predicting the engagement in
on-line political discussion. This issue is further explored in Table 3 in which a
logistic regression model predicting citizens' participation in on-line debates is
presented.

Table 2: The Characteristics of Finnish Internet Users and On-line Debaters

	Internet users in general		On-line debaters	
	%	N	%	N
Education				
Primary	10.0	75	11.0	22
Vocational	37.7	282	37.5	75
Upper secondary	23.7	177	24.5	49
Polytechnic	9.8	73	7.0	14
University	18.9	141	20.0	40
Household income				
I (poorest)	22.6	154	28.6	50
II	31.9	217	34.9	61
III	33.1	225	26.9	47
IV (richest)	12.4	84	9.7	17
Age**				
18-24	15.1	114	10.5	21
25-34	21.7	164	19.5	39
35-44	17.4	132	15.5	31
45-54	19.2	145	17.5	35
55-64	17.3	131	16.5	33
64+	9.4	71	20.5	41
Gender				
Male	49.8	480	51.5	103
Female	50.2	477	48.5	97
Voted in election**				
Yes	84.0	634	91.0	182
No	16.0	121	9.0	18
Use of media				
TV news/current affairs***	59.5	450	76.5	153
Radio***	10.8	82	26.5	53
Newspapers***	44.4	336	68.0	136
Internet news***	13.3	101	34.5	69
Candidate/party websites***	7.0	53	19.0	38
Blogs***	2.3	17	9.0	18
Candidate selectors*	17.3	131	26.5	53
Political interest***				
Very low	6.3	48	1.5	3
Low	35.0	265	16.0	32
High	45.4	344	43.5	87
Very high	13.2	100	39.0	78

* p<.05; ** p<.01; ***p<.001 Chi-square tests and Fisher's exact tests of differences between the two groups.

Notes: Education=the highest education obtained; Household income=quartiles; Use of media=the share of respondents claiming to have used the media in question "quite much" or "very much" for following the election.

With due caution to the somewhat low explanatory power of the model, the findings reported in Table 3 confirm the pattern observed in Table 2. The regression model thus reveals several significant predictors which strongly support the reinforcement theory: compared to the general public, Finnish on-line political debaters are significantly much more likely to be active in off-line politics, to use off-line media for political purposes and to have a high level of political interest. Moreover, quite naturally, they also use the internet to a higher extent. Indisputably, the Finnish citizens taking part in on-line political discussions are politically very active and have a high degree of civic interest (cf. Norris 2001b, 221). Bearing democratic theories in mind, on-line discussions are thus apparently not including a wide range of participants (cf. Barber 1984; Dahl 1989; Fishkin 1995). On the contrary, on-line political debaters belong to a very specific segment of the general public.

Table 3: Determinants of Participating in On-line Political Discussions in Finland (logistic regression)

	B	SE	Exp(B)
Education	-.307	.415	.736
Income	-.870	.445	.419
Age/100	-.705	.714	.494
Gender	.104	.196	1.110
Voted in the election	-.132	.312	.877
Activity in off-line politics	5.211***	.623	183.340
Use of traditional media	2.368**	.858	10.677
Internet use	.839*	.428	2.443
Political interest	1.533*	.632	4.631
Constant	-5.281***		
N	1,041		
% correct	86.0		
Cox-Snell R^2	.152		
Nagelkerke R^2	.262		

* p<.05; ** p<.01; ***p<.001

Note: The dependent variable: 0=citizen did not take part in on-line political debate, 1=citizen took part in at least one discussion during the last 4 years. Predictors: Gender: Male (1); Female (0). All other predictors are recoded dummies on a scale from 0 to 1 based on the categories presented in Table 2. Activity in off-line politics is also a dummy (0-1) based on a 12 point scale assigning 1 point for each of 12 different political activity-items.

Activity on the Political Discussion Boards: Quantity and Deliberative Quality

The second theoretically important aspect of on-line citizen discussions mentioned in the theoretical framework is whether these meet deliberative ideals. This aspect is now addressed using the results of the content analysis of four Finnish political on-line discussion boards.

Table 4 displays several quantitative indicators of the activity on the four discussion boards. In particular, drawing upon the research within the field (e.g.

Bentivegna 1998; Hill & Hughes 1998; Strandberg 2005), three measures are in focus: the degree to which the debates where monopolised by few debaters (i.e. messages posted by each debater), the liveliness of the debates (i.e. a standardised measure of the relationship between original and reply posts) and intensity (a measure indicating the length and complexity of discussion threads).

Table 4: Four On-line Discussion Boards: Quantitative Indicators of Activity in Discussion Threads

	jippii.fi (N=16)		suomi24.fi (N=39)		iltalehti.fi (N=164)		sfnet (N=21)		Total (N=240)	
	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Total
Messages*	16.69	29.22	2.36	1.29	12.65	22.94	16.33	22.28	11.57	21.74
Debaters*	4.19	4.17	2.18	1.05	6.98	11.11	6.43	6.11	5.96	9.59
Monopolisation***	2.47	2.00	1.07	.20	1.52	.75	1.91	1.04	1.54	.92
Liveliness (0-1) **	.56	.45	.45	.29	.68	.33	.66	.39	.63	.35
Intensity***	59.5	119.31	2.44	1.41	45.27	116.49	206.62	397.52	53.38	160.95

* p<.05; ** p<.01; ***p<.001 One-way ANOVA tested for difference between group means.

Judging from the figures concerning the number of individual messages, all forums except the suomi24-board display a rather satisfying level of activity given the Finnish context (cf. Strandberg 2005). It is, however, noteworthy that the standard deviation is quite high which means that there is much variation in thread length. This is also confirmed by the degree of liveliness and intensity which also both have high standard deviations. Consequently, it seems as if there are two types of discussions; short, lifeless and low-intensity or lengthy, intensive and lively debates. In theoretical terms, there are discussions whose quantitative activity meets deliberative ideals but there are also an equally large share of discussions which do not. Still, many discussions are long enough to hold a potential for deliberation to take place. Beyond these features, Table 4 shows that the discussion threads comprise an average of over ten individual messages and roughly six individual debaters and are thus not dominated by a few citizens as often found in other studies (cf. Fuchs 2006; Jankowski & Van Selm 2000). Viewed in light of deliberative norms, the equality of discussants appears to be quite good (cf. Dahlberg 2001, 2-3; Jankowski & Van Selm 2000, 153-154).

Moving onward with the analysis, focus is turned to the contents of the discussions. Concerning this, many of the democratic theorists' (e.g. Barber 1984; Dahl 1989; Fishkin 1995) perceptions of deliberative discussions are again central to the analysis. Table 5 shows the four forums according to certain qualitative indicators.

Several scholars have, as discussed earlier, raised concerns regarding the fact that topics in on-line discussion usually vary more between forums than within forums (cf. Hill & Hughes 1998; Papacharissi 2002; Polat 2005). The Finnish findings displayed in Table 5 do not entirely support this: the forums have a rather varied distribution of topics inasmuch as no discussion is predominantly focused on just one type of topic. On the other hand, however, the topic with the largest share does vary significantly between the different discussion boards which is more in line

Table 5: Four On-line Discussion Boards: Qualitative Indicators of Deliberative Quality in Individual Messages

	jippii.fi (N=65)		suomi24.fi (N=88)		iltalehti.fi (N=675)		sfnet (N=80)		Total (N=908)	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Topic										
Politican/ Party image	27.7	18	23.9	21	45.8	309	13.8	11	39.5	359
Issues	27.7	18	47.7	42	22.5	152	35.0	28	26.4	240
Political process	15.4	10	17.0	15	13.6	92	7.5	6	13.5	123
Metatheme	18.5	12	9.1	8	13.2	89	41.3	33	15.6	142
Type of content										
Provide fact	6.2	4	2.3	2	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.7	6
Opinion	18.5	12	25.0	22	24.3	164	38.8	31	25.2	229
Question	26.2	17	15.9	14	15.0	101	17.5	14	16.1	146
Statement	32.3	21	25.0	22	27.9	188	17.5	14	27.0	245
Announcement	16.9	11	31.8	28	31.1	210	25.0	20	29.6	269
Tone of message										
Negative	53.8	35	52.3	46	68.9	465	70.0	56	66.3	602
Neutral	33.8	22	22.7	20	17.0	115	21.3	17	19.2	174
Positive	12.3	8	19.3	17	12.1	82	7.5	6	12.4	113
Use of validations										
None		50		81		664		80		875
Internal		11	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	1.2	11
External	6.2	4	8.0	7	1.6	11	0.0	0	2.4	22

Note: All differences in the distribution of share between the forums are statistically significant at WHAT the .05 level (chi-square tests).

with the "topics vary more between than within forums" perspective. Nonetheless, the discussions, to a certain extent, meet the deliberative ideal of diversity of discussion topics.

Regarding the remaining three indicators, however, deliberative ideals are hardly met. Similar to many existing studies of on-line discussion, the debates analysed here display a low degree of reciprocity and mutual respect, the participants do not feel responsible before each other and they are not "listening as well as speaking, feeling as well as thinking nor acting as well as reflecting" (Barber 1984, 178). This is indicated by the large share of negative messages and the dominance of opinions, statements and announcements over questions and facts (cf. Fuchs 2006; Papacharissi 2002; Wilhelm 1999, 169-170). The relatively low share of questions is particularly worrisome; this could indicate that the discussions were not truly "interactive exchanges" (cf. Wilhem 1999, 170). Also, very few messages included any validations, neither internal (e.g. argumentation based on previous posts) nor external (e.g. links to facts or articles), supporting the posted message. The degree of "rational-critical argumentation" is thus very low (cf. Wilhelm 1999, 173-174). Correspondingly, a separate analysis of discussion threads (not reported

in detail here) shows that roughly one in four discussions turned into conflicts and that any kind of mutual agreement only could be achieved in 20 per cent of these conflicts.

Conclusions

Naturally, as in most studies of any on-line phenomena, the analysis in this study is bound to have missed out on thousands of on-line political discussions. Seeing as the forums analysed in this study are located on very popular Finnish websites, and the most popular Usenet root, I tentatively suggest that the analysis facilitates some general conclusions concerning the current state of mainstream citizens' on-line political discussions. Likewise, as discussed earlier, the content analysis per se is also bound to have merely scratched the surface of the deliberative quality of on-line political discussions. Returning to the analytical framework established earlier, bearing these reservations in mind, what conclusions can be drawn from the empirical analysis?

Four ideal types of on-line discussions were depicted in the analytical framework (Figure 1): a truly deliberative discussion, a potentially deliberative discussion, a non-deliberative wide audience discussion and a narrow audience non-deliberative discussion. The empirical analysis of the citizens taking part in on-line political discussions and the content analysis of actual discussions have brought about rather discouraging results. The on-line political discussions in Finland – a country which clearly is very accustomed to the internet and its use for political activity (cf. Gibson & Römmele 2005, 10) – are hard to classify as anything but narrow audience non-deliberative discussions, or at best as narrow audience semi-deliberative discussions. Even though a substantial share of Finnish citizens claimed to have engaged in on-line political discussions at least once during the last four years, the analysis revealed that these citizens were noticeably biased towards being politically very active and interested. Nixon's and Johansson's (1999, 146) fear of on-line discussions becoming a venue for an 'elite' group of politically engaged citizens is thus very true, at least in light of this analysis. The notion contained within the reinforcement theory of motivation being a crucial driving force of citizens' political use of the internet (e.g. Hill & Hughes 1998, 44; Norris 2001b, 221) is also supported. Pertaining to the analytical typology (Figure 1), the Finnish discussions analysed in this study are clearly located on the "narrow" end of the vertical – penetration among the public – dimension.

Given that on-line debaters are politically active and motivated, it is surprising that the content analysis of the four Finnish discussion boards revealed mostly sparse signs of true deliberation, as described by democratic theorists, taking place. Firstly though, on a positive note, some discussions were rather long, intense and lively and therefore held a potential for fruitful debates taking place. Also, the debates were not dominated by few active discussants and the diversity of discussion topics was satisfying. On the negative side, however, the further analysis of discussion contents showed that the discussions showed little signs of being truly deliberative. The degree of reciprocity and level of mutual respect were both quite low. Moreover, there was an abundance of opinions, announcements and statements leaving little opportunity for discussions to take place. The messages were not backed up by rational argumentation, as measured by the use of validations

in this article, which truly deliberative discussions ought to feature (e.g. Dahlberg 2001). A large share of the messages was also negative in tone. This is not *per se* in contrast to deliberative ideals, in fact, critical argumentation is a central part of such discussions. However, taking the large share of unresolved conflicts and disagreements into account (i.e. 80% of the threads where conflicts appeared), one might question the degree of critical argumentation in the noted negativism. Turning to the analytical typology, the deliberative quality of the discussions analysed mostly corresponds to situation D, i.e. a low deliberative quality, whilst containing, to a lesser extent, some elements which are symptomatic of good-quality deliberative discussions.

In conclusion, the study has demonstrated that public deliberation is generally not found on-line, at least not in Finland. The discussions mostly resemble narrow audience non-deliberative discussions, as described in the analytical framework (Figure 1). According to the general deliberative theory, the discussions thus do little to enhance democracy (cf. Fishkin 1995; Sunstein 2001). That said, neither does deliberation exist off-line in Finland, where a systematic deliberative experiment has only recently been conducted (Setälä et al 2007). Finnish society in general also has a clear emphasis on quietness and solitude over conversation (e.g. Carling 2007). This could be one explanation why politically active and interested citizens fail to engage in truly deliberative on-line discussions. It simply doesn't come naturally to Finnish citizens. Concerning this, however, it is important to bear in mind that studies from other countries have also found similar results. This would indicate that the nature of on-line discussion boards themselves, perhaps most importantly the user anonymity, is not a perfect venue for truly deliberative discussions. Nonetheless, these findings do not denote that the internet is unsuitable for deliberative discussions given the right conditions. Most likely, some sort of institutional arrangements and rules of conduct enforced through moderation would enhance the quality of on-line debates (cf. Wright & Street 2007). Even so, the major obstacle in any attempt towards citizen deliberation both on- and off-line, which was quite evident in this study as well, is how to engage citizens beyond the active segments. To summarise, the opportunities for on-line political discussions on the internet do not automatically bring about democratic benefits nor do they succeed in attracting citizens who are not already politically active and interested. In other words, public deliberation in its true form has not yet moved on-line.

Notes:

1. Finland still ranks among the top 30 countries in the world according to the website of Internet World Stats, www.internetworldstats.com.

2. Source: www.internetworldstats.com accessed in January 2007.

3. The national election survey was conducted with funding granted by the Academy of Finland.

4. According to Alexa web rankings website – www.alexa.com – accessed February 8th 2007, the www.suomi24.fi website is the 9th most visited site in Finland. The www.iltalehti.fi website is ranked 15th and the www.jippii.fi website 88th. The sfnet.keskustelu.politiikka group has 99 subscribers which is the highest number I noted among Finnish political newsgroups.

5. The reliability of the scheme was checked using the formula for interreliability suggested by Holsti (1969). After initial briefing, the result of the test was a very satisfying .91 (recommended minimum is .90).

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Appendix: Coding Scheme for Content Analysis of Threads and Messages

Threads:
Number of participants
Number of individual messages
Number of reply levels
The topic of the first message in each thread:
  1. Political issue
  2. Politician's/party's image
  3. Political process
  4. Metatheme
  5. Other
The type of content in the first message in each thread:
  1. Fact
  2. Opinion
  3. Question
  4. Announcement
  5. Statement
  6. Other
The tone of the first message in each thread:
  1. Negative
  2. Neutral
  3. Positive
Use of validation in first message of each thread:
  1. Internal validation (i.e. referring to arguments already posted in the forum)
  2. External validation (i.e. referring to external sources outside of forum)
  3. None
Occurrence of conflict in thread: Yes or No
Is some form of middle ground/mutual agreement achieved in thread with conflict:
  Yes or No

  Individual messages:
  Type of message: Original (first in thread) or Reply
  The topic of the message:
  1. Political issue
  2. Politician's/party's image
  3. Political process
  4. Metatheme
  5. Other
  The type of content in the message:
  1. Fact
  2. Opinion
  3. Question
  4. Announcement
  5. Statement
  6. Other
  The tone of the message:
  1.   Negative
  2.   Neutral
  3.   Positive

DO MASS MEDIA PORTRAY EUROPE AS A COMMUNITY?

GERMAN AND FRENCH DEBATES ON EU ENLARGEMENT AND A COMMON CONSTITUTION

SILKE ADAM

Abstract

The goal of this article is to analyse whether, and when, the media depict Europe as a common community and whether, and when, they remain nationally confined. Media portray Europe as a community if they (1) make European and member state actors and topics visible, (2) show the mutual connectedness between these actors and (3) give voice to support and criticism while avoiding that nation states wall themselves off. To measure whether mass media depict Europe as a common community and thus potentially foster citizens' integration a content analysis of interactions is systematically combined with empirical network analysis. A comparison of the debates on EU enlargement and a common constitution in the German and French quality press reveals that whether Europe is portrayed as a community varies between and within countries. Such variations seem to reflect the relation between national elites' attitudes and public opinion towards a specific issue.

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Introduction

European integration is characterised by the construction of common political and economic structures. These common structures have created a system of governance in Europe that is unique in the world as no other region shows a comparatively high level of state surpassing regulations and international organisations (Kohler-Koch 2000, 11). From the beginnings of the European integration project, the creation of common structures and institutions was pushed forward by political elites of the nation states whereas citizens have, in general, remained more hesitant. Today, there is a considerable gap between the attitudes of the elites towards Europe and the rest of the population in nearly all member states (Mittag and Wessels 2003, 418). Without its citizens however, any future projects for European Union (EU) integration that go beyond a free trade union, possibly dealing with problems that cause dissent, may fail.

Three types of attitudes shape the relation between the political system and its citizens (Easton 1965, 172): these are attitudes towards the authorities who are responsible for daily politics, attitudes towards the regime which equals the constitutional order and attitudes towards the political community. The latter will be the focus of this paper. In order to ensure the development of a community formal steps of integration are not sufficient in themselves. The concept also requires that citizens identify with each other (Easton 1965, 185, 325). Such a "we-feeling" seems demanding in Europe as here the nation states have dominated the concept of political community. Following Fuchs (Fuchs 1999, 156) such a community is usually constituted by two mechanisms: by a border line that defines those inside and outside of the community and by internal connections among its members. In small communities day-to-day interactions create border lines and internal connections. States with millions of inhabitants however, call for a different form of community: an imaginary one that is created in the heads of its citizens (Anderson 2003, Fuchs 1999).[1] Consequently, formal citizenship as granted in Europe by the Maastricht treaty in 1992, contributes to the development of a European community only insofar as it is subjectively reproduced.

Direct experiences with Europe like exchange programs or the common currency may foster the development of a community in citizens' heads. If however direct experiences are rare or completely lacking, mass media are regarded as powerful mechanisms that impact on these subjective images (e.g. Zaller and Feldman 1992, 611). The distance of EU politics from a citizens' everyday life thus makes media influence on the forming of a political community in Europe likely. If mass media have any influence as to whether people think of Europe as a community, then it is the national media who are responsible. The lack of supranational media outlets in Europe, audiences that are held captive in their native languages and politicians who need to cater to national audiences to be re-elected point to the fact that national media may or may not contribute to shaping a European community in citizens' minds.

Studies point to the fact that national mass media actually influence public perception of Europe (see e.g. de Vreese 2004, de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006). However, this impact cannot be described on the basis of a simple stimulus-response model. The studies already show that the impact differs according to the type of communication flow (one-sided or two-sided) and according to the sophistication

of the recipients. In addition, the studies point out that mass media affect the evaluation of specific policies, but not the evaluation of the overall integration project. None of these studies deals with the question of the development of a European community in the heads of the citizens. Before one can analyse how mass media might impact such "we-feelings," we need to step back and answer the question, which type of media content has the potential to impact citizen's attitudes of a community and how one might measure such media content. Consequently, this paper does not offer a study of media impact on EU attitudes of citizens. What it does is (1) to develop criteria which allow analysing mass media content regarding its integration potential, (2) to show how content and network analysis helps measuring these criteria and (3) to apply these considerations to the German and French debates on EU enlargement and a common constitution by quantitatively analysing reporting and commentating of quality newspapers in a three year period (2000 to 2002). The paper closes with a conclusion and a prospect on future research paths.

Theoretical Considerations: Mass Media's Potential for Integration

Mass media today are regarded as central mechanisms for a society's integration. The identification with a specific political space is not a precondition for politics, but is itself permanently created in communication processes (Eder 2001, 238, Habermas 2001, 102). So far empirical evidence is lacking as to *whether* the media fulfil this ascribed function (Vlasic and Brosius 2002, 93). Additionally, researchers still struggle with the question as to *how* the media might contribute to integration. Integration seems possible in two ways (Pöttker 2002, Weßler 2002): on the one hand mass media may integrate by unification or homogenisation (e.g. Schulz 1997). This is the most common perspective in communication research (e.g. Pöttker 2002, 325). Integration in this perspective requires that the media offer standardized programs and outlets for all groups in society, that these groups use the media similarly and that the media's content is uniform and consensus-oriented. Shared agendas in different media thus would be an indicator for mass media's integration potential. On the other hand mass media may integrate through plurality. From this perspective integration is made possible not by homogenisation, but by connecting heterogeneous parts. The media fulfil this function if they show the mutual interconnectedness of a community (Durkheim 1893/1977, 403). Integration from this perspective takes place through conflict communication (Wessler 2002, 72). It requires that the media allow different groups in society mutual observation. It does not demand however, that all citizens consume the media in a similar way so long as this does not lead to a permanent state of ignorance towards existing conflicts. The media content in this model needs to formulate conflicts without debasement of the opposition. Integration through plurality means that societies are characterised by a permanent struggle within their democratic public spaces (Dubiel 1999, 142).

Following the idea that a homogenisation of media outlets, usage and content contributes to integration, one can derive criteria that are necessary for public communication in Europe. Researchers that follow this integration model claim that there must either be a supranational, European-wide media system that reaches

out to the masses or – as an alternative – a multitude of national media systems that converge while transporting European issues into their national political spaces. This means that these national media report and comment upon the same issue at the same time under similar points of reference (Eder and Kantner 2000, 306).

This model of integration through homogenisation has been criticised for ignoring societies' plurality (Wessler 2002). Their functional and social differentiation makes integration by homogenisation, even in traditional nation states, difficult (Pöttker 2002, 331). In the case of the European Union this aspect becomes even more relevant. Research has shown that the common European input that relies on national media to be transported to the audiences is filtered at the national level creating debates that differ between countries (e.g. Adam 2007 a, b). The plurality of national contexts within the European Union leads to different domestic adaptation processes by national actors and, therefore, to different debates. It is likely that this domestication of European politics with national colours will continue as long as national politicians need to cater to national electorates for winning elections and so long as national media depend on the attention of national audiences in order to stay in business. Additionally, integration through homogenisation faces a second problem in the case of the European Union. Even if common European regulations and policies cause parallel debates in different countries one cannot be sure whether the media will show the European-level origin of these policies. If, however, citizens do not become aware of the European dimension of a topic one must doubt whether such a synchronous debate throughout Europe helps in integrating Europe (Koopmans and Erbe 2004, 100f.). Without direct references to the EU itself or to other European countries any such debates are unlikely to create an imaginary community of Europe in the minds of its citizens.

To conclude at this stage that the mass media have no potential for integrating Europe through homogenisation would be misleading. However, the plurality and differentiation in Europe makes it likely that if the mass media contribute to integrating Europe at all, they cannot solely rely on mechanisms of homogenisation, but need also to connect Europe through plurality. Researchers in the tradition of this second integration model claim that traditional national public spaces must open up for European and member state actors and issues in order to allow observation. As a result public arenas get linked to each other forming a network of European communication (Habermas 2001, Koopmans and Erbe 2004). The *visibility* of European actors and issues in the national mass media indicates a debates' integration potential on a first level. This criteria is supported by empirical research that shows that the higher the salience of European issues in people's daily lives, the more the people tend to identify with Europe (Risse 2004). From an integration perspective however, it seems insufficient if traditional national public arenas simply open up their communicative space for European actors and issues. The pure visibility of European and member states actors and issues is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for integrative debates. Following Durkheim (Durkheim 1893/1977, 403) integration requires the experience of mutual dependencies. Fuchs (Fuchs 1999, 156) calls it the connection among the members of a community and the border lines for those staying outside. The mass media show such mutual connections within Europe if the national and European member-state actors that have become visible are related to each other. Communicative interactions that are depicted in the mass media thus are not limited to traditional nation states anymore, but transcend them

within Europe. This *interconnectedness* is regarded as a second indicator for the integration potential of debates. Debates hamper the development of a European community if national and European member state actors are not related to each other within these debates (lack of connection among the members) or if communicative interactions reach beyond Europe (border line definition). But even if debates show the mutual interdependency within the European political space they do not necessarily foster integration. Integrative debates need to depict a *dispute constellation* (third criterion) that shows conflict as well as cooperation between the involved actors and prevents, at the same time, nation states from walling themselves off from the rest of Europe. A display of positive references is necessary as otherwise citizens lack possibilities for identification and negative references give existing conflicts within society a voice. If debates can avoid the walling-off of the nation states from each other, then purely national interest-definitions (Gerhards 1993, 106ff.) become an exception.

To integrate around 450 million Europeans in 27 countries with 23 different languages into a common community is a difficult task. If the mass media contributes to such task, it seems likely that they do so not only through homogenisation but also by connecting Europe through its plurality. Integration through plurality is demanding. It requires that debates in different European countries (1) make topics and actors in Europe visible, that (2) they show the interdependencies between these actors (interconnectedness) and (3) that they formulate positive and negative aspects of European integration without fencing off traditional entities (dispute constellation).

Methodical Considerations: Measuring Debates' Integration Potential

Only if we can measure criteria empirically, are they useful for research (Vlasic and Brosius 2002, 99). Such measurement allows not only the description of the integration potential of mass media debates, but also marks the starting point for later studies that need to test the impact of the analysed mass media depictions on citizens' attitudes. To measure whether mass media depict Europe as a community in plurality, it is not sufficient to show the pure visibility of European / member state actors and issues on the media agenda, but it does require us to take a closer look at the actor constellations, to see whether and how these actors are interlinked. One perspective that focuses on the linkages and interactions is the network concept. Networks are characterised by actors, positions or organisations that are connected by specific types of ties (Pappi 1987, 13). Debates in this perspective are constituted by speakers and their communicative interactions with other actors. Such speakers – also called frame-sponsors (Gamson and Modigliani 1989, 6) – are either the media themselves, if they raise their own voices, or political actors that make use of the media as a forum to express their ideas. These speakers attribute responsibility, support or critique to other actors and thus organise discourses by making other actors important or ignoring them and by employing frames of inclusion and exclusion. As those actors to whom responsibility, support or critique is attributed can become speakers themselves, complete networks arise that can be termed "symbolic." They differ from social or policy networks because the analysed interactions do not physically take place, but are presented within

the media. These networks construct reality as they reflect the media's depiction of political struggles, not the struggle itself. They therefore represent the "symbolic dimension" of politics (e.g. Edelman 1964).

To study media debates from a network perspective a specific, quantitative content analysis needs to be applied that focuses on interactions between speakers and addressees. As a first step all contributions within the media under study are selected that refer to the analysed topic. Interaction units (Früh 2001, 242) are coded within these contributions. These interaction units are defined by Koopmans and Statham (Koopmans and Statham 1999) as "claims." A claim is a strategic action in which a speaker publicly expresses his opinion by attributing responsibility and offering support and critique to other actors. Claims are not confined to verbal actions only but also refer to physical ones. An interaction- and actor-centred concept of debates (symbolic networks) is analysed with the help of an actor- and interaction-centred method. This results in data that reveal not only the actors' visibility, but also their constellations. As it is hardly possible to study such relational data with classical statistical instruments, a specific tool needs to be applied: empirical network analysis (Wasserman and Faust 1999). This method of analysis allows the examination of all three indicators for integrative debates (visibility, interconnectedness and dispute constellations) as it does not regard texts as a treasure trove of isolated actors, opinions and topics, but as symbolic constructions that reveal how conflict, cooperation and targeting connects the involved actors. The method of empirical network analysis provides us with mathematically founded definitions and indicators that reveal the position of actors within a network and the structure of ties that connects them. Which network indicators can be used to study the visibility, the type of dependencies presented and the dispute constellations within debates will be shown in the following.

To determine whether debates allow the observation of different actors and their opinions throughout Europe, we draw on the network analytic form of visibility. Visible actors are prominent in a debate which means that they attract attention. From a network perspective there are two possibilities to do so: firstly, actors can become visible as speakers who attribute responsibility, support and critique to others and thus serve as agenda-setters directing attention to their positions and interest. For this role actors need to actively access the media. Secondly, actors gain prominence if other actors direct their claims towards them. It can be assumed that this form of visibility is less dependent on the selection criteria of the media but more strongly reflects the importance of an actor in the political process. An actor's total prominence sums up its prominence as agenda-setter and attention receiver. Within a network a prominent speaker is thus the source or the object of many communicative relations. This also means that if a speaker attributes responsibility to two different addressees within one claim its prominence doubles compared to a visibility approach without a relational perspective. The same is true for attention receiving. Prominence thus does not mean pure existence in debates, but means prominence as agenda-setter and attention-receiver. In network analytic terms the former idea is called "outdegree," the latter "indegree" (Freeman 1979). The sum of both indicators results in the total prominence of an actor which is called "degree." Such "degree" analysis allows us to determine whether the positions and ideas of European and member state actors can be observed in debates. Only

if national actors have to share prominence with those from other parts of Europe is the first criteria for integrative debates fulfilled. However, the high prominence values of European / member state compared to national actors in debates tell only half of the story as far as visibility is concerned. Visibility is a two-dimensional concept: the first dimension refers to the actors' visibility; the second one takes the visibility of a topic on the overall agenda into account. The prerequisite for a debate's potential to integrate is its existence. If a topic is not gaining attention at all it is hidden from public view and thus hinders integration. In general one can distinguish between three types of debates: an issue can be a permanent one, an event-jumper or a low salience-issue. A permanent issue is debated over a longer period of time above a specific threshold of attention; an event-jumper gets on the agenda outside routine politics; a low salience issue remains below a threshold that reaches people's attention.

Visibility, however, is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition to attribute integrative potential to a debate. On a second level it is required that debates show the interconnectedness of Europe. For such an analysis we must compare how many interactions solely run between national actors, how many involve non-European actors (globalised interactions) and how many connect European actors. Even if European actors are involved a debate's integration potential can vary. If, for example, debates portray French actors in discussion with other French actors and those from Poland attributing responsibilities to other Polish actors, then communication does not cross borders. Such a construction of Europe that resembles traditional reporting from foreign countries (Koopmans and Erbe 2004) would be assumed to hinder the development of a common European community that transcends traditional border lines. Also a portrayal of Europe that relied solely on discussions within the EU institutions might be a hurdle for integration as this type of debate does not reflect the today's nature of the multi-level system of EU governance.

Integration by communication requires a third criterion: a dispute constellation that shows conflict and cooperation while at the same time avoiding the walling-off of traditional entities. Integration through conflict does not require that critical voices are oppressed. By contrast, it requires that conflict and positive references be formulated. To determine whether conflict and cooperation is present in a debate, we calculate a "PN-Index." This index subtracts all negative references within a debate from all positive ones and divides the result by all evaluated communicative references. For each debate this index varies between -1 and +1. A negative value indicates that conflict prevails; a positive value that supportive references are dominant. Integration through conflict communication becomes likely if the index lies close to 0. This indicates that a debate offers citizens positive points of reference while at the same time taking account of their concerns.

Last but not least, Europe is only portrayed as a community if interests – expressed by support and critique attributions – are not bound to traditional entities, but transcend them. Only if speakers from different European countries form common coalitions do the media portray a communicative space which is not dominated any more by specifically German, French or Polish interests. Such debates can be expected to foster the development of an imagined European community as traditional nation states do not wall themselves off. To identify coalitions in public

debates we follow the idea of Hajer (Hajer 1995) who claims that actors within a discourse coalition make the same story-line prominent. From a network analytic perspective this means that actors form a coalition if they attribute support and critique to the same actors and thus define their interest similarly.

To study such coalition structures one can use the concept of structural equivalence (Wasserman and Faust 1999, 347ff.): two actors are structurally equivalent if they attribute support and critique to exactly the same actors. As it is unlikely to find actors with identical reference patterns, structural equivalence analysis seeks to put actors into coalitions that have similar references of support and critique. This kind of analysis is based on two matrices in each debate that are characterised by the involved actors[2] and respectively the support or critique relations between them. Actors are analysed in a detailed perspective: they are not only differentiated according to their origin, but also according to their social position (government, etc.) – and in the country of analysis also regarding their political orientation. Such a detailed level of analysis is necessary to determine whether traditional entities shape interest definitions or not.

To evaluate how similar speakers are in their support and critique attributions, we calculate for each pair of actors the degree of correlation between their reference patterns.[3] High correlation values indicate that speakers make the same story-line prominent whereas low values point to different patterns of support and critique attribution. The similarity between the reference patterns of each pair of actors is summarised in a similarity matrix which shows all Pearson correlations. This similarity matrix is then subject to a hierarchical cluster analysis based on average linkage procedure and to a multidimensional scaling analysis (MDS). Both methods help to identify coalitions as they group actors together which are similar to each other. They differ as cluster analysis is based on a discrete model out of which strictly separable coalitions arise. MDS in contrast works on a continuous model that seeks to place similar actors close to each other in space.[4] Comparisons of these two methods show that their results are similar (Wasserman and Faust 1999, 388) but supplementary (for a detailed description to determine coalitions see Adam 2007 a).

The Integration Potential of German and French Debates on EU Enlargement and a Common Constitution

Applying the identified criteria and methodology to two central European topics – enlargement and constitution building – in two countries that are often regarded as the engines of EU integration, France and Germany, reveals each debates' potential for integration. The analysis is based on content – more precisely claims – analysis data from a seven-country study in Europe called "Europub."[5] To examine the debates on EU enlargement and a common constitution in France and Germany, all the claims in the political and economy section of a conservative and left-liberal quality newspaper that deal with these two issues were coded in each country for the years 2000, 2001 and 2002. As conservative newspapers the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (*FAZ*) and *Le Figaro*, as left-liberal newspapers the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (*SZ*) and *Le Monde* were chosen.

Within the respective period the enlargement as well as the constitutional issues were at the top of the EU policy agenda. At the end of the year 2002, after hard

disputes, the European Union decided not only on the largest enlargement round in its history – more exactly on the accession of ten new member states – but also on opening the doors for accession negotiations with Turkey. Probably the second most important question was to define the goals and institutional structure of an enlarged Union. Between 2000 and 2002 the heads of state publicly addressed these questions and decided that a Constitutional Convention should start its work in the beginning of 2002. Consequently, all claims that deal with the relation between Europe and the citizens, with the structures and competences of political order in the EU or with core goals for the integration project per se are coded under the label "constitutional issue" (see for a definition European Council 2001). Enlargement claims refer to the question of who should belong, and under which criteria, to the Union and what would be the consequences thereof.

As three years of detailed interaction analysis even goes beyond the capacity of such a large research project, this study is based on a sample. Each newspaper has been analysed once per week avoiding a selection of the left and conservative newspaper at the same day. The sample is thus constituted of 312 newspaper editions in each country.[6] Such a data set permits the study of the debates' integration potential according to each outlet, according to specific time frames (e.g. summits versus routine politics), according to specific issue fields and according to country differences. Which focus to choose depends on the researcher's own interest. As the last chapter of this paper seeks to understand differences in the analysed debates in the light of their national and issue-specific contexts, this paper is not concerned with producing a data set that is independent of the possible idiosyncrasies of any single source (see for a similar approach Ferree et al 2002). Consequently, the two different newspapers in each country are not analysed separately regarding their news reporting. If, however they act as speakers themselves, then they are treated as such.[7] Also differences in the three-year period have been largely neglected as it has not been analysed whether the integration potential changes in the course of time.

Within the selected newspaper editions any articles are selected that fit the two topics under study. Each article then is checked for claims. The number of claims indicates the visibility of a topic.[8] Within each claim up to three speakers can attribute responsibility, support or critique to up to three addresses.[9] To study the visibility of the actors, their interconnectedness and the resulting dispute constellation each relation between a speaker and an addressee coded within such claims is analysed. The case numbers of the following network analysis indicate the exact number of these relations.[10]

The media's reporting and commentating were coded by native speakers in country teams carefully trained before coding and supervised throughout the whole coding period. The coder trainers of the country teams were constantly in contact to solve coding problems. Two separate reliability tests have been conducted for the project in general: one for the editorials and one for the media's reporting. For the reliability test on editorial coding, coders in each country team coded a random sample of seven commentaries from the Scotsmen, the Times and the Guardian of the year 2002. The inter-coder reliabilities were measured as the average match between the coders. The overall reliability calculated on the core variables of the analysis turned out to be highly satisfactory with an average match of 75%. The

reliability of the coding of media reporting was tested on the basis of one issue of *The Guardian*. The average match between the coders on the core variables was 87%. As the detailed issue delimitation turned out to be problematic, the author checked on the basis of a string variable that captures the content of each coding unit whether it belonged to the two issue fields under study. The reliability for specific variables is indicated at the bottom of the respective tables or figures. The complete reliability tests can be obtained from the author.

The proposed study design facilitates findings that at least partly fulfil the integration requirements as it focuses on issue fields with strong European competences and on countries that are regarded as engines of the integration process. Moreover, a very specific source of data has been used: quality newspapers. Quality newspapers are geared towards a public that shows higher interest in politics as the average citizen. They are better staffed with journalists and correspondents what results in a higher quality of reporting and commentating (e.g. Gerhards, Neidhardt et al 1998, 87ff.). As a consequence thereof, the results are not representative for the overall media system of the countries under study. One cannot conclude that if the quality press portrays Europe as a community, the rest of the media system does the same. For some aspects such a generalisation might be valid as Pfetsch et al (2007) show: press commentaries in seven European countries turned out be more strongly affected by a country's political setting than by media formats. For some aspects, however, a generalisation is not possible. Kevin (2003) shows clearly that quality newspapers give European issues and actors more prominence as television or the regional / tabloid newspapers. What the study design, however, allows is to generalise findings that indicate integration barriers. If the results show that even the quality press – whose recipients are at least partly those who have pushed forward EU integration – has problems in portraying Europe as a common community, it is unlikely that the rest of a country's media succeed in doing so. What the research design also allows is to search for factors external to the media organisations that might impact whether media portray Europe as a community or not.

Visibility. There is only a chance that debates inherit integration potential, if the actors and issues from the EU and other member states become visible. In the German and French debates on EU enlargement and a common constitution non-national actors become visible (Table 1). Looking at the degree, which indicates an actor's total prominence as agenda-setter and attention receiver, it becomes clear that national actors are not dominating any of these debates. Their share of the total prominence lies between 38.4% in the German debate on a European constitution and 16.9% in the French enlargement debate. The remaining prominence is shared between European institutions, actors from member states and, in the enlargement debates, also with those from the upcoming member states. Non-European actors are marginal in the constitutional debates, but have some prominence in the enlargement debate as here possible upcoming member states like Turkey are relevant. A comparison between the actors' total prominence and their prominence as agenda-setters (outdegree) shows that national actors gain most of their prominence in the role of public speakers. In the German debate on the European constitution for example, the national actors' share of the total prominence amounts to 38.4% whereas their share of the prominence as speakers is above 50%. By contrast, transnational actors gain prominence as attention receivers.

This comparison shows that national actors still have an advantage when seeking direct access to the media. From an integration perspective one can conclude that non-national actors and their positions become visible – more strongly, however, as objects of national attention than as shapers of the debate themselves.

Table 1: Visibility of Actors

(%)	Constitution Ger		Constitution F		Enlargement Ger.		Enlargement F	
	Out-degree	Degree	Out-degree	Degree	Out-degree	Degree	Out-degree	Degree
EU	21,6	26,2	27,2	39,1	18,7	23,8	27,0	38,0
Member countries	26,6	32,1	24,1	24,3	10,8	16,1	22,7	19,5
Upom. member c.	1,0	1,2	2,6	1,9	19,8	20,4	19,0	16,9
National	**50,3**	**38,4**	**45,2**	**33,3**	**42,0**	**27,6**	**23,0**	**16,9**
Other	0,6	1,9	0,9	1,3	8,7	12,0	8,4	8,7
% (total)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N (total)		696		569		1050		348

Basis: all communicative interactions.

Remark: the "other" category contains all actors that are neither part of the EU nor involved into access negotiations at the time of analysis.

Reliability match of news analysis: claimant 1/2/3 (scope) = 100%/99%/100%; addressee 1/2/3 (scope): 80%/90%/92%.

Reliability match of commentary analysis: claimant is by definition the journalist writing the commentary; addressee 1/2/3 (scope): 83%/64%/65%.

An analysis of the actors' visibility tells only part of the story. It does not show, however, how much importance an issue gets on the media agenda. Only if debates gain sufficient attention can they possibly portray a European community. The question therefore is: does reporting and commentating reach a threshold that secures people's awareness? Figure 1 shows the intensity with which EU enlargement and a common constitution have been debated in Germany and France over the course of time. This analysis is based on the number of claims coded. The constitutional issue can be regarded as an "event-jumper" in both countries as reporting and commentating follow the same events. The enlargement debate, however, differs in intensity between the two countries. A relatively high intensity of reporting and commentating in Germany is contrasted by a manifest ignorance of this issue in France until the end of the year 2002. Only shortly before the heads of state decided upon the largest enlargement round in European history ever did the French media pick up on the issue. Whether this already qualifies the French enlargement debate as a "low-salience" issue depends on the evaluation criteria. The analysis proposed here cannot judge an issue's visibility compared to other issues on the media agenda. It does allow, however, an evaluation as to whether the readers have had a chance to assert the importance of an issue. In this sense the French debate resembles a low-salience issue: an examination of at least 8 newspapers editions per month contains less than 10 claims on average. If one takes into account the fact that each article contains on average more than one claim, one can conclude that

the enlargement issue was largely ignored in France. The lack of debate in France regarding one of the most crucial decisions of the European Union can be judged as a primary obstacle for integrating Europe through media debates.

Figure 1: Visibility of Issues

Interconnectedness. In the following we analyse whether these national and European actors are portrayed as interconnected and thus mutually dependent of each other or whether communicative interactions are confined to traditional border lines. Table 2 shows that in all four debates there are only few interactions that solely involve national actors. In the German debate on a common constitution the share of nationally confined disputes amounts to around 15%; in the French enlargement debate the share is less than 5%. Interactions that involve actors out-

side the European community are irrelevant in the constitutional debates, whereas they have some weight in the enlargement issue. This relatively high number stems from the fact that those states hoping to join the Union like Turkey or Croatia are involved in the enlargement debates. Most of the interactions, however, run within the European Union, between national, European, member state or upcoming member state actors. A closer look at this European communicative space reveals that most of these interactions also cross border lines. Between 58 and 68% of all communicative interactions within the debates transcend traditional border lines revealing an interconnected European Union with strong dependencies. European topics are discussed here in a manner different from classical foreign news reporting that only shows disputes within a foreign country. These debates truly reflect the interdependencies of a common Union as they go beyond a portrayal of internal struggles within the core EU institutions and show the multi-level governance system. As far as interconnectedness is concerned the debates fulfil the integration requirements.

Table 2: Interconnectedness of Debates

Percent of	Constitution Germany	Constitution France	Enlargement Germany	Enlargement France
Global actors involved	1,7	2,2	19,3	15,8
Solely national actors involved	15,1	11,4	11,1	4,6
European actors involved	**83,2**	**86,4**	**69,6**	**79,6**
	↓	↓	↓	↓
Interactions bound to borders	17,4	17,8	11,4	14,0
Interactions bt EU institutions	10,9	14,4	3,0	7,8
Interactions within a country	6,5	3,4	8,4	6,2
Interactions transcending borders	65,8	68,6	58,2	65,6
N (Relations)	696	569	1050	348

Basis: all communicative interactions.

Reliability match of news analysis: claimant 1/2/3 (scope) = 100%/99%/100%; addressee 1/2/3 (scope): 80%/90%/92%.

Reliability match of commentary analysis: claimant is by definition the journalist writing the commentary; addressee 1/2/3 (scope): 83%/64%/65%.

Dispute Constellation. On an evaluative dimension, mass media depict a common European community, if they are open for critique and support while at the same time avoiding that traditional entities fence themselves off. The analysed debates only partly fulfil these requirements. In the German debates on EU enlargement and a common constitution negative references towards actors are far more prominent than positive ones. The PN-Index for the former debate equals -0.27, the one in the latter debate -0.24. The lack of support relations could be an obstacle to integrating Europe as a common community is likely to face severe difficulties if conflict is the only driving force within it. In contrast to Germany, positive and negative references have an equal share in the French constitutional debate (PN = 0.00). In this debate conflictual and supportive views are given a voice. An in-

teresting case is the French enlargement debate. Here, support dominates conflict (PN Index = +0.14). The media portray the topic in a consensual way. This media depiction is contrasted by the actual conflict constellation within the country: there is no other country in Europe in which the citizens refuse any enlargement of the Union by such a clear majority (European Commission 2000, 2001, 2002). Only about a quarter of the French support the accession of the ten mainly Eastern European countries while less even support full membership of Turkey. The French political elite – which means the complete elite in times when the prime minister and the president come from different parties – has, after unsuccessfully fighting enlargement, contributed to paving its way. The actual conflict within the country dividing the elite and the public is thus not depicted by the media. At least the quality press seems to conceal critical voices. This concealment of conflicts is likely to hinder integration as it leads to mute conflicts which have the potential to increase the gap between the citizens and Europe.

The degree of conflict within a debate shows only a part of the dispute constellation. A more detailed analysis of the evaluations within a debate reveals which actors form common coalitions as they attribute support and critique to similar addressees. This last analysis reveals whether Europe is portrayed as a community or not. Only if speakers from different European countries form common coalitions do debates carry the potential to foster an imagined European community. To identify coalition structures in debates, actors with similar support and critique attributions are placed in the same coalition as they are regarded as spokespeople for the same ideas. Figure 2 and 3 show the similarity of actors' reference patterns based on multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) and cluster analysis. MDS places actors with similar reference patterns close to each other in space. Those actors that are identified as similar by cluster analysis (the exact results can be obtained from the author) on a correlation level above .4 have been put into the same circles within this MDS space.

In the German debate on a common constitution coalitions are predominantly transnational. Traditional entities do not wall themselves off. The two German newspapers, the *FAZ* and the *SZ*, have similar reference patterns as the supranational EU institutions (EU Commission and the EU Parliament). This indicates that the conservative and left-liberal newspapers are not separated by a left-right divide, but resemble each other in their commentating on the constitutional issue. This coalition of supranational EU institutions and German newspapers is strongly tied to a second coalition that is composed of civil society actors from Germany, Ireland and the British government. The conservative opposition in Germany and other German media quoted in the news coverage form a coalition with French actors and other countries. The German government, together with left-leaning German politicians, constitute the only national coalition within the debate. However, this coalition has similar reference patterns to the alliance of the Belgian and Italian governments including the French media. Besides one coalition composed of Austrian actors only, the other alliances transcend border lines in their composition. In sum, coalitions in this debate do predominantly transcend border lines and thus do not seem to be an obstacle to integration.

Turning to the French debate on a European constitution, the analysis reveals a stronger tendency for coalition formation bound to traditional border lines com-

Figure 2: Discourse Coalitions in the Debates on Common Constitution
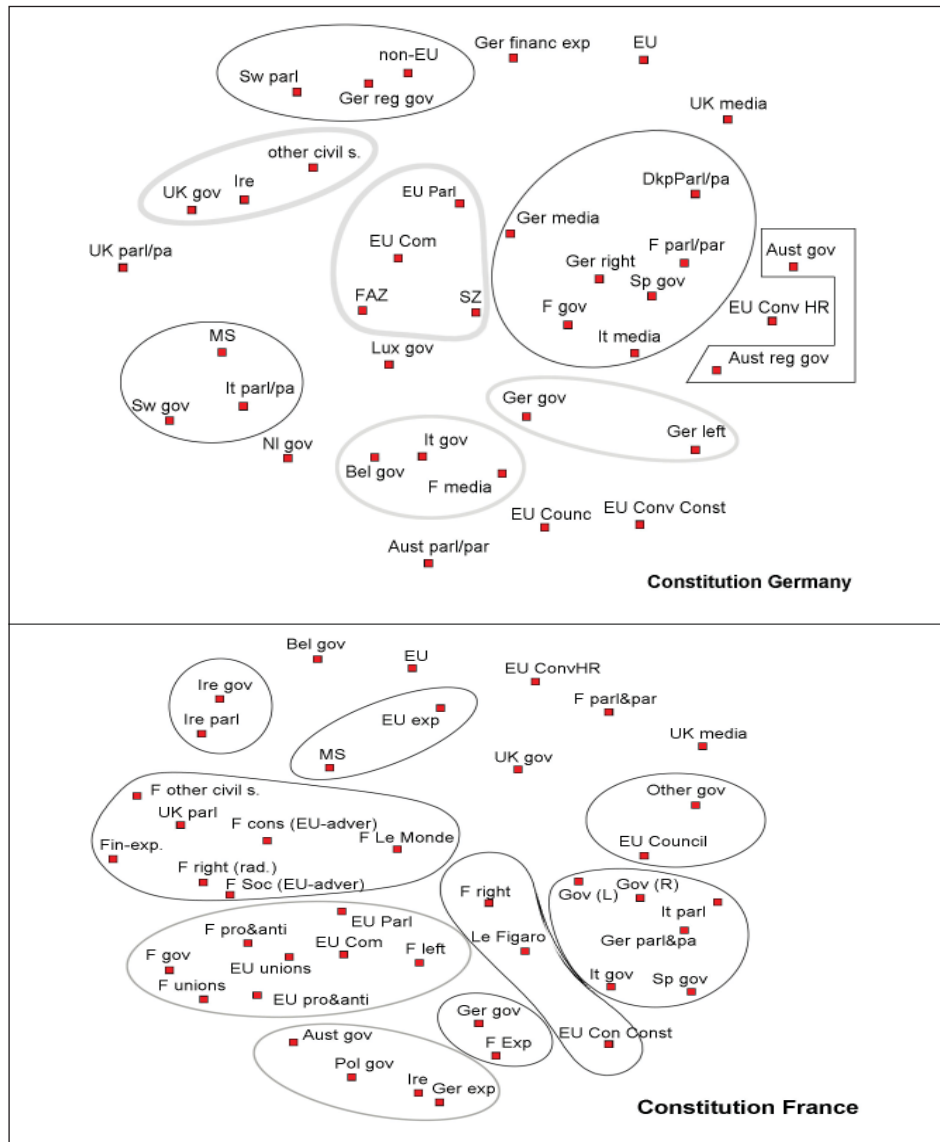
Actors' representation in space: MDS; circles: cluster analysis (cut-level .4); grey coloured circles: similarity between coalitions; Program: UCINET 6; Stress value: Ger = .33; F = .32

pared to the analysed German debate. Besides a coalition composed of Irish actors only, there are two coalitions that are mainly composed of French actors. The French EU-opponents form a coalition together with French civil society organisations, French financial experts and – surprisingly – the left liberal newspaper of *Le Monde*. As a transnational actor it includes only parliamentarians from Britain. This coalition shows clearly that Europe divides France not by a left-right split but creates its own cleavage (Mittag and Wessels 2003, 419). The conservatives in parliament

Figure 3: Discourse Coalitions in the Debates on EU Enlargement

Actors' representation in space: MDS; circles: cluster analysis (cut-level .4); grey coloured circles: similarity between coalitions; Program: UCINET 6; Stress value: Ger = .34; F = .32; basis: actors with degree ≥3 and outdegree ≥1.

and the conservative newspaper *Le Figaro* form another French coalition in which the Constitutional Convention is integrated at a much lower correlation value. The remaining coalitions are transnational. There is, for example, a French-European

alliance which closely resembles an Austrian, Polish, Irish and German coalition. In sum, there is a tendency among French actors to form their own coalitions. Singularly the alliance that is composed of EU-opponents and *Le Monde* with its multitude of French actors involved is characterised by a clear separation between national and transnational actors and has no correspondence to other coalitions. However, it would be too much to claim that this debate is solely characterised by national coalition building as there are also national actors involved in transnational coalitions that transcend borders.

The German debate on EU enlargement is dominated by national coalition formations. The analysis reveals three national coalitions in which transnational actors are poorly integrated. The first one is composed of the German government and left politicians. In contrast to the German debate on a common constitution, this coalition is strictly separated from any transnational alliance. In the second national coalition we find the German experts. Thirdly, there is a big national coalition that surrounds the German opposition. In addition to these three primarily national coalitions there are transnational coalitions functioning mainly without German actors. The only exceptions are the analysed media raising their own voices: the *FAZ* and the *SZ* once again form a coalition with supranational EU institutions expanded to include the Spanish government and some upcoming member countries.

In the French debate on EU enlargement the picture changes. Here we barely find any national coalition formation. French national actors form coalitions together with actors from the EU or other member states. And also those coalitions in which French actors are not involved show a strong tendency for transnational coalition building. Regarding coalition formation, the French enlargement debate does not show any obstacles to integration.

Conclusions and Prospects

The analysis has shown that debates differ in their potential to integrate Europe in its plurality. The proposed criteria to analyse debates' integration potential do not call for harmonisation between countries, but require that European actors and topics become visible, that actor constellations reflect the dependencies of a common European political space and that debates show conflict and cooperation while portraying a community in which interests are no longer bound to traditional border lines. None of the analysed debates fully fulfils these requirements although the study design facilitates such integrative findings as quality newspapers have been analysed, debates have been studied in countries that are regarded as the engines of the integration process and in issue fields that are strongly europeanised.

The debates on the constitutional issue in Germany and France fit the criteria pretty well. In both debates European and member state actors and the issue itself become visible. However, the German debate is still dominated by national speakers – a finding less pronounced in France. Both debates show the interconnectedness of the European political space. With regard to dispute constellations both debates, however, reveal some integration barriers. In Germany consensus and positive references are rare and thus positive identification with a common community becomes difficult. France, by contrast, shows some tendencies for national interest definitions as national actors – at least partly – separate themselves from the rest of Europe. The enlargement debates show stronger integration barriers. Here the

German debate makes EU actors and the topic visible and shows the interconnectedness of a common political space but refrains from showing positive identification points and remains with clear national coalition formations. The dispute constellation in this debate thus does not truly portray Europe as a common community. The French debate on EU enlargement is even more problematic for integration. Although the debate reflects the interconnectedness of Europe, shows a strong visibility of EU and member state actors compared to national ones and a dispute constellation without national coalition formation, it remains hidden from public view. When the largest enlargement round ever in the history of the European Union was decided on, no substantial discussion took place in France. Even when this topic was debated, critical voices were rare. The French debate thus concealed not only the topic itself, but also the conflicts inherent within it.

Three criteria have been used to identify integration potentials and barriers in mass media depictions of Europe: the visibility, the interconnectedness and the dispute constellation. These three criteria seem valuable as they leave behind the idea that mass media might only contribute to integration if their contents are homogenized across all European countries. Whether integration in plurality turns out to be more than a hope and whether mass media actually contribute to it, needs to be shown empirically. Therefore a study of media impact needs to be conducted that systematically connects community depictions of the mass media – and this means going beyond an analysis of the quality press – to public perceptions. Such studies are ambitious as a (political) community is defined by a border line and internal connections (Fuchs 1999, 156). Consequently, mass media depictions of communities need to go beyond analysing mass media material as treasure trove of isolated actors, topics and opinions, but study border line definitions and internal connections among its members. The systematic connection of content and network analysis might guide us in this direction as it allows to study more than the visibility of actors and issues showing the way how actors are interconnected and how dispute divides or unites Europe.

The media portrayal of Europe however may not only be regarded as an independent variable impacting public perception, but also as a dependent variable. In this latter perspective, one might ask which factors trigger a portrayal of Europe that meets these integration criteria. Such a question goes well beyond existing research that focuses on explaining when Europe gets on the media agenda at all. The results of this study make clear that debates vary in their potential to integrate Europe between and within countries. Thus national, issue-specific contexts may help us understanding such variation. One factor that is crucial to describe these national, issue-specific contexts is the relation between elites' attitudes and public opinion[11] as the latter determines the national elites' communication strategies (regarding agenda-setting see Gerhards et al 1998, Kollman 1998) and therefore the domestic adaptation of European issues (Adam 2007 a, b). Applying this idea to our four test cases leads to the following hypothesis: only in those situations, in which the national elite represent national citizens, can we find integration potential within debates. In those situations in which citizens do not agree with their national leaders, however, media debates hardly depict Europe as a common community. The strong gap between the elite and the public in France regarding the enlargement issue – the elite supports it whereas the citizens strongly reject it

(European Commission 2002) – results in a silencing of the topic and the inherent conflict. The weaker misfit in Germany between the elite and the public (European Commission 2002) regarding enlargement leads to a strongly negative debate with a national coalition formation. The constitutional debates where lesser integration barriers have been identified, take place in a context where the elite represent the public: the German elite and public support constitution building (European Commission 2002); in France the party system as well as the citizens are both divided on the future shape of EU integration (e.g. Goulard 2002). Consequently, mass media seem to fail to portray Europe as a community if the public rejects what national elites support, as then national politicians avoid discussing the topic at all or refrain to national interest definitions what is strongly reflected in mass media debates. Consequently, one should not overestimate mass media's potential to integrate Europe as their picture of Europe largely depends on the domestic adaptations of common European policies. Such adaptations are difficult, if there is a gap between national elites and the public.

Notes:

1. Weber characterises a community by interpersonal interactions and by the affective feelings of belonging together (Weber 1972). The community definition employed here, is based on imagined not interpersonal interactions and it is open for affective and rational – interest or value-based reasons for belonging together (see also Fuchs 2000, 217f.).

2. This analysis has been limited to actors who substantially shape the debate. Only actors involved in at least three communicative interactions and that appear as a speaker at least once have been included. The latter cut level is necessary as otherwise actors would be placed in the same coalition that are similar in the sense that they do not attribute support or critique to anybody.

3. In general there are two main measures to determine similarity: the Euclidean distance and the Pearson correlation. As actors should be placed in the same discourse coalition if they have similar friends and enemies – even if their voices differ in intensity – one needs to draw on the Pearson correlation. The Euclidean distance by contrast measures the absolute difference between actors' reference patterns and thus does not allow to put speakers into coalitions that have similar reference pattern but differ in their outdegree (Backhaus et al 2003, 496, Wasserman and Faust 1999, 374).

4. MDS is based on an iterative optimisation procedure which seeks to place actors with similar reference patterns close to each other in space. The fit between the presented actor constellation and the original similarity matrix results in a stress value. The lower the stress value the better the spatial representation of actors. A hierarchical cluster analysis is used here (Backhaus et al. 2003, 479ff., Wasserman and Faust 1999, 381) based on an average linkage procedure. This procedure is regarded as conservative as it does not show tendencies for dilatation or contraction (Backhaus et al. 2003, 516f.). Such a cluster analysis is visualised with dendrograms that group actors that have very similar reference pattern on a high level.

5. Detailed information on the project that was sponsored by the EU Commission (HPSE-CT2000-00046) can be found at http://europub.wz-berlin.de and in Koopmans' and Stathams' project description (Koopmans and Statham 2002).

6. As the sample for the commentary analysis in the Europub project has been denser as the one for the news reporting analysis, the commentary data had to be weighted in order to create a common data set that allows for a systematic comparison of media and political actors as speakers.

7. The media act as speakers not only in their commentating, but also when they overtly take a position in news reporting. Each commentary is regarded as one claim by one journalist.

8. This analysis is based on 338 articles (518 claims) in the German and 294 articles (482 claims) in the French constitutional debate; on 485 articles (763 claims) in the German and 192 articles (299

claims) in the French enlargement debate.

9. Detailed coding schemes can be found in the following codebooks (Adam et al 2002, Koopmans 2002).

10. For such network analysis only those claims can be included that contain at least one communicative interaction between claimant and addressee. Consequently, the network indicators are based on fewer articles than the analysis of a topic's visibility. The exact numbers are: 277 articles (415 claims, 696 relations) for the German constitutional debate; 250 articles (409 claims, 569 relations) for the constitutional debate in France; 392 articles (618 claims, 1050 relations) for the enlargement debate in Germany; 172 articles (267 claims, 348 relations) for the enlargement debate in France.

11. It would be misleading to claim that the relation between the elite's attitudes and public opinion is the only factor that influences the filtering of EU politics at the national level. For a more detailed explanation see Adam 2007 a, b.

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DAL YONG JIN

KULTURNI UDAR: SPREMENJENE VLOGE UNESCA IN DRŽAVNIH OBLASTI GLEDE KULTURNE SUVERENOSTI

Članek obravnava spremembe v korejski kulturni politiki s poudarkom na sistemu televizijskih kvot v obdobju neoliberlane globalizacije. Koreja je ena izmed redkih držav, ki se je desetletja uspešno upirala hegemoniji Hollyooda. Zakonsko osnovo za varovanje lokalne kulture in kulturne suverenosti daje Unescova Konvencija o varovanju in spodbujanju različnosti v kulturnem izražanju (2005). Kljub temu pa je korejska vlada zaradi pritiskov ZDA nenadoma bistveno spremenila politiko televizijskih kvot. Bistveno vprašanje zadeva vlogo nacionalnih držav v procesu spreminjanja kulturnih politiki v obdobju Unescove konvencije.

COBISS 1.01

DONG HEE SHIN
MURALI VENKATESH

POLITIČNA EKONOMIJA KONVERGENCE: JANUSOVI OBRAZI KOREJSKE KONVERGENCE

Na temelju kvalitativnih podatkov o udeležencih konvergence v Koreji članek obravnava proces konvergence z različnih vidikov in proučuje vpletenost interesov udeležencev. Ključna vprašanja so: (1) Kakšno strategijo je sprejela Koreja? (2) Kateri družbeni in politični dejavniki so vplivali na oblikovanje strategije? (3) Kako so različni interesi uveljavili ideologije, s katerimi akterji oblikujejo strategije na temelju svojih interesov? Kljub dinamičnim interakcijam se omrežje akterjev konvergence še ni stabiliziralo, saj je politika konvergence kompleksna in polna protislovij.

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113 POVZETKI

XIN XIN

RAZISKOVANJE KITAJSKIH MEDIJSKIH ORGANIZACIJ: PRIMER ŠANGHAJSKEGA BIROJA AGENCIJE XINHUA

Članek obravnava vpliv tržnega preoblikovanja medijev na organizacijsko strukturo in novinarsko prakso v kitajskih novičarskih organizacijah. Na primeru lokalnega šanghajskega biroja kitajske tiskovne agencije Xinhua hoče ugotoviti, koliko so tržni dejavniki oslabili centralizirani nadzor nad lokalno novinarsko prakso v zadnjih 25 letih. Članek ne obravnava samo novičarske organizacije, ampak tudi njeno povezanost z drugimi institucijami.

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JEREMY COLINS

"JE TO ZA VAS NOVO, PREDSEDNIK?" MEDIJSKE AGENDE, UPRAVLJANJE NOVIC IN INTERAKCIJA V PREDVOLILNI KAMPANJI PRED SPLOŠNIMI VOLITVAMI LETA 2005 V VELIKI BRITANIJI

Članek obravnava specifičen primer interakcije med predsednikom vlade in gledalcem predvolilnega televizijskega programa BBC, da bi razjasnil vrsto vprašanj o »krizi javnega komuniciranja« in političnem nadzorovanju informiranja. V političnem smislu je bila epizoda, v kateri se je pokazalo, da Tony Blair ni bil pripravljen na vprašanje o naročanju na zdravniški pregled, relativno nepomembna v primerjavi z vprašanji, kot sta azilna politika ali iraška vojna. Vendar pa analiza kaže, da se vsaj začasno lahko obide volilne vprašanja in teme, ki jih načrtujejo politični akterji, čeprav se mediji v zadnji instanci zanašajo na uradne vire. Vloga BBC v tej študiji sproža tudi vprašanje o položaju javne radiotelevizije ter odnosu med tiskom in radiotelevizijo v političnem novinarstvu v Veliki Britaniji.

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JAVNA RAZPRAVA NA INTERNETU:
ANALIZA POLITIČNIH RAZPRAV NA INTERNETU PRED FINSKIMI PARLAMENTARNIMI VOLITVAMI 2007

Članek obravnava potencial internetnih političnih razprav, da bi postale resnično posvetovalne. Prvi del obravnava pogostost razpravljanja na internetu med različnimi kategorijami državljanov. V drugem delu članke analizira kakovost razprav na štirih finskih spletnih mestih v dveh tednih pred finskimi parlamentarnimi volitvami marca 2007. Raziskava kaže, da razprave (vsaj za sedaj) niso resnično posvetovalne in da v njih sodelujejo le politično zelo aktivni državljani. Odprto ostaja vprašanje, ali (in kako) bodo razprave državljanov na spletu postale resnično posvetovalne.

SILKE ADAM

ALI MNOŽIČNI MEDIJI PRIKAZUJE EVROPO KOT SKUPNOST?
NEMŠKE IN FRANCOSKE RAZPRAVE O ŠIRITVI EU IN SKUPNI USTAVI

Članek analizira, ali (in kdaj) mediji obravnavajo Evropo kot »skupno skupnost« ali pa ostajajo nacionalno omejeni. Predstavljanje Evrope kot skupnosti pomeni, da mediji (1) obravnavajo evropske akterje in akterje iz članic EU, (2) predstavljajo medsebojno povezanost teh akterjev in (3) omogočajo izražanje podpore in kritike, ki presega nacionalne okvire. V analizi sta bili uporabljeni metodi analize besedil in analize omrežij. Primerjava razprav o širitvi EU in skupni ustavi v osrednjih nemških in francoskih časopisih kaže, da so v prikazovanju Evrope kot skupnosti razlike tako med državama kot znotraj njiju. Razlike v časopisih odražajo odnos med stališči nacionalnih elit in javnega mnenja do specifičnih vprašanj.

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